E-mail Literacy in Higher Education Academic Settings

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ABSTRACT

The research purpose was to identify (1) the problems encountered by academic and administrative staff in emails received from students, (2) positive and negative qualities of the authentic emails of higher education students, (3) functional explanations of the academic email, (4) the problems encountered by students in emails received from academic and administrative staff, and (5) higher education students' email writing awareness. An exploratory sequential mixed design was used. The study group consisted of 15 staff and 1064 higher education students. The qualitative data were collected from staff interviews and 80 authentic emails of students. And a survey was prepared based on qualitative data and then quantitative data were collected. The problems encountered by staff are style, carelessness, articulacy problem, spelling and punctuation problem, email incivility. The negative qualities of authentic emails are as follows: not using institutional username, formal language, paragraph structure in the email body, salutation, closing statement, contact information; username without name and surname, blank subject line, spelling and punctuation problems, sloppy wording, lack of self-introduction. Non-descriptive, late, and short answers, not getting answers, sloppy answers, emails with negative feelings disturbed students. Students' awareness of writing academic emails displayed a more positive picture than the emails they wrote. Items in which students' awareness is weak are as follows: trying to reflect their feelings to email, using punctuation marks to convey the feeling, writing email for long and complex matter, using paragraph structure, adding contact details, CC - BCC. Research results were discussed with relevant literature.

Key words: Academic Writing, Email, Email Literacy, Netiquette, Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

Email is a frequently used communication tool in academic settings (Ewald, 2016). Emails written by second-language users are more impolite and informal than emails written by native speakers (Chen, 2015, Danielewicz-Betz, 2013; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2016), however, native language users also have problems with these issues (Pinto, 2019). In this study, the focus is on e-mail literacy in the native language. This study examines correspondences in staff-student's emails at Turkish universities.

The use of email between staff and students at universities constitutes academic correspondence. Academic email can be evaluated as a business email. There are no clear recipes in academic email. However, it is necessary to pay attention to netiquette, cyber incivility, formality. Email communication in an academic setting can present challenges related to workload and compromised relationships (De Gagne et al., 2020). To be taken seriously and considered reliable, the following should be avoided in email correspondence: use of emojis, informal language, misspellings, and grammatical errors, and disregard for upper-/lower-case (Dumbravă &

Koronka, 2006). Studies on email communication between students and professors have shown that student emails are usually not in compliance with these rules (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Knight & Masselink, 2008), and professors are disturbed by excessively informal emails sent by students (Sims, 2015; Stephens et al., 2009). In this context, it is important to understand the difference between academic email and private email. Poor email creates a communication conflict between professors and students (Filippone & Survinski, 2016). However, not every university staff member might have the opportunity to carry out email proficiency practices for students at the beginning of their college career as did Sims (2015).

Students can easily access their professors outside class hours via email (Haworth, 1999). Most students, especially reticent ones, prefer email rather than having face-to-face communication (Kelly et al., 2004). Students email due to reasons such as phatic communion, asking for help, and making formal requests (Bloch, 2002), presenting excuses for their delayed assignments (Duran et al., 2005). It is a significant communication tool between parents and teachers

in terms of topics like grades, scheduling, health issues, behavior, and social issues (Thompson, 2008). And it has taken its place in educational environments as an instruction and learning tool (Mabrito, 1991; Panteli, 2002; Paterson, 2016). It can promote learning by enhancing classroom communication and access to information (D'Souza, 1992). It improves the learning levels of students, increases student-student and student-faculty member interactions, and supports life-long learning (Boles, 1999). As may be seen, emails create direct channels of communication between students and faculty. The importance of email communication has increased even more in distance education that is required by the COVİD-19 pandemic period. In these senses, it is not in question to see the end of emailing between university personnel and students.

Emails can be used for both formal and informal communication (Chhaya et al., 2018; Lewin-Jones & Mason, 2014). They are divided into two categories as private and business emails (Thompson & Lloyd, 2002). Business emails are written to address an official organization, place an order, or make an inquiry with an organization or person (Lampert et al., 2008). This type of email is always about a business or service. Business emails are different from everyday personal correspondence in terms of ethics, tone, content, and quality. Business communication via email is expected to be professional. It is important to comprehend the importance of formal email during the university period as this is a transitional phase to work life. There is dizzying email traffic in workplaces. For the year 2020, the total number of business and consumer emails sent and received per individual is an average of 306 emails per day and this number is expected to be 319 in 2021 (Radicati, 2020). University staff believes that experiencing email overload. (Lewin-Jones & Mason, 2014). Associate professors and professors receive an average of 84 email messages per working day (Pignata et al., 2015). As the use of email becomes widespread, the number of individuals affected by cyber incivility (Mccarthy et al., 2019). A study on flaming shows that email messages containing slang and bad language, using excessively exclamation or question marks, or using capital letters created conflicts in workplace communication (Turnage, 2008). Netiquette, referred to as internet ethics, is the network etiquette that regulates the behavior on the internet, including written online communication (Shea, 1994). Netiquette emphasizes the style of conveying the message, as well as its content (Kozík & Slivová, 2014). A study conducted in Japan with students at primary, secondary, and high school showed that good netiquette knowledge significantly reduced cyberbullying among students (Kumazaki et al., 2011). Similarly, research showed that emails containing negative messages, but complied with netiquette, increased the level of tolerance in the recipients, improved job satisfaction significantly decreased uncertainty, and made the sender appear more positive (Bartl, 2017). Based on these studies, it may be argued that netiquette, cyber civility, formality supports individuals in a positive way both at school and in the workplace. Email messages must be worth the time that the recipient gives for reading them.

OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study examines correspondences in staff-student's emails at Turkish universities. The present study addresses the following purposes:

(1) What are the problems encountered by academic and administrative staff in emails received from students?
(2) What are the positive and negative qualities of the authentic emails of university students?
(3) What are the functional explanations of the academic email?
(4) What are the problems encountered by students in emails received from academic and administrative staff?
(5) What level is students' email writing awareness?

The data were collected from students, academic staff, and administrative staff at universities. The email literacy was handled from the aspects of both students and staff.

The study is considered important in that it describes the current situation in terms of the use of email in academic settings, discusses by comparing it with similar studies in literature, and recommends solutions to the problems identified in this area. In this context, the result of this study is to contribute to the advancement of both theoretical and empirical research to support respectful and healthy email communication between university personnel and students.

METHOD

Mixed method was employed in this study. Contrary to the prevailing view, a mixed method is not the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, but it entails strengthening the study by combining the best parts of both (Özden & Durdu, 2016). In the social sciences, it is necessary to examine both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the topic to achieve understanding within a holistic and enriched framework (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). The study was performed with the exploratory sequential design. The exploratory sequential mixed design is a two-stage design in which the researcher first explores qualitative data and then uses these qualitative findings in the aspect of quantitative research (Creswell, 2014). The process in this study consisted of a qualitative first stage and a quantitative second stage (see Figure 1). The Ethics committee approval was obtained from home university for the research data collection tools. The approval shared with participants during the data collecting process.

Qualitative Stage

The qualitative data of the study were collected from three different data sources. Multiple data collection methods, multiple data sources, and the use of multiple theoretical perspectives contribute to the credibility of qualitative research (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The first qualitative data source of the study was the interviews. Interviews were held with 7 academic and 8 administrative staff members of 8 universities. To determine the participants for the interviews, the method of snowball sampling was used to include respondents who readily met the relevant criteria and could
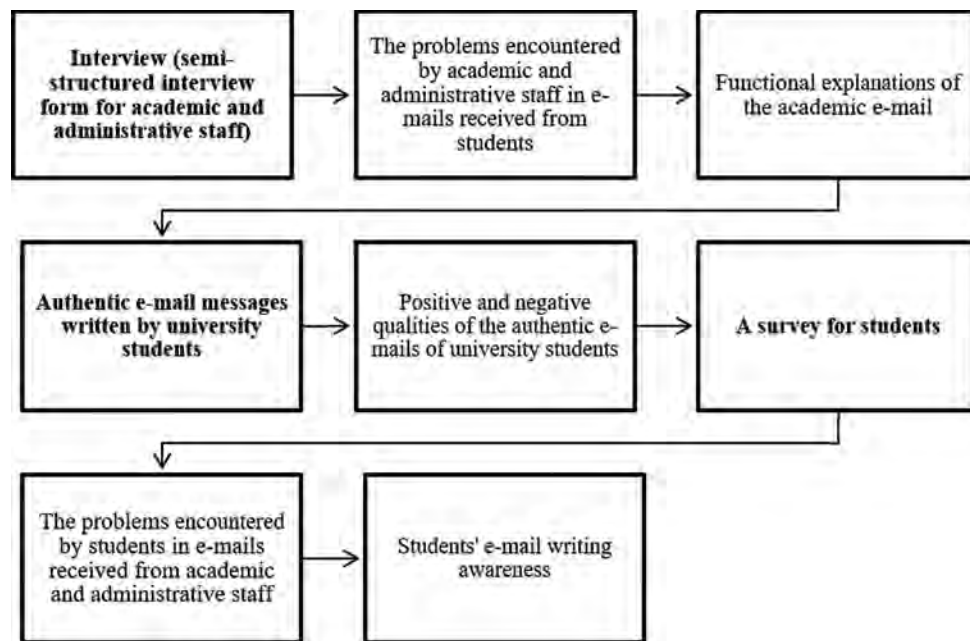
Figure 1. Data collection process

be posed questions in consideration of the other participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The interview participants were university staff who were in constant contact with university students and frequently received emails from students. A semi-structured interview form was used in the interviews with the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Table 1 contains information about the staff.

The second qualitative data source of the study was 80 authentic email messages written by university students. The emails were analyzed using the content analysis method (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). The third qualitative source is the open-ended questions asked to the students in the survey. In the examination of the staff interviews and open-ended questions, descriptive analysis, and content analysis were conducted. In line with the descriptive analysis, direct quotations were included from time to time to reveal the views of the participants. The findings from three different qualitative data sources were included in a two-step constant comparative analysis (Özdemir, 2010). To find out differences and similarities; findings from student emails were compared to the views of the staff and finding of the survey's open-ended questions. Coding was done using an evaluation form consisting of wording, ethic, content, formal structure, subject line, email account, spelling, punctuation, and articulacy titles. The form was used to determine the problems encountered by academic/administrative staff in emails received from students, and Functional explanations of the academic email. Creswell (2014) shows consensus among coders as one of the factors affecting reliability. In this study, after the first categories were formed in the data analysis process, the second researcher reviewed the categories and expressed an opinion on the categories. The first categories were created with the joint decision of both researchers. In the next phase of data analysis, the findings progressed by expanding the initial categories. At the end of the data analysis, the second researcher reviewed the categories and subcategories. The

Table 1. Qualitative sample

	n	**%**
Gender		
Female	8	53.3
Male	7	46.6
Education		
Undergraduate	3	20
Graduate	5	33.3
PhD	7	46.6
Age		
30-40	11	73.3
41-50	4	26.6
Seniority in profession		
1-10	8	53.3
11-20	5	33.3
21-30	2	13.3
Occupation		
Administrative	8	53.3
Academic	7	46.6

categories and subcategories were finalized by providing a consensus between the two researchers.

