

“HEY WHAT’S UP DUDE!”

Greetings in Email Messages in L2 English and L2 Swedish

Master’s thesis

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract Sähköpostin käyttö on nykyään hyvin yleistä, niin arjessa kuin työelämässäkin. Viestejä kirjoittaessa olisi kuitenkin syytä pitää mielessä tervehdysten käyttämisen merkitys sähköpostiviestinnässä, varsinkin vierailta kielillä kirjoitettaessa. Tervehdysten käyttöä, joka on myös tärkeä osa pragmaattista ja sosiolingvististä kompetenssia, ei ole kuitenkaan tutkittu Suomessa vielä kovin paljon. Siksi tämän tutkielman tavoitteena oli selvittää, miten suomea äidinkielenään puhuvat englantia ja ruotsia toisina kielinään opiskelevat lapset ja nuoret käyttävät tervehdyksiä sähköpostiviesteissä kirjoittaessaan joko ystävälle tai opettajalle. Tutkielmassa käytetty aineisto koostuu Jyväskylän yliopiston Topling-hankkeessa vuosina 2010–2013 kerätystä aineistosta. Se koostuu alakoulun englannin (luokat 4–6) ja yläkoulun ruotsin (luokat 8–9) oppijoiden kirjoittamista sähköpostiviesteistä ystävälle ja opettajalle. Kummankin kieliryhmän oppijat kirjoittivat yhteensä kolme viestiä, kolmena eri kertana, jolloin oli mahdollista seurata, miten oppijoiden taidot tervehdysten käyttämisessä sähköpostiviestejä kirjoittaessa kehittyivät. Tulokset osoittivat, että suurin osa oppijoista käytti tervehdyksiä kohdekielen sähköpostinkirjoitus-konventioiden mukaisesti: ruotsin oppijat suoriutuivat tästä tosin hieman paremmin kuin englannin oppijat. Varsinkin alkutervehdysten käyttäminen vaikutti olevan molemmille oppijaryhmille helpompaa kuin lopputervehdysten käyttäminen. Kohdekielille tyypillisesti monet oppijat huomioivat viestien vastaanottajan joko puhuttelemalla tätä, useimmiten etunimellä, tai faattisilla kommentteilla lopputervehdysten yhteydessä, vaikka useimmiten viestit aloitettiin pelkällä alkutervehdyksellä. Myös tunneikoneita käytettiin jonkin verran, varsinkin ystävälle kirjoitetuissa viesteissä. Englannin oppijoiden viesteissä tilastollisesti merkittävimmät vaihtelut tervehdysten käytössä olivat havaittavissa toisen ja kolmannen kirjoitus-kierroksen välissä, kun taas ruotsin oppijoiden viesteissä vaihtelu oli tilastollisesti merkittävää kaikkien kierrosten välillä. Suurin osa oppijoista edistyi jonkin verran tervehdystenkäyttötaidoissaan, mutta monista viesteistä oli silti havaittavissa, että oppijoiden tervehdysten käyttötaidoissa olisi vieläkin parantamisen varaa: monissa viesteissä joko alku- tai lopputervehdys oli jätetty kokonaan pois, ja monien oppijoiden taidot tervehdysten käytössä eivät kehittyneet tai jopa laskivat. Tutkimuksen tulosten perusteella oppijoiden tietoisuutta tervehdysten merkityksestä sähköpostiviesteissä ja tervehdysten käyttämisen tärkeydestä englannissa ja ruotsissa tulisi lisätä. Lisää perehdytystä tarvittaisiin myös siihen, miten tervehdyksiä tulisi käyttää oikeaoppisesti kohdekielisten sähköpostinkirjoitus-konventioiden mukaisesti. Siksi olisi tärkeää, että nämä seikat otettaisiin paremmin huomioon kielenopetuksessa, jotta oppijoiden pragmaattinen ja sosiolingvistinen kompetenssi riittäisivät sopivaan kielenkäyttöön erilaisissa kommunikaatiomuodoissa englanniksi ja ruotsiksi.	
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1 INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades email has been widely used all over the world for different purposes both for formal and informal communication, and today it has a significant role in people's everyday lives, both in leisure time and at work.

As children born in the 1990s and 2000s, who are also called "diginatives", have grown up surrounded by IT technology and the media, they are usually accustomed to using email and other modes of communication, particularly the social media. This does not, however, mean that they would be "automatically" aware of how to use these modes of communication in an appropriate way, particularly when using them in a foreign language (abbreviated as L2). It is therefore important that they are provided with guidelines for communication as early as in basic education, for instance, so that they would be able to use modes of communication appropriately from an early age onwards. Thus, the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2004 (abbreviated as NCC 2004) provides guidelines for teaching communication skills. Particularly when writing email messages in L2s, for example, it is crucial that learners are aware of the pragmatic and sociolinguistic rules of the L2 they are learning, in addition to email writing conventions of the L2, which are also a part of sociolinguistic competence. Nevertheless, when writing email messages in a L2, it should be taken in to account that writing conventions in email messages in one's first language (L1) are not necessarily similar to those in the L2 (Carlsson 2002: 206). Consequently, writing emails in a L2 according to the email writing conventions of one's L1 may result in pragmatically inappropriate language use, which, in the worst case, may cause misunderstandings and confusion, particularly if the recipient of an email message is a native speaker of the language (Carlsson 2002: 208). Moreover, because of pragmatically inappropriate language use the sender of a message may be regarded as impolite or uncooperative (Leech 1983: 231). Hence, in L2 teaching, communication skills are emphasised since primary school, where the focus is

more on spoken communication, whereas in secondary school, the focus turns gradually on written communication (NCC 2004: 140, 122).

When writing email messages, greetings¹, i.e. openings and closings, have a significant function in a message (Economidou-Kogetsidis 2011: 16; Crystal 2001: 99): they indicate politeness, how the recipient is taken into account, and what the relationship between the sender and the recipient is, for instance. By the choice of a greeting and the type of greeting one sets the tone for the following email conversation (Waldvogel 2007: 122). Greetings also establish and maintain communication, thus it is relevant whether a greeting is present or absent (Carlsson 2002: 116). Moreover, in email communication the choice of wording and message structure have a more significant role than in face-to-face communication, because of the lack of non-verbal language that conveys social meaning and “serves as a social lubricant” (Chen 2006: 35). For this reason, it is important that L2 learners learn to use greetings pragmatically appropriately already from an early stage of their language learning.

There is, however, only a little information on how L2 learners of English and Swedish use greetings in email messages, so further research on it is needed for several reasons. First, no research on the use of greetings by Finnish primary school learners who learn English as a L2 has been conducted yet. In Swedish, a

¹ In the present study the term *opening* is used for the greetings that are used to open an email message and *closings* for the greetings that are used to close an email message, whereas the term *greeting* is used to cover both openings and closings. The reason for the use of these terms is that it makes it clearer to talk about openings when opening a message and about closings when closing one while the term *greeting* refers to both of them. In addition, all of these terms are used in several previous studies, which means that these terms are generally used. This is a crucial detail to be pointed out since there is great variation in the terms used to refer to greetings in English. To illustrate, Tella (1992: 213-214) uses the term *greetings* to cover both openings and closings, and specifies them by using the terms *initial greetings* for openings and both *end/final greetings* and *closings* for closings. Chen (2006: 40), however, uses the terms *opening* and *opening greetings* for openings and *closings* for closings, whereas Waldvogel (2007: 126) uses the terms *greeting* for openings and *closing* for closings. Finally, Crystal (2001: 99) uses the term *greetings* to cover both openings and closings, whereas he points out that the terms *salutation*, *opening* and *greeting* are used for openings, and the terms *farewell*, *signature* and *closing* are used for closings.

few studies on the use of greetings by Finnish learners of L2 Swedish have been conducted (see e.g. Södergård 2005; Green-Vänttinen and Rosenberg-Wolff 2008), but the youngest subjects have been university students. In other words, there is no information on how learners of L2 English and young learners of L2 Swedish use greetings in email messages. Second, no longitudinal studies on the use of greetings have been conducted, so there is no information how the greeting-user competence of email writers progresses over time. Third, no comparison between the two languages in this area has been made before, so it is interesting to see, whether there are differences or similarities in the use of greetings within the two language groups.

Since email is today a widely used mode of communication worldwide, and communication skills are an important part of L2 competence, the present study concentrates on how Finnish learners of L2 English and L2 Swedish use greetings when writing email messages to a friend and to a teacher. The data used in the present study is a part from the data collected for the project Topling¹ (at Jyväskylä University), and it consists of email messages written by primary school learners (grades 4 to 6) of L2 English and secondary school learners (grades 8 to 9) of L2 Swedish. Thus, the aim of the present study is to find out what kind of greetings the learners use, whether their use of greetings is comparable to the email writing conventions of the L2s and how the learners take the recipient of the message into account. The focus is also on whether different kinds of greeting-user profiles are possible to be identified, and how emoticons are used with greetings. When concentrating on the use of greetings, it is also possible to find out what kind of sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence learners have, based on their use of greetings.

