

OPENINGS AND CLOSINGS IN EMAIL REQUESTS AS WRITTEN BY TUNISIANS

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigates the stylistic choices of a group of Tunisian postgraduate students to open and close emails sent to their professor and examines how they address to him. To carry out this study a corpus of 182 emails requests was collected. The findings reflect a great variation regarding the openings, closings and the modes of address employed by Tunisian postgraduate students. In general, the participants did appear to pay attention to greetings and closings in their emails. The great variation in openings and closings and address forms found reveals that there are no common standards for the writing style of the respondents. Results also reveal a wide stylistic range in the forms of address employed. The great variation of address forms seems to suggest that Tunisian postgraduate students are to some extent unsure about the appropriate term of address to use to address their professor. It is also found that the participants employ both formal and informal openings and closings. The study related these discourse practices to their interpersonal meanings broadly divided into expressions of familiarity, involvement, and closeness - rapport-building actions (positive politeness) and expressions of distance, independence and deference-respect building actions (negative politeness) (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Scollon and Scollon, 1995; Spencer-Oatey, 2000).

KEYWORDS: *Emails, Opening, Closing Address Forms, Politeness*