Quantitative Stage

Pooling the items. In the first step, 59 items were prepared from qualitative data. For the sake of objectivity, these items were submitted for the review of two experts on language education, and 11 items were eliminated. In the second step, draft items were submitted to a group of 15 to obtain expert opinions. This evaluation group consisted of people who had at least a doctoral-level study or degree and were specialized

in teaching language and educational sciences. These experts had the choices of 'necessary,' 'useful but need improvement,' and 'unnecessary' for each item. Lawshe analysis was performed to determine content validity. In Lawshe analysis, where the number of experts is 15, the validity criterion is 0.49 (Lawshe, 1975). After the analyses, 4 items with a content validity coefficient of less than 0.49 were eliminated. Furthermore, according to the recommendations of the experts, 7 statements were re-formulated. In the third step, the draft survey consisting of 44 items was submitted to two experts on educational sciences for an evaluation of suitability for implementation in terms of visual design, ordering of items, font size, and phrasing. After the evaluation, 2 items were removed due to overlapping with another. As a result, 42 items remained in the survey. Pilot implementation process (pre-trial). The pilot implementation of the draft survey was conducted with 20 university students. The researcher participated in the pilot implementation as an observer. In the pilot implementation, the students completed the survey in 7-10 minutes. The pre-trial revealed no problems in terms of the comprehensibility of the survey items. The pilot implementation showed that the comprehensibility of the items was in accordance with the general implementation, filling out the survey did not take too long to the extent of boring the students. As a result of experiences in the pilot implementation, an instruction (Dear Participant, please answer the survey considering the emails you wrote to academic or administrative staff at the university sincerely.) was add for the general implementation. General implementation. The survey is of the Likert type, scored between 1-5 points (5-Always, 4-Most of the time, 3-Occasionally, 2-Rarely, 1-Never). To prevent reaction generalization in participants (Erkuş, 2016), 17 items (40, 38, 39, 37, 42, 41, 19, 21, 20, 16, 17, 18, 15, 9, 1, 3, 4) are reverse items. The reverse items were recoded prior to analysis. The 42-item survey was applied to the quantitative sample (1129 university students from the faculties of education, science, economics, and administrative sciences, and from the school of physical education and sports). After implementation, the answered survey forms were examined, and 65 forms were excluded from the analysis because of the incomplete coding, multiple answers. Table 2 shows the data of 1,064 students from 8 universities.

Factor analysis. First, factor analysis was conducted to determine the groupings between the items. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) sampling adequacy test was applied to determine the suitability of the sample size to factoring (Brownlow, 2004). The KMO was .874, the chi-squared value was 9019.933, and the P value was $P < .001$. The lower cut-off point was determined as .40 in the factor analysis by repeating the varimax rotation technique. In repeated analyses, 18 items (35, 33, 32, 31, 28, 27, 26, 25, 14, 13, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1) loaded on more than one factor were identified and eliminated. 5 factors with an eigenvalue greater than 1 were found (see Table 3). These factors explain 56,13% of the total variance. This is a sufficient rate for multi-factor scales used in the social sciences (Fabrigar & Wegener, 2012).

As seen in Table 3, the survey consisted of 24 items and 5 factors. The reliability of the survey was tested using the

Table 2. Quantitative sample

	n	**%**
Gender		
Female	659	71.33
Male	305	28.66
Age		
18	154	14.47
19	211	19.83
20	289	27.16
21	193	18.13
22	109	10.24
23	51	4.79
24+	57	5.35

internal consistency coefficient of Cronbach's alpha. If the Cronbach's alpha value is above 0.70, the survey is considered reliable (Kılıç, 2016). The Cronbach's alpha value was .865 for the 1st., 769 for the 2nd., 773 for the 3rd., 700 for the 4th., 864 for the 5th factor. For the whole survey, it was .875. Following the examination of the items in each factor, the dimensions of the survey were named. The 1st factor was named style, the 2nd advertency, the 3rd tone, the 4th message, and the 5th technical aspects. The quantitative data obtained from the surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics. A single sample *t*-test was conducted to see the difference between the distribution of items among options. Since the middle point is 3 in the questionnaire, 3 is determined as the cut-off point.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results were presented with subtitles containing the purposes of the research.

The Problems Encountered by Academic and Administrative Staff in Emails Received from Students

For this purpose, 5 categories and 21 subcategories were reached. Percentages are the distribution of the answers within themselves.

1) Style (42.36%): Too informal style (18.46%), No salutation (9.78%), No courteous closing statement (7.6%), Too many inverted sentences, as in informal speech (3.26%), Use of daily acronyms (3.26%).
2) Carelessness (20.64%): No self-introduction (8.69%), Email usernames other than real personal names (6.52%), No attention to upper/lowercase (%3.26), Blank subject line (2.17%).
3) Articulacy problem (18.45%): No clarity in the message (5.43%), Messy wording (4.34%), Bad message structure (2.17%), Sentences lacking structure (no beginning, no end, (2.17%)), Lack of semantic consistency in the message (2.17%), No clarity in the message (2.17%).
4) Spelling and punctuation problem (9.78%), No attention to rules of grammar (4.34%), Lack of punctuation (3.26%), Misspellings (%2.17).

Table 3. Survey factor structure as per factor analysis

Style		Advertency		Tone		Message		Technical aspects	
Items	**Factor load**	**Items**	**Factor load**	**Items**	**Factor load**	**Items**	**Factor load**	**Items**	**Factor load**
40	.804	19	.672	16	.747	11	.791	29	.924
38	.783	21	.667	17	.743	12	.739	30	.913
39	.764	20	.657	18	.699	10	.724		
37	.752	23	.649	15	.687	9	.502		
42	.683	22	.641						
41	.670	24	.542						
36	.513								
34	.485								

5) Email incivility (8.68%): Use of imperatives (4.34%), Lack of manners (3.26%), Expressions bordering on slang (1.08%).