The present study consists of seven chapters. After the introduction, the theoretical framework is provided in Chapter 2, discussing written interaction in L2 English and L2 Swedish in the NCC 2004, pragmatic and sociolinguistic competences, language used in email and previous research in this field of

¹ Further information on Topling in <https://www.jyu.fi/hum/laitokset/kielet/tutkimus/hankkeet/topling>.

study. Next, research aims are presented in Chapter 3, moving on to Chapter 4, in which the data and the method of analysis used in the present study are described. Chapter 5 reports on describing the findings which are discussed further in Chapter 6. Finally, Chapter 7 concludes the study by summarizing its main findings, evaluating the present study and giving suggestions for further research.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Written interaction in L2 English and L2 Swedish in the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2004

The NCC 2004, published by the Finnish National Board of Education, provides guidelines for the teaching of writing and written interaction in L2 English and L2 Swedish, defining what level of language proficiency and what kind of competence in written interaction pupils are supposed to achieve in their L2s during basic education. English and Swedish have a particular role in the NCC 2004 since most of the pupils in basic education study English and Swedish (Tilastokeskus 2011; Kangasvieri et al. 2011). On the one hand, English is usually the first foreign language that Finnish pupils begin to study, usually on the 3rd grade. On the other hand, Swedish is the second official language of Finland, and a compulsory language in schools; most pupils begin their Swedish studies on the 7th grade but depending on the school they attend and the area in which they live some pupils begin their Swedish studies as early as in primary school.

2.1.1 Written interaction in L2 English in primary school

When the learning of a L2 begins between the 3rd and 6th school years (in primary school) the aim of the teaching of a L2 is to learn to communicate in the target language in concrete situations that are close to pupils' everyday life, at first emphasizing the oral language competence, and gradually increasing the emphasis on written language competence (NCC 2004: 139). Therefore, the following goals are set in primary school for learning written interaction and communication strategies in foreign languages, including English (NCC 2004: 140):

- recognizing the main ideas in speech or written text
- finding specific information in a spoken communication and text
- planning one's own messages
- relying on non-verbal communication and an interlocutor's help in oral interactive situations
- relying on written aids in producing and interpreting text.

Furthermore, the NCC (2004: 140, 124, 278-295) provides guidelines for learner assessment in languages according to the Language Proficiency Scale which is a Finnish application of the scales presented in the Common European Framework of Reference for language learning, teaching and assessment (abbreviated as CEFR) launched by the Council of Europe. The Language Proficiency Scale covers the skills in listening comprehension, speaking, reading comprehension and writing. According to the final-assessment criteria for a good grade (8) in L2 English, the level of language proficiency in writing should be A1.3 according to the language proficiency scale (NCC 2004: 140). A1.3 stands for “functional elementary language proficiency”, including the following requirements according to the Language Proficiency Scale (NCC 2004: 281):

- [the pupil]
- Can manage to write in the most familiar, easily predictable situations related to everyday needs and experiences.
- Can write simple messages (simple postcards, personal details, simple dictation).
- Can use the most common words and expressions related to personal life and concrete needs. Can write a few sentences consisting of single clauses.
- Prone to a variety of errors even in elementary free writing.

At this stage of L2 English competence, however, the main emphasis in language proficiency is on listening and reading comprehension, as the required language proficiency level for them is A2.1, meaning “initial stage of basic language proficiency” (see below 2.1.2), whereas for speaking the level is A1.3 (NCC 2004: 140).

2.1.2 Written interaction in L2 Swedish in secondary school

When the learning of an L2 between the 7th and 9th school years (in secondary school), language competence is required in a wider area: “more demanding social situations, ...the area of pastime, services and public life” (NCC 2004: 121). Written language competence is further emphasized, and pupils become more aware of the cultural conventions of the particular language (NCC 2004: 121). In secondary school, at the latest, it is an essential part of learning strategies to be able to use the ICT (information and communication technology) in communication and data acquisition (NCC 2004: 121). Therefore,

the following goals are set in secondary school for learning written interaction and communication strategies in L2 Swedish (NCC 2004: 122):

- linguistic reasoning or reasoning based on situational hints, for clarifying the content of a message
- utilizing feedback obtained in an interactive situation
- compensating for deficient language skills by approximate expression
- monitoring one's own language usage
- use of certain idioms peculiar to oral interaction, such as those associated with giving feedback, taking and maintaining a turn to speak, and beginning and ending a spoken communication.

According to the final-assessment criteria for a good grade (8) in L2 Swedish, the level of language proficiency in writing should be A2.1 according to the language proficiency scale (NCC 2004: 124). A2.1 stands for "initial stage of basic language proficiency", including the following requirements according to the Language Proficiency Scale (NCC 2004: 283):

[the pupil]

- Can manage in the most routine everyday situations in writing.
- Can write brief, simple messages (personal letters, notes), which are related to everyday needs, and simple, enumerated descriptions of very familiar topics (real or imaginary people, events, personal or family plans).
- Can use concrete vocabulary related to basic needs, basic tenses and co-ordinate sentences joined by simple connectors (and, but).
- Can write the most simple words and structures with reasonable accuracy, but makes frequent basic errors (tenses, inflection) and uses many awkward expressions in free writing.

At this stage of L2 Swedish competence it is evident that the emphasis is on writing and listening comprehension since the language proficiency requirements for them are higher (A2.1 for both) than for speaking and text comprehension, the required language proficiency level for them being A1.3, "functional elementary language proficiency"(see above Section 2.1.1) (NCC 2004: 124).

To sum up, according to the NCC 2004 it is more important for secondary school pupils to be aware of how to begin and end their messages than for primary school pupils. One reason for this is the fact that in primary school the emphasis of language learning is on spoken language competence, whereas the emphasis on written language competence increases gradually, being more emphasized in secondary school. Furthermore, some of the goals for written

interaction and communication can be applied to written communication by email: As early as in primary school pupils are supposed to be able to plan their own messages, which indeed is the first step of email writing. In secondary school, though, pupils are supposed to know how to begin and end a face to face conversation, which is an important competence in written communication as well.

It is evident that in basic education, particularly in grades 3 to 6, the main goal is to reach a good competence level in oral skills. This does not, however, exclude the importance of practicing written communication skills, as already in grades 7 to 9 they are emphasized more. Since today ICT skills are essential for everyone, it is crucial that people learn to use ICT appropriately already in early age, knowing how to write email messages in a particular language, preferably complying with the email writing conventions of the given language, which is one part of both ICT and email writing competence. It is also emphasized that communication practiced in schools should be participative, interactional and communal, and individuals should practise media skills both as a recipient and a producer of messages (NCC 2004: 37). Thus, the aim of the present study is to find out whether primary school and secondary school pupils know how to write email messages according to the email writing conventions of English and Swedish, and how they use greetings in email communication. The knowledge of email writing conventions of a L2, however, is an important part of pragmatic and sociolinguistic competences, both of which are discussed in greater detail next, in Section 2.2.

2.2 Pragmatic and sociolinguistic competences

Communication between people involves linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic components and competences. *Linguistic competence* means lexical, phonological and syntactic knowledge and skills related to language use. In other words, linguistic competence is people's ability to speak, understand, and to communicate according to syntactic and semantic rules of grammar (Kempson 2012: 529). *Sociolinguistic competence* means language use in accordance with the sociocultural conventions, enabling appropriate language use in different social contexts, and as appropriate language use requires knowledge of the sociolinguistic rules for speaking in a community, people need therefore to understand the influence of social factors on speech behavior, but also the influence of speech behavior on social factors (Holmes 2013: 440). Further, the knowledge of when to be silent and how to speak in situations of different degrees of formality is also included in sociolinguistic competence (Holmes 2013: 442). Because sociolinguistic competence is closely related to all social conventions of a culture, such as politeness norms and conventions related to different language use situations, it influences all communication (Holmes 2013: 443; CEFR 2001: 13). *Pragmatic competence* means "the ability to understand what the speaker means by his or her utterance" (Recanati 2012: 135), defining which linguistic resources can be used in particular linguistic functions and speech acts (CEFR 2001: 13). Moreover, communication could be regarded as successful when "intentions of the speaker are recognized by the hearer" (Recanati 2012: 135). What kind of a pragmatic competence a language user attains depends on the surrounding community and culture: how the language is used and in what kind of interaction one participates in the particular community or culture (CEFR 2001: 13; Holmes 2013: 445-446).

In order to use a language in a proper and understandable way people need all the above-mentioned competences: linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences. In the present study, the main focus is on sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences of language learners. For this reason, the concepts of

sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences will next be discussed in greater detail.

2.2.1 Pragmatic competence

Pragmatics means “the discipline concerned with the study of those aspects of the meaning of communicative acts which are not determined by the meanings of the signal independently of the context, but follow from the interpretation of the signal in context” (Spencer-Oatey 2008: 335). In other words, every word has two meanings: the meaning that the individual word has when it stands alone, in a dictionary, for instance, and the meaning that it acquires in a particular context, such as in an email message. Words cannot therefore be used in whichever context, but the language user has to choose those words that are the most suitable for the particular context. Regarding politeness, for example, “from a sociolinguistic perspective, pragmatics provides useful insights into the different ways that politeness is encoded in discourse in different socio-cultural contexts. So, pragmatic principles account for how it is possible to infer that someone is politely asking for a lift when they say *Damn I just missed my bus*” (Holmes 2013: 445). In other words, someone uttering *Damn I just missed my bus* can be interpreted as polite only when the context in which it is uttered is taken into account, otherwise it could be interpreted incorrectly. For this reason, in order to interpret the utterance correctly, pragmatic competence is needed.

In addition, the following terms are closely related to sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences, giving a more profound view on them: social pragmatics, pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. *Social pragmatics* “focuses on the description and analysis of the systematic relations between types of communicative acts, particular context features (e.g. the relationship between the participants, the topic, the purpose of communication, etc.) and their impact on the success of communication in general, and the rapport between the participants, in particular” (Spencer-Oatey 2008: 335). Thus, social pragmatic knowledge is required from language users in every communicative situation in order for them to become understood. In contrast, *pragmalinguistics* interfaces with grammar, for instance, and looks into how language users use the

particular resources of a language to convey given pragmatic meanings (Spencer-Oatey 2008: 334). It also covers “the resources for conveying communicative acts and relational or interpersonal meanings”, these resources being different kinds of pragmatic strategies, such as directness and indirectness, routines, and a great number of linguistic forms that are used to intensify or soften communication (Leech 1983: 11). Finally, *Sociopragmatics* “interfaces with social psychology and sociology and it explores how people’s performance and interpretation of linguistic behaviour is influenced by socioculturally-based principles” (Spencer-Oatey 2008: 336). Moreover, sociopragmatics includes the social perceptions that affect the ways in which people communicate and perform a variety of communicative actions in interaction with each other (Leech 1983: 10). Thus, it could be said that pragmatics has both a linguistic and a sociocultural focus (Spencer-Oatey 2008: 336).

Since pragmatic knowledge is important for language learning, similarly as language transfer is one part of L2 learning, also *pragmatic transfer*, meaning “the transfer of pragmatic knowledge in situations of intercultural communication”, can be recognized in learner language (Žegarac and Pennington 2006: 143). In other words, a language learner may use expressions typical of his/her L1 when using the L2: on the one hand a learner’s L1 may contribute positively to correct language use, but on the other hand it is a reason for incorrect language use. Pragmatic transfer, therefore, similarly to linguistic transfer, can be divided into *positive* pragmatic transfer, meaning that the transfer helps the language learner, for instance, to produce pragmatically correct utterances which are similar to native language speakers’ language use, and *negative* pragmatic transfer, meaning that the transfer may lead to pragmatically incorrect utterances and possibly, but not always, to misunderstandings (Žegarac and Pennington 2006: 144-145). It is, however, not always easy to know whether an act of communication is influenced by pragmatic transfer. Although it might be regarded as negative transfer, it does not mean that this kind of transfer leads to misunderstandings or miscommunications; it is merely not typical language use in these L2s (Žegarac

and Pennington 2006: 144). Thus, in order to use a target language correctly, and in most cases avoiding negative pragmatic transfer, pragmatic knowledge in addition to sociolinguistic knowledge discussed below, are relevant in language use and learning.

2.2.2 Sociolinguistic competence

As sociolinguistic competence has preliminary been defined above (see section 2.2), this competence will next be discussed from two points of view: firstly, discussing sociolinguistics and politeness, and secondly, discussing sociolinguistic competence in relation to power distance.

2.2.2.1 Sociolinguistic competence and politeness

The knowledge of how to use language for different functions, in other words, “getting things done in different contexts”, is an important part of sociolinguistic competence (Holmes 2013: 443). Further, one of the most important functions in sociolinguistic competence is one’s ability to use language politely when communicating with different people (Holmes 2013: 443), which is a fact that should be taken into account also when speaking in an L2 or in L2 learning for the following reasons: Firstly, in order to communicate successfully in a L2 it is not enough that one knows the grammar rules or uses a perfect native accent. Secondly, being polite in a L2 requires not only knowledge of the politeness norms of a given culture but also how social relations are indicated in a particular language. Moreover, Holmes (2013: 443) has also observed that in Western classrooms the greatest emphasis in L2 learning seems to be on linguistic competence: learning the vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation of the target language. The concept and importance of sociolinguistic competence should, however, be taken into account and be more emphasized so that language learners would learn to use the language in a range of contexts. Besides, since several rules for polite interaction, for instance, can be explained by the social distance norms of the community, acquiring sociolinguistic competence requires the understanding of

the social values in the community's language use (Holmes 2013: 443). For this reason, acquiring sociolinguistic competence is regarded as difficult and slow.

As politeness is such an important part of sociolinguistic competence, it should be taken into account that there are two kinds of politeness: positive and negative politeness. *Positive politeness* is first and foremost solidarity oriented, emphasizing values and attitudes that are shared between the interlocutors (Holmes 2013: 285). To illustrate, when a boss suggests that his/her subordinate can call him/her by the first name, it can be regarded as a positive politeness move. Further, also a more informal style in communication, such as the use of slang, endearments or curse words may express positive politeness, particularly if this kind of informal language has not been used between the interlocutors before (Holmes 2013: 285). Furthermore, also greetings, particularly openings, can be regarded as a pragmatically important part of an email message, for instance, because their use is usually regarded as polite, functioning as a positive politeness strategy (Economidou-Kogetsidis 2011: 16). In contrast, *negative politeness* is a means to be polite by paying respect and avoiding intruding or embarrassment (Holmes 2013: 285). For instance, directives including interrogatives and hints can be regarded as negative politeness. The following question illustrates a negative politeness strategy: *could you please stay a bit later tonight, do you think, and finish this job?* (Holmes 2013: 285). As the aim of this question is to ask somebody indirectly to work a little longer instead of asking somebody directly to do so, the one who asks wants evidently to respect the worker and avoid social conflict. Thus, this aim can be achieved by negative politeness (Holmes 2013: 285). Further examples of negative politeness include the use of both a title and last name to one's superiors, or to older people one is not acquainted with, as "negative politeness involves expressing oneself appropriately in terms of social distance and respecting status differences" (Holmes 2013: 285). Related to this, the dimension of formality is involved in politeness, which means that one has to know when it is appropriate to call somebody by the first name, or when it is better to call him/her by the last name or title, for instance. Also social relations can be indicated by addressing the interlocutors in a certain way: by using titles, surnames or first names, for

example (Holmes 2013: 285). In addition, particularly when writing letters or email messages social relations are mostly indicated by the use and choice of greetings (Waldvogel 2007: 132, 138).

Of course, what is regarded as polite, friendly or impolite behavior depends on the particular social and cultural context, as different people may make different interpretations of identical interactions (Holmes 2013: 371). It should, therefore, be kept in mind that the sociocultural norms of different cultures, or even different social backgrounds, may differ from each other significantly, even in the same country (Holmes 2013: 443–445). Firstly, in some cultures it is common to express one's concern and interest in other people explicitly, whereas in other cultures this kind of behavior would be regarded as intrusive, for instance. Secondly, also knowing how to refuse a request in a particular culture, and when to apologise and for, are aspects of socio-pragmatic competence. In other words, politeness norms are not universal. As a result, people may unintentionally offend others because of the different norms and expectations about how friendliness or respect is expressed. The ways in which dimensions such as solidarity and status are realized tend to differ from one country to another, although these dimensions may be regarded as universal (Holmes 2013: 291). Thus, problems, misunderstandings between people from different speech communities are likely, mostly because they do not share the same rules of interaction. Problems and misunderstandings caused by the differences between sociolinguistic norms can be regarded as *pragmatic failure* which may result in an impact that the speaker is regarded as impolite or uncooperative (Leech 1983: 231). It is important, therefore, to be aware of social norms and politeness norms of a particular culture. In addition, not only gender, age, kinship relationships and social status, but also social distance (for further information, see section 2.2.2.2), solidarity and the degree of formality of the interaction determine how to speak politely in different cultures (Holmes 2013: 290). To sum up, as Mey (2001: 221) emphasizes, people's linguistic choices should always be viewed and explained through the context in which the interaction takes place: "the focus is on the environment in which both speaker and hearer find their affordances, such that the entire situation is

brought to bear on what can be said in the situation, as well as on what is actually being said". Indeed, this can be regarded as one of the main claims of sociopragmatics (Mey 2001: 221).