The biggest rate of the problem was style. This sequence was followed by carelessness, articulacy problem, email incivility, spelling, and punctuation problem. The subcategories showed that the staff members were occasionally subject to sloppy, haphazardly written messages. Participant comment example:

> *No salutation is used, they use language like they are writing to a friend, the text structure is wrong (it is hard to understand the theme), also grammatical errors, these are just some of the issues I spot in emails.* [Participant 11]
> *We need to teach e-mail correspondence beginning from primary school. In our day, e-mail is used more often than letters or official forms. Its difference from messaging on social media cannot be overemphasized. Otherwise, SEE YOU may become officially CU in dictionaries.* [Participant 5]

Positive and Negative Qualities of the Authentic Emails of University Students

The qualities of emails supported the findings reached for the first purpose of the research. Subcategories such as closing statement, formal language, respect, subject line, self-introduction, usernames, punctuation, spelling, and exposition were the problems faced by the staff. Percentages show the rate of the emails (see Table 4).

The most disturbing subjects for the staff are respectively 'too informal style, lack of salutation, spelling and punctuation problem, lack of self-introduction, lack of courteous closing statement, and email usernames other than real personal names'. In the sequencing of problems in authentic messages, these topics are in the lower order.

Functional Explanations of the Academic Email

The answers of the staff to this purpose yielded 9 categories. The percentages for the first two categories show the rate of staff. Later categories' percentages show the rate of the distribution of the answers within themselves.

1) Email username: Email addresses should contain the real name and surname of the user (100%), People should use their institutional email accounts, if any (20%)

2) Format and length: Message should be broken into paragraphs for visual convenience (100%), Email body should be made up of 2-3 paragraphs on average, a maximum of 35 sentences, and a maximum of 300 words (86.6%), Length may change depending on the importance of the subject and content (13.33%), Subject line should be short (minimum 1-2 words, maximum 10 words, or 5 words on average (53.33%)).

3) Email subject line: Should give an idea about the subject (36.95%), Should summarize the message (26.3%), Should give an idea on the purpose of the correspondence (21.05%), Should contain keywords (15.7%).

4) Email introduction: Purpose of the email (47%), Self-introduction by the sender (29.4%), Salutation (23.5%).

5) Email body: Explanation and details on the purpose of correspondence (66.6%), Sender's request (33.3%).

6) If the email is for a request or complaint, the content: Clear description of the request or complaint (37.51%), Resolution demanded (33.33%), Reason of the request or complaint (29.16%).

7) If it is an application email, the content: Personal details and eligibility (42.1%), Information and documents required for application (31.57%), Purpose of application (26.31%).

8) Sentence structure: Short sentences (52%), Comprehensible and clear sentences (32%), Simple sentence structure (16%).

9) Email conclusion: Expectation/demand/request from the recipient (43.47%), Summary of the message (17.39%), Courteous closing statement (17.39%), Timeline or deadlines regarding the requests (13.04%), Sender's contact information (8.6%).

Participant comment example:

> *While contacting someone for the first time, the sender must include a short self-introduction and state the purpose of contact. P13. The message should be divided into paragraphs. This gives a hint on how many themes there are for the recipient to follow.* [Participant 6]

Categories include the opinions of the participants from the user account to the content of the email, its result, paragraph, and sentence structure. The subject on which all participants agree is the email account. The staff members stated that email usernames must contain the name and surname of the sender.

Table 4. Qualities of the authentic emails of university students

	Negative qualities	Positive qualities
Sender's contact information	No (92.5%)	Yes (7.5%)
Sender's name at the end of the message	No (78.75%)	Yes (21.25%)
Paragraph structure in the email body	No (77.5%)	Yes (22.5%)
Salutation	No (66.25%)	Yes (33.75%)
Subject line	Blank (56.25%)	Filled out (43.75%)
Spelling and punctuation rule	No (48.75%)	Yes (51.25%)
Sloppy language and wording	Yes (35%)	No (65%)
Courteous closing statement	No (28.75%)	Yes (71.25%)
Self-introduction	No (25%)	Yes (75%)
Use of formal language	No (25%)	Yes (75%)
Username	No name and surname (72.5%)	Name and surname (26.25%)
Institutional username	No (98.75%)	Yes (1.25%)

The Problems Encountered by Students In Emails Received from Academic and Administrative Staff

Student responses showed that students focus more on communication with academics than administrative staff. The issues most students complain about were not getting answers or getting short answers that were not explanatory enough. Based on answer expressions, it can be said that the people who initiate email communication are students. Percentages are the distribution of the answers within themselves.

1) Non-descriptive, short, late answers (20.65%).
2) Not getting answers (18.42%).
3) Sloppy answers (such as use of daily acronyms, (17.39%).
4) Answers reflecting negative feelings (such as arrogance, disdain, (16.30%).
5) Use of style far below the attentive style of the sent message (14.13%).
6) Spelling punctuation errors (8.69%).
7) Too serious answers (4.34%).

In the survey, it was asked whether the students would like to get training in network and communication ethics in academic emails. 64.04% of the students stated that they want to get training. Student comment example:

> It bothers me that I do not receive the same level of replies to my emails, which I wrote carefully, respectfully, and formally. For example, "OK." should not be an answer. I would like to receive email training, but this training should also be given to academics. [Participant 305]

Students' Email Writing Awareness

The students' answers in the survey are presented descriptively in Table 5.

More than fifty percent of the students preferred the 'occasionally, rarely, and never' options for 17., 18., 15., 12., 10., 30. items (feeling convey, punctuation marks to convey the feeling, a long and complex matter, paragraph structure, contact details, CC - BCC).