2.2.2.2 Sociolinguistic competence and power distance

Power distance means the way in which equality and inequality between people are regarded in a particular culture (Hofstede 1992: 46). In other words, some people are regarded as having a higher status if they are in a leading position in society, have a highly appreciated occupation, or are wealthier than others. In countries where power distance is low the aforementioned factors do not significantly affect the way in which people communicate with each other, for example, whereas in high power distance countries these factors play a significant role in people's everyday lives, and also define their status in the whole of society (Hofstede 1992: 48-51). Power distance is also used as a criterion when defining the types of cultures: Finland, for instance, is a case in point when discussing cultures where power distance between people is low, which can be seen, for example, in the manner in which young people are in most cases regarded equals to adults (Hofstede 1992: 46, 54). Other countries, where the power distance between people is low include Austria, Sweden, and Great Britain, whereas in Malesia, Guatemala, and Panama, for instance, power distance between people are the highest in the world (Hofstede 1992: 46).

Power distance is a part of everyday life; we grow into it from childhood, regarding our relations to our parents (Hofstede 1992: 54-55). Regarding language and power distance, Holmes (2013: 446) points out that

children absorb attitudes from their peers and families as they grow up. The attitudes people hold towards different languages or accents are components of their sociolinguistic competence... Being able to recognize the prestige variety [of a language] is part of a person's sociolinguistic competence, even though they may not choose to use that variety themselves.

As in Finland the power distance between children and their parents is low, the power distance is reflected similarly at school (Hofstede 1992: 56-57). Firstly, children and teachers are seen as equals, meaning that both respect each other equally: both the teacher and pupils respect each other. Secondly, teaching is

learner-centered and pupils are encouraged to take the initiative in classroom communication.

By contrast, in high power distance countries children are not seen as equals to teachers (Hofstede 1992: 56). Firstly, teachers are supposed to be highly respected (particularly older teachers), also outside the school environment, teaching is teacher-centered, in communication the teacher is always the one to take the initiative, and discipline in schools is strict. Secondly, teachers are not publicly objected, but actually regarded as “gurus” who provide all the information available to learners, whereas in low power distance countries learners are expected to be active, argue and find answers to their questions, and further, find their own “intellectual paths”. In some high power distance countries also physical discipline in schools is common (Hofstede 1992: 57). One reason for this is that physical discipline symbolizes and emphasizes the inequality between a teacher and a pupil, and it is also regarded as relevant to the development of a child’s character. In low power distance countries physical punishment, particularly in schools, leads to reporting of a criminal offence (Hofstede 1992: 57).

Linguistic choices are one of the most powerful ways to indicate the power distance between people (Holmes 2013: 446). Although “the ways in which power is encoded in discourse are often subtle”, the manner in which people address and speak to each other, reflects the power distance between people (Holmes 2013: 446). As sociolinguistics attempts to find general patterns between the relationship of language and society, it also tries to identify and explain how “social factors account for linguistic variation in different speech communities” (Holmes 2013: 449). Since, according to Holmes (2013: 450), “all speech communities have linguistic means of distinguishing different social relationships; here solidarity and status are relevant dimensions of analysis”, *the three sociolinguistic universals* are introduced, illustrating how language can be used to indicate the power distance between people. Furthermore, the three sociolinguistic universals help to explain the relationship between language and

society by identifying some universal tendencies or trends that are linked to social trends and processes (Holmes 2013: 451–452).

The three sociolinguistic universals are:

“Sociolinguistic universal 1: If a particular linguistic form such as ... first name in English, is used reciprocally to express solidarity between people who know each other well, the same form will be used non-reciprocally by more powerful people to their subordinates to express superior status or power.

Sociolinguistic universal 2: If a particular pronunciation or grammatical feature, such as *[h]-dropping* or *be* omission, is used to express a shift in style, from formal to informal for instance, the same feature will be used to signal differences in social group membership.

Sociolinguistic universal 3: Linguistic forms expressing negative politeness will be used more frequently as social distance and status/power differences between people increase” (Holmes 2013: 450).

Regarding the above-mentioned universals, the first sociolinguistic universal is linked to “the solidarity and status/power dimensions”, the second sociolinguistic universal is linked to “the status/power dimension to the formality dimension”, and the third sociolinguistic universal “involves considerations of the functions of language in relation to the solidarity and status/power dimensions” (Holmes 2013: 450). To sum up, social relations, and therefore also power distance, can be indicated through linguistic choices. For this reason, people, and particularly language learners, have to be aware of the possible consequences of the pragmatic choices they make (Kecskes 2012: 600), not forgetting the importance of possessing pragmatic and sociolinguistic competence in the language they are learning.

2.2.3 Pragmatic and sociolinguistic competences and language learning

After discussing pragmatic and sociolinguistic competences it should be asked, how, then, they relate to language learning. As it has been already been stated, in order to use a language in a proper and comprehensible way people need all the above-mentioned competences: linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences. Particularly language learners are required to be aware of these competences when learning a new language (CEFR 2001: 131). To illustrate the connection between pragmatic and sociolinguistic competences and language learning, it should be taken into account that when writing an email message,

for example, learners “need to make sociopragmatic choices concerning forms of address, degree of formality, degree of directness, complementary closes, presence and amount of mitigation,” in addition to choosing the appropriate writing style and strategy (Economidou-Kogetsidis 2011: 2). Consequently, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences are relevant when a language learner is due to write in a L2, since the knowledge of writing conventions, for instance, is regarded as pragmatic knowledge (CEFR 2001: 123, 125–126). Written discourse should be regarded as “a form of expression that is culturally defined and is thus describable through culturally agreed conventions”, so a L1 learner knows what is socially and culturally acceptable language use regarding writing (Söter 1988: 179). The L2 learner might be aware of the writing conventions of different genres and how to construct a text, both rhetorically and stylistically, but in terms of L2 learning, the only weakness of this knowledge is that it covers only the L1, having no or only few similarities to the L2 (Söter 1988: 178). In other words, sociocultural norms of a language define whether a text is regarded as stylistically acceptable (Söter 1988: 179).

Since one’s L1 may have a great effect on the way one writes emails in a target language, for example, it should be taken into account that writing conventions in email messages in one’s L1 are not necessarily similar to the target language’s email writing conventions (Carlsson 2002: 206). Accordingly, there are several reasons for why language learners make pragmatic mistakes (Carlsson 2002: 208). Firstly, they do not master formal language use, they are unaware of the L2’s communicative conventions, or they are unwilling to adopt pragmatic rules of the L2 that differ significantly from the pragmatic rules of their L1. Secondly, it may be difficult to make the learners see the importance of studying writing conventions of a L2 because of the sociocultural norms arising from the learners’ L1. Since the L2 learners may think that the sociocultural norms applying to their L1, covering also writing conventions, are the best and right ones, conventions that differ from their L1 are faced with doubt, contempt, or nonchalance (Carlsson 2002: 208). When the above-mentioned points are taken into account, it is evident that pragmatic and sociolinguistic competences are an essential part of language competence and language learning.

In conclusion, as pragmatic competence is such an important part of language competence, how, then, could learners' pragmatic competence be improved and taught in schools? This is not an easy question to be answered, and therefore the writers of the CEFR (2001: 154) wish users of the Framework to consider the following questions:

Should the development of the learner's *pragmatic competences* (...) be:

a) assumed to be transferable from education and general experience in the mother tongue (L1)?

or facilitated:

b) by progressively increasing the complexity of discourse structure and the functional

range of the texts presented to the learner?

c) by requiring the learner to produce texts of increasing complexity by translating

texts of increasing complexity from L1 to L2?

d) by setting tasks that require a wider functional range and adherence to verbal exchange patterns?

e) by awareness-raising (analysis, explanation, terminology, etc.) in addition to practical activities?

f) by explicit teaching and exercising of functions, verbal exchange patterns and discourse structure? (CEFR 2001: 154)

Further, as also sociolinguistic competence is such an important part of language competence, how, then, could learners' sociolinguistic competence be improved and taught in schools? This is as challenging a question as the one of teaching pragmatic competence. For this reason, the writers of the CEFR (2001: 154) ask users of the Framework to consider the following questions:

Should the development of the learner's *sociolinguistic competence* (...) be assumed to be transferable from the learner's experience of social life or facilitated:

a) by exposure to authentic language used appropriately in its social setting?

b) by selecting or constructing texts that exemplify sociolinguistic contrasts between

the society of origin and the target society?

c) by drawing attention to sociolinguistic contrasts as they are encountered, explaining

and discussing them?

d) by waiting for errors to be made, then marking, analysing and explaining them and

giving the correct usage?

e) as part of the explicit teaching of a sociocultural component in the study of a modern language? (CEFR 2001: 154)

By considering the questions presented above, it is possible to get ideas of how to teach these competences.

As it has been already stated, pragmatic and sociolinguistic competences are important in L2 learning. For this reason, the present study aims to find out what kind of sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences learners have, based on their use of greetings. Indeed, the knowledge of how to use greetings appropriately when writing an email message in a L2, for example, is also a part of pragmatic competence. Thus, the email writing conventions of English and Swedish and what kind of language is used when writing email messages are discussed in the next section.

2.3 Language used in email messages

Since email is a relatively new medium and it has features of both written and spoken language, there are no strict rules concerning the writing style used in email but certain conventions regarding writing styles in email messages are preferred (Biesenbach-Lucas 2006, as referred to in Economidou-Kogetsidis 2011: 1; Chen 2006: 35; Englund 2009). Particularly in western countries the writing conventions concerning email are basically comparable to each other, with some cultural differences (Tella 1992; Crystal 2001; Englund 2009). Consequently, conventions concerning email writing in Finland differ from the English and Swedish email writing conventions to some extent, particularly regarding greetings used in emails (Englund 2009; Crystal 2001). Language users, and particularly language learners, should therefore be aware of the differences in these conventions, in order to write emails that are appropriate in the target language. For this reason, in the next sections characteristics of email and the language used in writing them in addition to the English, Swedish and Finnish email writing conventions are discussed, with a focus on the use of greetings.

2.3.1 Email

Email is presently used widely all over the world for different purposes both for formal and informal communication (Crystal 2001; Carlsson 2002; Englung 2009; Vauras 2008; Toropainen and Lahtinen 2013). As email has become such a popular mode of communication, there has to be something that explains its widespread use. Though email may contain some elements of other modes of communication, such as memos, letters or even telephone conversations, it is like none of these, but unique (Crystal 2001: 125-126): it is more effective than the letter as it can be responded quickly, and it defeats the telephone as well in eliminating the so called “telephone tag” (i.e. people leaving messages to each other asking them to call back). Naturally, also email has limitations as a mode of communication, but most of them remain still undiscovered; email could therefore be seen as quite an unpredictable mode of communication, since “there is no way of controlling an e-mail, once it has been sent; nor is there any way of knowing who will eventually see it or edit it” (Crystal 2001: 126-127). Thus, the concept of email may sometimes feel slightly ambiguous, but it has most similarities with letter writing, since an email contains elements of it: when writing email messages, every element of an email, such as openings and closings, for example, are usually placed on a separate line, being spaced away from the body of the message (Crystal 2001: 102). Further, the range of openings and closings used in email writing are also characteristics of traditional letter writing (Crystal 2001: 103). Regarding a letter’s functions, email is today used for most purposes that have earlier been carried out by a letter alone, such as “the sending of CVs or job applications, certain types of form-filling” (Crystal 2001: 126).

The language used in email communication though has traditionally been regarded as freer than in letter writing (Vauras 2008: 211), and there are several points that reflect the informal language use that is typical of email writing (Crystal 2001: 103): the use of first names with an opening, such as *Dear David*, *Hi Mary*, sometimes even merely initial letters are being used, “even between people who do not know each other well”, and the absence of *Yours sincerely* in

closings, for example. Also the fact that when writing emails some people prefer using more personalised openings, such as *Hello* + first name, or *Hi Everyone!*, reflects the informal character of email (Tella 1992: 213). Further, since email messages can be easily deleted and using email feels temporary, the sense of carefreeness is being promoted (Crystal 2001: 127). For these reasons, there is a tendency to regard email as an informal mode of communication. Moreover, as it is spontaneous, quick, private, and used also in leisure time, email offers possibilities of greater levels of informality than traditional letter writing (Crystal 2001: 127–128). Nevertheless, it should be born in mind that email is also used in formal contexts, and formal emails, such as emails sent to authorities, are handled with the same dignity and value as traditional letters: they are archived and filed, and regarded as formal documents (Englund 2009).

Electronic communication, including email, has several characteristics of informal spoken language, which may explain why email is considered an informal mode of communication, informal communication style being typical of it (Severin-Eriksson 1997: 119–120, as quoted in Södergård 2005: 272). In practice, this means that no great attention is paid to strict rules concerning spelling, for instance (Vauras 2008: 211; Language Development via the Internet 2005). The informality of email can therefore be seen also as a chance to improve communication (Englund 2009). Firstly, from a writer's point of view writing emails does not set high requirements concerning grammar and spelling, for instance, which may encourage people to write although they would otherwise feel uncertain of writing. Secondly, this also contributes to the writer's sense of freedom to choose his/her words. As it is more acceptable to use language freely in emails, it again increases the freedom of language use and makes email a more popular and powerful medium, since "allowing a range of linguistic options increases the communicative power of a medium" (Crystal 2001: 107). Further, even though there are guidelines for email writing, giving directions how to write emails and which style to use in them, the reactions of recipients influence people's use of email more than style guides (Crystal 2001: 107). In other words, the use of email has also been influenced by

“the linguistic mores” of its users (Crystal 2001: 107), which explains why the language used in emails is nowadays regarded as informal. Moreover, the fact that the use of email has become a routine part of everyday social life has also influenced informal language use in emails: it is being used extensively in everyday communication, particularly during leisure time (Crystal 2001: 128). Although the sense of freedom is regarded as a positive aspect of email writing, sometimes the carefreeness may go too far (Englund 2009): messages may become very ungrammatical and the use of unestablished abbreviations, for example, complicates reading and understanding; what is regarded as quick and effective on some occasions does not always apply. Thus, in order to be understood, it is recommendable to write emails in the same manner as one would write a traditional letter, paying attention to spelling and grammar rules (Englund 2009). Due to the extensive and growing use of email, however, it may be that in future it may lose its informal and carefree usage, or at least more formal style will become more common as email is being used for wider and different purposes (Crystal 2001: 128):

The result will be a medium which will portray a wide range of stylistic expressiveness, from formal to informal, just as other mediums have come to do, and where the pressure on users will be to display stylistic consistency, in the same way that this is required in other forms of writing.

2.3.1.1 The significance of greetings in email

A standard email has usually a fixed structure: a fixed sequence of discourse elements, including an opening, a body (the message itself) and finally a closing (Crystal 2001: 94). Greetings, i.e. openings and closings, are sometimes considered optional elements of an email message, whereas a body of a message is naturally an obligatory element (Crystal 2001: 99). Though sometimes greetings are regarded as optional elements of an email message, it is preferable to use them, as greetings have a significant function in emails (Economidou-Kogetsidis 2011: 16; Crystal 2001: 99): greetings indicate politeness, how the recipient is taken into account, and what the relationship between the sender and the recipient is. Furthermore, by the choice of a greeting and the type of a greeting (informal or formal) one sets the tone for the

following email conversation (Waldvogel 2007: 122). Since both openings and closings establish and maintain communication it is relevant whether the greeting is present or absent (Carlsson 2002: 116). Moreover, the writer constructs his/her social and professional identity and relationship with the addressee through an opening, whereas a closing can consolidate the relationship and contribute, either positively or negatively, to future encounters (Waldvogel 2007: 123). Thus, “whatever approach is used to start or end the communication, important social information is conveyed by the choice” (Waldvogel 2007: 128). A successfully chosen and used greeting can therefore create a positive atmosphere between the interlocutors, whereas a greeting that is too intimate and informal, for instance, for the particular context may cause confusion, even irritation (Eisenstein et al. 1996, as cited in Carlsson 2002: 116).

Openings

Although also openings have a significant function in email, they are not used in several types of email messages (Crystal 2001: 99–100). Firstly, in messages from people who do not know the recipient personally, for instance, openings are not usually used. Secondly, public announcements and junk-mail are also cases in point of messages without an opening. Thirdly, in messages sent within institutions to all members of staff, sending out information and instructions, personalized openings are often seen as unnecessary. Although messages sent between people who know each other usually include some sort of an opening, there are some cases where they are left out (Crystal 2001: 100): when a message is responded promptly, for example, or when the message is seen as the second part of a two-part interaction, in which case an introductory opening is regarded as inappropriate. Nevertheless, the message is more likely to contain an opening, as an apology, if the delay in responding has been long (Crystal 2001: 100). In addition, it is acceptable to open a formal letter without an opening (Carlsson 2002: 117).

Closings

Closings have a relevant function in an email: they show, among others, affection, gratitude, expectation, and communicative intent (Crystal 2001: 103).

In addition, one of the most important functions of this particular element is, however, its function as *a boundary marker* and an *identity function* (Crystal 2001: 105). Usually, a closing consists of two elements (Tella 1992: 214; Crystal 2001: 102): of a pre-closing formula, such as *Best wishes*, *Lots of love*, *See you soon*, or *Thank you*, and an identification of the sender, i.e. the sender's name, which is also called *a signature*. It is common to use both of these elements when closing an email message, but sometimes messages are closed with the sender's name only (Crystal 2001: 102). A closing has two important functions (Crystal 2001: 105): First, as a boundary marker it indicates that "further scrolling down is unnecessary", indicating that the message does not include further personalized text. Second, the identity function obviously identifies the sender to the recipient, particularly if the identity cannot otherwise be recognized, when the email address is opaque, for instance. Therefore, including a closing should be self-evident because in the best case it makes the reading and understanding the message easier.