As seen in Table 6, items 36, 34, 23, 22, 24, 15, 11, 12, 10, and 30 were positively significantly different from 3

which is the cut point. Items 40, 38, 39, 37, 42, 41, 19, 21, 20, 16, 9, and 15 were negatively significantly different from 3, but they are reverse items. In most of the items, students have high awareness. Despite this high awareness, it cannot be said that they are equally successful in practice (see Figure 2).

Comparing authentic messages and survey results, the survey results showed a more positive image. The gap in 'username and institutional account' elements is over 50%. Students' awareness level in the survey was better than their ability to write formal emails. Knowing how to write is different from producing a concrete email text. Putting theoretical knowledge into practice can be more challenging than it seems.

Discussion

Due to the nature of the exploratory sequential mixed design, the first, second, and third purposes of the research formed the basis of the fifth purpose. For this reason, discussion for the first, third, fourth, and fifth purposes (The problems encountered by academic and administrative staff in emails received from students/Positive and negative qualities of the authentic emails of university students/Functional explanations of the academic email/Students' email writing awareness) are presented together in a comparative way.

Students' email writing awareness

This section is presented under titles according to the factors in the survey.

Style

Setting the right style in an email is based on the awareness that how you say something is as important as what you say. The rate of items that are students using daily acronyms, smiley faces/emojis, humor and implication, is less than 4.8% (item40-38-39-cumulative rate of 'always, most of the time') in the survey. Smiley faces and abbreviations commonly used in social media are not suitable for use in an

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of the survey (n=1064)

Factors and items	Mean	Std. Deviation	(5) Always	(4) Most of the time	(3) Occasionally	(2) Rarely	(1) Never
	x̄	Sd	%	%	%	%	%
Style							
40. I use abbreviations and acronyms in email (for instance, CU, OK, TIA, and IRL etc.).	1.05	.367	.1	1.1	.2	1.3	97.3
38. I use statements that contain humor and implication in email.	1.25	.650	1.1	.8	2.4	13.0	82.6
39. I use smiley faces/emojis in email.	1.40	.733	.4	1.3	8.6	17.3	72.4
37. Since I write the email message as if I were speaking, the sentences are inverted and elliptical.	1.44	.782	.2	2.7	8.9	17.1	71.1
42. I may without noticing write all letters in upper or lower case.	1.30	.820	2.3	1.7	4.4	7.3	84.3
41. I use sincere and casual statements in email.	1.84	.944	1.1	4.8	16.7	31.8	45.6
36. I begin the email message with a salutation that includes the 'name' or 'title' of the recipient.	3.83	1.120	33.1	35.5	16.9	10.4	4.0
34. I end the email message with a courteous closing statement.	3.93	1.144	38.9	33.7	12.6	10.6	4.1
Advertency							
19. I may correspond with an email account that does not contain my name and surname.	1.34	.787	1.1	3.3	3.0	14.0	78.6
21. I may without noticing leave the subject line blank.	1.91	.929	1.1	6.2	13.6	40.6	38.4
20. In an email I have written for information, I may forget to provide information such as student number and course name.	1.74	1.046	3.3	5.2	9.9	25.8	55.8
23. I prefer primarily an institutional email account in correspondence.	3.46	1.422	33.6	21.6	14.4	18.0	12.3
22. I introduce myself at the beginning of the email message.	4.45	.902	64.2	22.6	9.1	1.9	2.3
24. Before I send the email, I check spelling, punctuation, and articulacy.	4.43	1.019	67.9	18.8	6.3	3.0	4.0
Tone							
16. I write things that I cannot easily say in face-to-face conversation.	2.29	1.283	7.0	14.3	16.3	25.7	36.8
17. I convey my feelings in the e-mail.	2.97	1.127	9.1	22.7	35.6	20.9	11.7
18. I use punctuation marks such as exclamation, question mark, ellipsis to convey my feelings in the email message.	2.98	1.365	13.8	30.5	16.0	19.5	20.2
15. I may communicate via email on a long and complex matter.	3.18	1.209	17.6	23.1	27.3	24.0	8.0
Message							
11. My email messages are shorter than 30-35 sentences (about 300 words).	3.89	.756	21.1	50.0	26.5	2.3	.2
12. I write the email message by dividing it into short paragraphs.	3.17	1.200	12.5	31.7	28.1	15.3	12.4
10. I add my name, surname, and contact details at the end of the email message.	3.25	1.490	27.0	25.3	13.3	14.4	20.1
9. I start the email message by entering the subject directly.	2.21	1.244	42.1	18.1	19.2	17.5	3.1
Technical aspects							
29. I use the CC and BCC in accordance with its function.	2.38	1.448	15.2	8.2	15.2	22.3	39.1
30. I use the spell check function in email processors.	3.27	1.329	22.6	25.1	20.9	19.3	12.2

Table 6. One-sample T test of survey (n=1064) (Test value = 3)

	t	p	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
				Lower	Upper
item40	-173.119	.000	-1.945	-1.97	-1.92
item38	-87.879	.000	-1.751	-1.79	-1.71
item39	-71.166	.000	-1.600	-1.64	-1.56
item37	-65.118	.000	-1.561	-1.61	-1.51
item42	-67.530	.000	-1.697	-1.75	-1.65
item41	-40.024	.000	-1.159	-1.22	-1.10
item36	24.229	.000	.832	.76	.90
item34	26.431	.000	.927	.86	1.00
item19	-68.652	.000	-1.656	-1.70	-1.61
item21	-38.282	.000	-1.090	-1.15	-1.03
item20	-39.208	.000	-1.258	-1.32	-1.19
item23	10.605	.000	.462	.38	.55
item22	52.274	.000	1.445	1.39	1.50
item24	45.918	.000	1.434	1.37	1.50
item16	-18.085	.000	-.711	-.79	-.63
item17	-1.007	.314	-.035	-.10	.03
item18	-.404	.686	-.017	-.10	.07
item15	4.945	.000	.183	.11	.26
item11	38.584	.000	.895	.85	.94
item12	4.496	.000	.165	.09	.24
item10	5.389	.000	.246	.16	.34
item9	-20.630	.000	-.787	-.86	-.71
item29	-13.930	.000	-.618	-.71	-.53
item30	6.506	.000	.265	.19	.34

email between student and teacher (Filippone & Survinski, 2016). Due to its text-based nature, email restricts the transmission of humor and sarcasm (Bartl, 2017). The rate of students who tend to write emails with their speaking style is less than 3 (item37-cumulative rate of 'always, most of the time'). Like on social media the verbal nature of email messages could make emails informal (Gimenez, 2000). The fact remains that emails can return to bilateral dialogue in the form of a conversation chain. Individuals may reflect in writing the verbal elements of communication. This is quite normal. Student emails have a verbal-written hybrid nature as a form of discourse (Ewald, 2016). If the recipients are aware of this, they will not perceive it as disrespect. Even though this may seem like a trivial issue, it has the potential of causing serious miscommunication. The person who conveys the speech elements to the message should use the elements of the e-mail carefully to create a positive impression on the recipient. The sender should use email communication styles to compensate for the absence of faces and voices in the email (Firari, 2007). The percentage of students who tend to ignore the use of upper and lowercase is below 4 (item42-cumulative rate of 'always, most of the time'). If the sender does not pay attention to small and capital letters, it may create an impression of unseriousness in the recipient (Dumbravă & Koronka, 2006). The survey results showed that students (77.4%) largely avoided the use of casual statements (item41-cumulative rate of 'rarely, never'). The remaining 22.6% may be continuing their social media habits while writing e-mails. Social media and text messaging are common among students and they use everyday language there (Filippone & Survinski, 2016). A formal communication style should be used by students and lecturers in the exchange of academic information (Linek, & Ostermaier-Grabow, 2018). Most students (68.6%) chose the
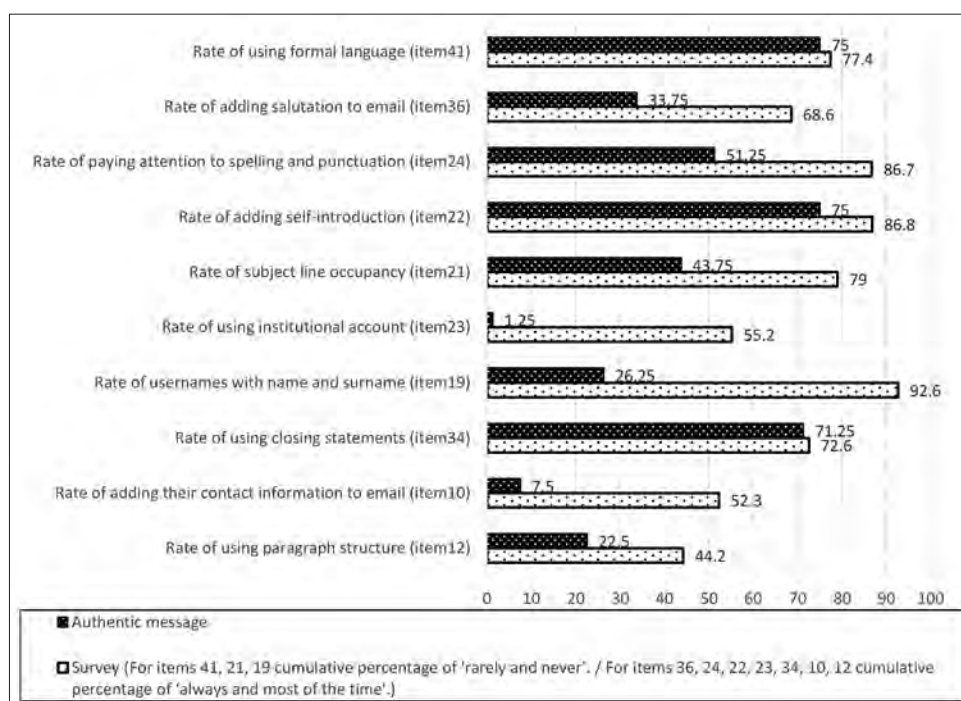
Figure 2. Comparison of authentic messages and survey results

'always, most of the time' options for salutation (item36). The authentic message rate with salutation was only 33.75%. Salutation and closing statements are expected for courtesy and seriousness (Hallajiana & Davidb, 2014). The authentic message rate with closing statements was 71.25%. This rate is 72.6% (item34-cumulative rate of 'always, most of the time') in the survey. Salutation, closing, and sign-off demonstrate the politeness and social distance of an email (Kim et al., 2016). The result of this research shows that students needed to be informed about the salutation.