2.3.1.2 The use of greetings in English email messages

Openings

When writing emails according to email writing conventions used in English, openings such as *Dear*, *Hi*, and *Hello*, are suitable for informal language use, particularly if they are used with the recipient's first name only; when *Hi* and *Hello* are used alone, they are suitable for formal language use as well (Crystal 2001: 101; Tella 1992: 213). When an opening is used with the full name, or with just a surname, it makes the message more formal, which is also the case when using titles with openings (Crystal 2001: 103).

Closings

Widely used closings in informal email writing are *Thanks*, *Best*, and *Best wishes/regards*, + the sender's first name, whereas *Yours truly*, particularly with a signature including the sender's first and surname is used in formal email writing (Crystal 2001: 106, 103). Since closings are used for conveying affection or expectation, among others, also closings such as *Lots of love*, or *See you soon* are typical of informal email writing (Crystal 2001: 103). Similarly to openings,

the use of the full name or just a surname with a closing phrase makes the message more formal (Crystal 2001: 103). It has to be taken into account, however, that in some cultures greetings tend to be more formal than in the USA, for example, and the congenial first-name use typical of Americans' everyday interaction, including email communication, does not necessarily apply in every country (Crystal 2001: 106).

Additionally, attention should be paid to the tendency of using a comma after the opening phrase in English email writing, (Englund 2009), such as in *Hello David,* [emphasis added] (Crystal 2001: 103). Thus, the use of an exclamation mark after the opening phrase is not typical of British English email writing (Tella 1992: 214), as it is in Swedish (see Englund 2009 below). In some cases though even native speakers of English do use an exclamation mark after an opening, as in *Hi folks!*, for example (Tella 1992: 214). Accordingly, this kind of use of an exclamation mark could be explained by the fact that writers consider the appropriate language used in email writing being close to spoken language (Tella 1992: 214).

2.3.1.3 The use of greetings in Swedish email messages

Openings

When writing emails according to the email writing conventions used in Swedish¹, the use of openings is also considered polite, and therefore their use is recommended (Englund 2009). The most widely used opening in Swedish email writing is *Hej* which is also regarded as a neutral opening phrase, and it can be used on most occasions and contexts (Andersson 1996: 31–42 as cited in Södergård 2005: 276). The more familiar the relationship between the people is, the more appropriate it is to use the recipient's first name with an opening, which also makes the message more personal and informal (Englund 2009;

¹ The Swedish email writing conventions to which the present study refers apply in Swedish spoken in Finland, since most of the sources regarding the Swedish email writing conventions (i.e. Englund 2009, Södergård 2005, Green-Vänttinen and Rosenberg-Wolff 2008) represent Swedish spoken in Finland. The email writing conventions used in Swedish spoken in Sweden may slightly differ from those used in Swedish spoken in Finland.

Södergård 2005: 276, 280). As in English, also in Swedish the use of the full name or just a surname with openings and closings is typical of more formal email writing than the use of a mere first name (Södergård 2005: 278). Also in Swedish an opening can be omitted on some occasions: when the correspondence is very impersonal and the message's function is to provide information in customer service, for instance (Englund 2009). Nevertheless, it is not incorrect to use an opening in these kinds of messages either (Englund 2009). Moreover, according to Swedish writing conventions, openings are usually finished with an exclamation mark, but the English manner of using a comma, following a capital letter (e.g. *Hello, How are you ...*), instead of an exclamation mark is taking over also Swedish email writing (Englund 2009). Nevertheless, the use of the Swedish convention is recommended when writing emails in Swedish (Englund 2009).

Closings

The choice of the closing phrase in Swedish email writing is also important, and again it depends on the relationship between the correspondents (Englund 2009; Södergård 2005: 278): *Med vänlig hälsning* + the sender's (full) name is regarded as a formal phrase, whereas *Hälsningar* + the sender's name is more informal. In contrast, Carlsson (2002: 117) regards *Med vänlig hälsning* as a neutral closing that can also be used in formal contexts, so there seems to be no consensus on the use of this particular closing. The use of the abbreviation *MVH* (*Med vänlig hälsning*), however, is not recommendable, because it is usually regarded as a pleasantry or too intimate and colloquial (Englund 2009; Carlsson 2002: 121). Accordingly, it should be used today only in short everyday messages where it usually signals that the message is closed, thus it is about to lose its function as a closing (Carlsson 2002: 123).

2.3.1.4 The use of greetings in Finnish email messages

Since Finnish is the L1 of the subjects of the present study, it is essential to also discuss the email writing conventions of Finnish. In Finnish, greetings are used similarly in email as in traditional letters (Kotus 2011): First, a message is

opened with an opening, such as *Hei* or *Terve*, an exclamation mark included or excluded. If the opening is finished with or without an exclamation mark, the message body begins with a capital letter, whereas it begins with a small case letter if the opening ends with a comma. Second, depending on the context, the first name of the recipient can be included in the opening, such as *Hei Mikko!* but in formal messages it is not necessary. Further, formal letters are usually opened with phrases like *Hyvä N.N.* or *Arvoisa N.N.* (Kotus 2011). When closing an email message, closings such as *Ystävällisin terveisin*, or *Terveisin*, with the sender's name (the first name only or in more formal contexts the whole name) are commonly used (Chydenius and Perttilä, n.d.).

2.3.2 Emoticons

Emoticons are the most characteristic feature of netspeak (Vauras 2008: 210): Firstly, Cambridge Dictionaries Online defines *netspeak* as “the words, abbreviations, etc. that people use when communicating on the internet”. Secondly, it has been used in the Internet since the mid-1990s, being most popular among young people. Basically, emoticons are designed to express emotions in written texts in the digital media (covering the use of different digital appliances that are used for communication, such as mobile phones, social media in the Internet, etc.), where features of spoken language, such as facial expressions and the pitch of speech, for instance, are not otherwise available (Vauras 2008: 212). To illustrate, emoticons are small pictures or icons:

:) (a smiley face) :D (a laughing face) :((a sad face) <3 (a heart) (Vauras 2008: 211, 215).

Actually, the word *emoticon* is a compound of words emotion and icon, hence emoticon (Vauras 2008: 220).

The origins of emoticons

Emoticons were first invented by Scott Fahlman, who is also regarded as “the father of emoticons”, in the USA in 1982 (Vauras 2008: 212). Originally emoticons were used to express humour and irony in email messages, but

gradually they were used to express other emotions, too (Vauras 2008: 214). Finally, emoticons “landed” in Finland in the beginning of 1985 but not until the mid-1990s did the use of them become more common, as the use of the Internet increased and text messages were introduced (Vauras 2008: 213). To illustrate, already in the early 1990s attention was paid to the use of emoticons in email messages (which were then also called “mail icons”) as a way to compensate for non-verbal language (Tella 1992: 220). Accordingly, it was evident that people who were acquainted with computers and computer-mediated communication were more likely to use emoticons: “the more experienced the user is, the more he seems to use mail icons [i.e. emoticons] and other means of conveying non-verbal communication [such as expressing a loud voice through writing words with capital letters only]” (Tella 1992: 220). Before emoticons, and even today, non-verbal language has been expressed by punctuation (Vauras 2008: 214–215): an exclamation mark can express the tone or stress of voice, a question mark can express a tone in speech, a comma or a full stop express pauses, three full stops in a row express uncertainty or incompleteness. Today, however, emoticons are used to some extent by everybody acquainted with the media of today, but particularly teenagers and young adults use them when communicating in the Internet (Vauras 2008: 213).

In the West, particularly in Europe and in the USA, the orthography has based on symbolic phonetic alphabets the meanings of which only the users of them can identify (Vauras 2008: 211): First, a Chinese person, for instance, would not be able to guess, what *A*, *E* or *S* represent and how to use them, because he/she might not be acquainted with the Latin alphabet. Second, everybody has to use the variants of the alphabet available in order to be sure that everybody understands what one wants to say. It has been suggested therefore that these limitations to traditional orthography have generated emoticons (Vauras 2008: 211–212). Firstly, because they are like small pictures, they can be interpreted by almost anyone, no matter whether one has seen the particular emoticon before or not. Secondly, anyone can create new emoticons by using the possibilities

provided by a keyboard and one's imagination. Thirdly, the meaning of an emoticon is not necessarily always the same but it depends on the context.

The function of emoticons

When considering face to face interaction, the role of actual words is secondary to the relevance of body language and the pitch of speech (Vauras 2008: 213). Thus, in netspeak emoticons carry out the tasks of non-verbal language: "a virtual smile [i.e. a smiley face :)] in a text message, for instance, expresses politeness and desire to co-operate similarly to a friendly smile in face to face interaction¹" (Vauras 2008: 214). Because in the digital medium the possibilities for expressing oneself are limited, writers are supposed to be creative in order to express the pitch of speech, gestures, facial expressions and laughter, for instance, which affect the comprehension in spoken language (Bellander 2011). Therefore, "to express oneself directly and emotionally strong is a way to get one's message across quickly, without misunderstandings" (Bellander 2011). For this reason, emoticons have a significant function in written communication.