Advertency

The staff members stated that email usernames must contain the name and surname of the sender, who, as a matter of fact, should use an institutional email address whenever available. The percentage of usernames with name and surname in the authentic messages is 72.5. On the other hand, 92.6 percent of (item19-cumulative rate of 'rarely, never') the students stated that they corresponded with accounts containing their names and surnames in the survey. The percentage of those who use their institutional account in the authentic messages is 1.25. In the survey, this rate is 55.2% (item23-cumulative rate of 'always, most of the time'). Considering that students generally expect a response from the staff and have a request, it can be said that this rate is insufficient. Like, Ward & Winter's (2019) study, the results of this study showed that students contact their professors via personal email addresses rather than institutional email addresses. The study of DeAngelo & Feng (2019) showed that emails sent from a professional email address increased the chances of an email being opened. The probability of recipients responding to internal emails is 7.76% while it is 2.26% to external emails and the average response time to internal emails 2.1 times faster than external emails (Yang et al., 2017). It is important to comprehend the importance of institutional correspondence as the university is a transitional phase to work life. In employment, resumes with unofficial email addresses have a much lower rate of being considered in comparison to those with official email addresses (Toorenburg et al., 2015). In this sense, students who will send emails for formal purposes should use an institutional email address if they want to be taken seriously, or at least an email address with their real name and surname. In short, if students want to get answers from academicians or get a quick answer, an institutional email account will make them advantageous. In authentic messages, the subject line occupancy rate is 43.75 percent. This rate is 79% (item21-cumulative rate of 'rarely, never') in the survey. In a different study, there was a misuse of the subject line, mostly including salutation irrelevant to the content of the message (Kim et al., 2016). The results of this study showed that the situation of the students was even worse, most of them left the subject line blank. According to the survey, 8.5 percent of (item20-cumulative rate of 'always, most of the time') the students did not provide enough basic information about them to enable the recipient to reach the information they request. In the authentic messages, 75 percent of students introduced themselves. This rate is 86.8% (item22-cumulative rate of 'always, most of the time') in the

survey. In a different study, students only wrote down their names and did not provide basic credentials such as grade level, which showed that students were quite inadequate to identify themselves (Kim et al., 2016). Similar results were obtained in this study. Emails from students who bothered finding out the name of their tutor or course/class are time-consuming and uncomfortable for academics (Pignata et al., 2015). In the authentic messages, 48.75 percent of the students did not pay attention to spelling and punctuation, while 86.7 percent of (item24-cumulative rate of 'always, most of the time') students stated that they paid attention to these rules in the survey. Spelling and punctuation errors, causing the sender's frivolous and careless to make an impression. In the formal mail, the sender avoids misspellings, before sending to eliminate the possibility of any misinterpretation (Dumbravă & Koronka, 2006). Formalness and courtesy are important to create a positive impression and should not be neglected.

Tone

The tone in email text is defined as the expression of feelings in content (Chhaya et al., 2018). Majority of students (67.4%) chose the 'always, most of the time, occasionally' options in the item of 'feeling convey' (item17). The content and tone of an email can affect communication and relationships (Berthiaume, 2015). According to the rude email scale developed by Mccarthy et al., (2019), "the emails that are condescending, the emails that have an accusatory tone, the emails with a harsh tone, the emails with a passive-aggressive, the email someone sent when they were angry and upset" are email incivility (p. 65). Majority of students (60.3%) chose the 'always, most of the time, occasionally' options in the item of 'punctuation mark to convey the feeling (item18). The question marks/exclamation marks in the email message create the perception that the person writing is in a supervisory relationship with the recipient (McAndrew & DeJonge, 2011). Instead of letting a punctuation or exclamation point make the speech in the email, the recipient should be respected by writing complete words and clear, short sentences (Filippone & Survinski, 2016). Lots of students (40.7%) chose the 'always, most of the time, occasionally' options in the item 'using email on the long and complex matter (item15). Academic and administrative workers of higher education articulate the importance of face-to-face interaction, instead of email, particularly in complex situations (Chase & Clegg, 2011). Some of the students (37.6%) chose the 'always, most of the time, occasionally' options in the item of 'being able to email what they cannot say in face-to-face communication (item16). During face-to-face communication, sentences that would not be said should not be written into an email (Weinstock, 2004). A personal conversation is a more convenient way of conveying sensitive information to people than by email (Berthiaume, 2015).

Message

In the authentic messages, 22.5 percent of the students used paragraph structure. This percent is 44.2

(item12-cumulative rate of 'always, most of the time') in the survey. The paragraph structure is important in terms of ease of readability and visual reading. Because a lot of time is spent reading the content of long emails, the average response time increases as the length of the email body increases (Yang et al., 2017). Paragraphed structure can be used to shorten the recipient's reading time. In the authentic messages, 7.5 percent of the students added their contact information at the end of the message. This rate is 52.3% (item10-cumulative rate of 'always, most of the time') in the survey. Failure to provide contact details is a major reason for the lack of communication. The rate of students who stated that they directly entered the subject in their message is 60% (item9-cumulative rate of 'always, most of the time'). Entering the subject without addressing the recipient or introducing themself is not suitable for the formal structure of the email. From the staff's views, it was concluded that the ideal length of an email should be 300 words or less. If an email is longer than 500 words, the response rate is less than 5% (Yang et al., 2017). 71.1 percent of (item11-cumulative rate of 'always, most of the time') the students stated that they kept their email message under 300 words. This result shows that the staff and students show a reasonable disposition.

Technical aspects

Email technology allows the sender to plan, review, and check and edit for grammar, clarity, and courtesy before sending the message (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Duthler, 2006). Some of the students (31.5%) chose the 'rarely and never' options in the item of 'spell check function in email processors' (item30). Considering that almost every young person has a smartphone, and such features are offered free of charge, it can be said that this rate is high. Majority of students (61.4%) chose the 'rarely and never' options in the item of 'use of BCC and CC in accordance with their functions' (item29). With this rate, it is inevitable for students to cause or be exposed to cyber incivility without realizing it. The emails with malicious CC are email incivility (Mccarthy et al., 2019). These rates show that there is a need to inform students about these issues.