In addition, emoticons function as punctuation marks and are a significant part of syntax, having a significant semantic meaning (Vauras 2008: 216): Firstly, in a chat conversation, an utterance such as "oh how irritating you are :)", for example, the emoticon makes it rather playful, whereas without an emoticon the utterance would seem rude. Secondly, emoticons are usually placed at the end of an utterance, even after a full stop, but they can also be placed at the beginning or in the middle of an utterance: "^__^ nice to see you!", "hi :) you too".

How emoticons should be interpreted depends on the pragmatic context (Vauras 2008: 217): to illustrate, depending on the situation, a smiley face :) can be used to express affection, humour, sarcasm, a good mood or even as a greeting. Thus, emoticons are used in several pragmatic functions, the most

¹ The direct citations of Vauras 2008 in this section have been translated by the author.

important ones being the expression of humour, but particularly affection (Vauras 2008: 217–218). Firstly, they make the interlocutors' stance to the subject clear. Secondly, the use of emoticons as "softeners" is so common, that "young people say that they are worried if a text message they receive does not include an emoticon - what might be wrong, when the other one does not send a positive signal?". Thus, it is no wonder if young people use them extensively.

2.4 Previous research

2.4.1 English

A few studies on the use of greetings in email messages written by L1 and L2 English speakers have been conducted, three of them reviewed in a chronological order below.

A study on content and language used in email messages sent by L2 and L1 English speakers by Tella (1992)

Tella (1992: 1-292) studied the content and language of email communication between Finnish upper secondary school students, who studied English as a L2, and L1 speakers of English from various countries, among others Britain, the USA and Austria. The aim of the study was to discover what contents, themes and topics were present in email communication between the participants, and what kind of language they used in their email messages. As the focus was also on language used in emails, one of the aims was to find out how the use of greetings differed from greetings used in traditional letters.

Openings

Tella observed that in his study there were a large number of personalised, quite formal ways to open an email message in addition to ordinary openings such as *Dear Tim*, or *Dear Mr Lawrence*. For instance, in his study, some writers used openings such as *Hi*, *Hello*, which were the most common openings used, in some cases even with the sender's first name. Openings such as *Hi folks!* or *Hi Everyone*, were used when the messages were intended to several addressees. Another different way of opening an email message was the use of the mere first name, without any kind of an opening.

Closings

In addition to ordinary closings typical of letter writing, such as *Best wishes*, and *Sincerely yours*, a great variety of different closings were used. Though closings usually consist of two or three different parts (see also Crystal 2001: 102), Tella (1992: 214) was surprised to find that in his data closings were frequently reduced to only one part, such as *Fondly*, *David Lu* and *May your lifes be full of*

happiness! O(...), M (...) & J(...). Another common way to close an email message was to use the sender's first name only, without any other closing, which in some cases can be regarded even as impolite, particularly if the relationship of the correspondents was not close, or they did not know each other. Sometimes, the closing was a part of the last sentence, such as *...now the computer is flashing and beeping so will send this best wishes Paul* (emphasis added), which can be considered stylistically acceptable, because it "allows one to be brief without being rude" (Tella 1992: 216). Tella (1992: 216-217) argues that the knowledge of a great variety of closings is important in foreign language teaching, because email communication tends "to break out of conventional bonds", which is the most significant difference between ordinary written communication and email communication. The considerable variety of closings may be explained by "the more informal character of the emails", which may even significantly promote letter writing (Tella 1992: 213).

Further observations made by Tella (1992)

Though the variety of closings used in his study was great, Tella (1992: 217) emphasizes the importance of *phatic language* use: "phatic language does not in fact convey any factual information but helps to open up the communication channel and to keep it open", in addition to containing "various contact establishing and supporting uses of language" (Tella 1992: 217), such as "anything from greetings to short talks about the weather to non-verbal language like nodding, smiling or simple eye-to-eye contact" (Ingesman 1990, as quoted by Tella 1992: 217). In computer-mediated communication greetings have a significant role in phatic language use, but also non-verbal language can be compensated by the use of emoticons, for instance resulting in more social communication (see section 2.3.3). Unfortunately, Tella found that the writers did not use enough phatic utterances but most of them concentrated on the exchange of information, and therefore some writers failed to maintain friendly, social, or personal ties between the correspondents. Thus, if one attempts one's email message to be sufficiently polite, phatic use of language is needed.

A study on the use of greetings in workplace email communication by Waldvogel (2007)

Waldvogel (2007: 122–143) has studied the form and use of greetings in email messages sent by New Zealand employees and employers (native speakers of English) from two workplaces: an educational organization and a manufacturing plant. The aim of the study was to explore “the relationship between the organizational or workplace culture and the role, status, and style of email” (Waldvogel 2007: 126), in addition to finding out how the workers of both workplaces used email and what kind of attitudes they had towards it. While analysing the openings and closings used by the employees and employers, the aim was to identify how the sociolinguistic variables such as status, social distance and gender influenced on the form and use of them. The analysis was conducted by counting the different types of openings and closings “cross-tabulated to the variables” (Waldvogel 2007: 126). The most significant finding was the fact that indirect and socially distant styles of communication were dominant in the educational organization, where openings and closings were not widely used, whereas in the manufacturing plant, however, openings and closings were used more extensively than in the educational organization, which reflected the open and positive relationships between staff and management. Additionally, the frequent and extensive use of openings and closings also constructed good relationships between workers, and contributed to a direct and friendly workplace culture. Therefore, Waldvogel suggests that the relative status of people, social distance, and gender, for instance, are not as important factors for the form and use of openings and closings as the workplace culture.

Openings

The most commonly used opening in both workplaces in the study by Waldvogel was *Hi* + the recipient’s first name, but also *Dear* + the recipient’s first name was frequently used. Waldvogel states that the use of informal openings contributes to a greater sense of solidarity between the participants. However, the differences between the uses of openings in the two workplaces were prominent. Firstly, in the educational organization 59 % of the messages

began without any form of an opening, whereas 21 % began merely with the recipient's name. Secondly, in the manufacturing plant, most messages, 58 %, began with an opening which was mostly accompanied by the recipient's name (53 %). One reason for the absence of openings in the educational organization may be the fact that most of the messages sent among the staff there were brief administrative exchanges, and the people were in frequent email correspondence. Waldvogel (2007: 137) claims, however, that due to the absence of openings it is clear that the educational organization represents "a business first, people second culture". Consequently, also the fact that the employees in the educational organization dealt with a great number of messages daily and the lack of time may affect the absence of openings.

Closings

The most commonly used closings in the study by Waldvogel included *Cheers*, + the sender's first name, first name only, and *Thanks*, + the sender's first name. Again, the differences between the uses of greetings in the two workplaces were again remarkable: In the educational organization 34 % of messages ended without a closing, and another 38 % ended with the writer's first name only. Although openings were infrequently used in promptly sent messages between people who knew each other in the educational organization, some kinds of closings were included in this type of correspondence. In the manufacturing plant, however, only 10 % of the messages were without a closing, whereas 75 % of them included one (such as *Cheers*, or *Regards*,) and the sender's first name. Also phatic comments (see section 2.3; see also Tella 1992), like *Have a nice day* or *Thanks*, were frequently used and had a significant role in the emails sent by the workers of the manufacturing plant.

Status

Openings or acknowledgements by name¹ were more widely used in emails designated to people of higher status in Waldvogel's study. According to her, this observation suggests that greetings and the use of a person's name are

¹ Waldvogel does not make a difference between a first name and surname at this point.

regarded as a form of politeness, and also as a way of constructing respect between the participants. As greetings were not widely used in the educational organization, the same practice was visible also in the messages sent to people of higher status: only 17 % of the messages began with an opening and the recipient's name, which again supports the point made by Waldvogel (2007: 137) that the educational organization represents "a business first, people second culture". Moreover, this figure is in sharp contrast to the percentage of the manufacturing plant: on the one hand, nearly 75 % of the messages sent to the people of higher status contained an opening and the recipient's name. On the other hand, it should be borne in mind that the overall percentage of this kind of openings in the manufacturing plant was high: 50 % of the messages sent to people of lower status and 62 % sent to equals contained an opening and a recipient's name. Moreover, all of the messages sent to people of lower status included either the recipient's first name or an opening, or both, which suggests that in this organization, also people of lower status, were treated equally: they are acknowledged and respected. Further, two explanations for the low number of openings used in the educational organisation and the great number of openings used in the manufacturing plant are suggested: it may be that in both workplaces "either people are not particularly status conscious or are status conscious but inclined to acknowledge it" (Waldvogel 2007: 138). It is also possible that the egalitarian character of New Zealand society is reflected in the extensive use of first names and informal forms of greetings "denoting solidarity exchanged among communication partners, regardless of status" (Waldvogel 2007: 138).