The problems encountered by students in emails received from academic and administrative staff

The biggest problem for students was not getting an answer or not getting enough descriptive answers. One of the possible reasons for this situation may be that email is not a suitable communication channel for conveying feelings. As students have contacted their tutors many times to tell their excuses (Savic, 2018; Pinto, 2019), it would not be wrong to say that they have negative feelings. Already, the results of the research showed us that the students tried to convey their feelings to the message, and they received messages that included feelings from the staff. Email restricts the transfer of emotions due to its text-based structure (Bartl, 2017), and negative emotional messages are perceived as rude by the recipient (Mccarthy et al., 2019). A frivolous

tone may cause the reader to ignore, delete, or overreact to your message (Dumbravă & Koronka, 2006). However, the situation is very unpleasant for students who do not receive an answer to their e-mail. "Assuming instructors desire a positive relationship with their students, they should consciously seek to respond promptly to student e-mails when reasonably possible" (Tatum et al., 2017, p.39). Out-of-class communication between students and teachers goes beyond classroom time and may affect students' academic, social, and emotional development (Elhay & Hershkovitz, 2019). Based on the survey answers, it was understood that students mostly contacted academic staff. The results of a different study showed us the academic staff was overloaded with higher levels of email than administrative staff (Pignata et al., 2015). Intensive email sending of students during homework and exam times (Lewin-Jones & Mason, 2014), forced staff to track emails on weekends and outside of working hours. Email overload may be driving staff to answer late. According to the research of Tatum et al., (2017) "Quick response to student e-mails creates more positive perceptions of instructor social attraction, task attraction, competence, character, and caring than slow response speeds" (p.39). In this case, academics are faced with a dilemma of timelessness and negative perception. Despite this dilemma faced by academics, they need to spend time writing answers to have healthy out-of-class communication with students. Unfortunately, this may lead to a different source of trouble. The rush to reply to too many messages in a short time can be a source of sloppiness in the message. Messages with negative feelings may be related to the concept of divergence and convergence in politeness accommodation. Convergence is the process of people adapting to each other's speech while divergence is a way of adjusting their speech away from each other to emphasize differences (Bunz & Campbell, 2004). Staff answers may show politeness accommodation based on the impression of incoming messages. A study of politeness accommodation showed that replies to emails containing verbal or structured kindness clues are much more polite than those that did not (Bunz & Campbell, 2004). 'Use of style far below the attentive style of the sent message, spelling punctuation errors, emotional tone' issues, on the other hand, show that some of the staff need email communication training just like some of the students. The fact that students find email too serious may be a result of today's social media habits. Indeed, a study conducted in 2001 shows that for years students have found e-mail more serious than text chats (Honeycutt, 2001). Students prefer to contact their professors via social networks than email (Ward & Winter, 2019). Social media are areas where the academic hierarchy has softened a little. Therefore, students may feel more comfortable there. University is a belated stage to acquire formal email writing skills. If students do not learn this knowledge in university either they will have to acquire it by trial and error or on their own. Considering the importance of email correspondence in today's business, understanding these points will provide students with a robust foundation in work life.

CONCLUSION

Digital literacy focuses on the competence and understanding that young people need to use technology effectively and critically (Buckingham, 2010). Digital literacy is a top priority in European Higher Education Area (Shopova, 2014), and OECD countries. In international exams such as PISA, digital literacy skills are also measured as well as students' knowledge (Ören et al., 2017). Being able to communicate seamlessly via e-mail is also part of digital literacy. This study showed that the widespread use of email in higher education (Lewin-Jones & Mason, 2014) does not enable students and staff to become successful about email literacy. In fact, the main issue in this research was the impression of the post on the recipient by their writing. For example, looking at the data of this research, it is seen that any university student can use exclamation marks to convey his/her feelings to the message. However, they do not know that this implies superiority over the recipient. Likewise, it is seen that academics send emails with negative feelings. Considering that students are usually the initiators of communication, this can be explained by the academic's accommodation to the incoming message. It is the reaction by getting angry at the message that may cause a flaming. However, trying to convey a negative feeling to an email text is already email incivility. Academicians should especially avoid emotional reactions due to their academic hierarchy. Email is a fast and effective way of communication, but it has one major disadvantage that possible misinterpretation (Berthiaume, 2015). Electronic discourse formed by stylistic features of email messages is very effective on the recipient's reactions (McAndrew & DeJonge, 2011). As the results of a study conducted with medical students (Kim et al., 2016), results of this research show that many students are insufficient for most of the rules to be followed in an academic email. A study on email communication between 1,200 university students and their professors conducted in 3 different countries showed that students were not aware of the role of email messages in making an impression in the eyes of the professor (Danielewicz-Betz, 2013). Khani & Darabi (2014) while expressing similar results in the Iranian context, this research showed that the same situation applies in Turkey. If students learn email etiquette, they also learn that they can avoid leaving a negative impression on the recipient (Kim et al., 2016). Emails messages with politeness motivate academics to work with students by making students appear more competent and successful (Bolkan & Holmgren, 2012). There are many studies showing the necessity of training on email etiquette of students (De Gagne et al., 2020; Özçakmak & Hakkoymaz, 2017; Kim, et al., 2016; Lewin-Jones & Mason, 2014; Pignata et al., 2015). The results of this study revealed that more than half of the students wanted to get training in communication ethics in academic emails. However, it was seen that academicians also needed training for healthy communication. Besides that, the results of this study concluded that, as in Linek, & Ostermaier-Grabow's (2018) research,

it may be beneficial to give some formal advice not only to students but also to their staff by their organizations on how to behave in digital written communication.

This study has some limitations. Linguistic features of Turkish may limit the generalizability of the study to other languages or cultures. The study showed that there is a significant difference between email writing awareness and writing skills in academic settings. However, our data do not provide any information about this difference. The reason for this may be that students want to show themselves differently than they do in a positive way. Or it may be due to a lack of formal email writing experience. However, these are only assumptions for this research and future research is needed for concrete information. And a two-way analysis may be made for the issues that students are uncomfortable with the messages they receive from academics. For this purpose, authentic email messages of academicians can be examined in future research.

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