Also closings can be used to signal the different status of people. In addition, it has been suggested that closings used in email messages are a sign of deference or respect. In Waldvogel's study, messages sent to people with higher status in the educational organization were more likely to be signed off in some way (69 %) than people with lower status (57 %), but regarding the type of closing used, the status of the recipient had little effect. In the manufacturing plant, however, the differences between the closings in messages to higher or lower status people were not significant.

Conclusion of Waldvogel's study

In conclusion, the two work places in Waldvogel's (2007) study represent two different kinds of workplace cultures: in the educational organization people did not consider the use of greetings as important as in the manufacturing plant, where greetings were used extensively. For this reason, it was evident that in the manufacturing plant the good working atmosphere and good relationships between people were regarded as more important than in the educational organization which clearly represented "a business first, people second culture". Nevertheless, the status of people, whether they were in a higher or lower position in the work place, was signalled through the choice of greetings more frequently in the manufacturing plant than in the educational organization. To sum up, the use of openings and closings may reflect the relationships between people and the workplace culture and atmosphere. Greetings have, therefore, a significant role in establishing and maintaining social relationships in workplace emailing:

The importance of greetings [i.e. openings] and closings as a linguistic resource lies in the affective role they play. The choice of greeting [i.e. opening] or closing and its presence or absence in an email message conveys not only an interpersonal message enabling the writer to negotiate his or her workplace relationships but also contributes to the creation of a friendly or less friendly workplace culture and, in turn, reflects this culture. (Waldvogel 2007: 140)

A study on greetings and forms of address used by university students by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011)

Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011: 1-23) studied the greetings and forms of address that Greek Cypriot university students used in their email messages to the faculty. The students had studied English as a L2. Also the degree of directness in the students' email messages and how they softened or aggravated requests sent by email was examined. Furthermore, the emails were commented by lecturers to whom the students' emails had been sent. Thus, the aim of the study was to find out "the degree of directness and amount of lexical/phrasal and external modification employed in the English e-requests of Greek Cypriot university students, what forms of address Greek Cypriot students (NNSs [non-

native speakers] of English) employ in their e-mails to faculty” and “to what extent British native speaker lecturers perceive unmodified and direct e-mails from students as abrupt and impolite” (Economidou-Kogetsidis 2011: 2). The emails written by the students were both requests for information and requests for action. Each request head act within an email was identified, and they were analysed and coded considering the degree of directness, “internal modification (lexical/phrasal downgraders or upgraders), and external modification (mitigating supportive moves and aggravating moves added to the head act)” (Economidou-Kogetsidis 2011: 6). In addition, every email was analysed regarding the form of address used. The results of the study showed that NNS students preferred direct communication style in their email messages, did not use lexical/phrasal downgraders, omitted both openings and closings, and used a great variety of forms of address.

Forms of address in openings and closings

In the study by Economidou-Kogetsidis, a wide stylistic range of forms of address were used: from zero form of address to the formal *Dear*, + the recipient’s title and last name. The most frequently used openings were *Hi*, *Hello*, (both used mostly with an incorrect academic title and last name) and *Dear*, (mostly with an academic title and last name). Further, there was no one and only way to end one’s emails that the students would have preferred. Nevertheless, the majority of the emails did not include an opening or a closing (which Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011: 2) calls “the zero form of address”): only 16.5 % included an opening while 23 % included a closing. Further, in messages without a closing, not even a sender’s name as a closing was employed although some kind of a grounder (*I couldn’t come to class today because I was sick*, for example) or a pre-closing (*Thanks*, for example) were included. Economidou-Kogetsidis says that the zero form of address makes the messages more direct, and in some cases messages of this type are interpreted as status-incongruent. Even though the use of greetings is regarded as polite and the lack of a greeting can even be considered disrespectful, the students of the study seemed to ignore the positive politeness strategy enabled by the use of greetings and went straight to the point, stating their requests explicitly, and

keeping the message brief. Accordingly, Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011: 16) thinks that the preference of directness, the omission of greetings and lack of acknowledgment is “typical of email communication among young people who grow up in an instant messaging culture where speed and directness are particularly valued”. One reason for the large number of messages with zero form of address and also for the great variety in the greetings and forms of address might be that the students were unsure about how to address a faculty member appropriately when writing emails to them, and therefore they may have thought that it is “safer” to omit the greeting. In addition, academic syllabi, for instance, do not provide any explicit instruction in email writing, which also explains the students’ uncertainty.

Problems in email writing confronted by non-native speakers of English

Economidou-Kogetsidis discovered that non-native speakers of English may have several problems related to writing emails according to email writing conventions in English. Several points illustrate these problems: Firstly, pragmatic transfer could be recognized, as the students began their messages frequently using an academic title and the recipient’s first or last name incorrectly according to the English email writing conventions, such as *Miss Christine* or *Dr. Paul*. These kinds of constructions are grammatically acceptable in Greece, the students’ mother tongue, but not in English, and as the students of the study were non-native speakers of English, living outside the target language culture, it is understandable that they were unaware of the ungrammaticality of the construction they had used. Secondly, the students did not seem to know the difference between the openings *Hi* and *Hello*: the former is more informal than the latter and consequently, some students had combined the more informal opening with a formal form of address, such as *Hi Dr. Paul*,. Thirdly, a great number of them did not open their email messages with *Dear* + the recipient’s name, which reflects the fact that this form of address is not used in Greece. All in all, the majority of the students employed the zero form of address, and if they did use openings, they preferred more formal language: “42.5 per cent of the salutations [i.e. openings] used were phrased with the

lecturer's last name, whereas only 20 per cent employed the more informal first name" (Economidou-Kogetsidis 2011: 13).

Comments from the lecturers

The comments from the lecturers of the students provided a more profound view on the greetings used in email messages written by the students. To illustrate, the lack of pre-closing *Thank you* was regarded as impolite, since the lecturers thought that it "referred to the student's 'lack of consideration', 'lack of gratitude', 'selfishness' and 'rudeness'" (Economidou-Kogetsidis 2011: 15). In contrast, Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011: 16) argues that *Thank you in advance* as a pre-closing, however, may have a negative impact on email since it can be interpreted as an open presupposition that "the request will be granted", putting pressure on the recipient.

In summary, the students in the study by Economidou-Kogetsidis preferred the use of formal language, although they were not aware how to combine an opening and a title or whether to use a first name or a last name with a title. Due to the great number of email messages with the zero form of address and the great variety of forms of address it was evident that the students were uncertain how to greet and address the faculty. Finally, the findings suggest that EFL (English as a foreign language) students could benefit remarkably from email instruction. Moreover, as the teaching of email conventions of particular languages depends on individual EFL/ESL (English as a second language) teachers, "it also seems necessary that EFL/ESL books and curricula should also make room for explicit email instruction" (Economidou-Kogetsidis 2011: 18).

2.4.2 Swedish

In Swedish, a few studies have been conducted on the use of greetings in letters and email messages written by L2 Swedish speakers and learners, four of them will be reviewed in a chronological order below.

A study on letter writing by L1 and L2 Swedish speakers by Carlsson (2002)

Carlsson (2002: 11–231) studied the letter writing of Swedish upper secondary school students. The students were either native speakers of Swedish or L2 Swedish speakers whose mother tongue was either Persian or Spanish. The writers were supposed to write letters in three genres: an apology (informal), a request (formal) and an application (formal). The aim of the study was to find out how the letter writing, both informal and formal letters, of L2 Swedish speakers differed from the manners of native speakers of Swedish, briefly reviewing also the use of openings and closings. Furthermore, the possible effects of the gender of the writers on the letter writing were taken into account. In addition to the analysis of the letters, the subjects were also interviewed about the manners they had written the letters and they were asked why they chose to use particular forms of address, for instance.

Openings

In Carlsson's study, *Hej* was the most frequent opening used in formal letter writing, but also *Hejsan* was used extensively, particularly by women. In addition, it was observed that when writing formal letters to a particular recipient the most frequently used opening was again *Hej*, but also *Bäste/Bästa*¹ + the recipient's name or title (for example: *Bäste personalschefen*), particularly in the letters of L1 Swedish writers. Moreover, the overall use of addressing increased in this letter format. Regarding formality, both L1 and L2 Swedish writers used informal openings frequently in formal letters. Two explanations for this are provided: First, the official language in general has become more informal, which may affect particularly the L1 Swedish writers' letter writing. Second, regarding the explanation for may be that they were not aware of the

¹ The form *Bäste* is used when the addressee is male, whereas the form *Bästa* is used when the addressee is female. The opening *Käre/Kära* is used similarly.

Swedish writing conventions regarding formal letters, which may explain the informal language use of the writers of L2 Swedish.

In informal letters the most frequently used opening was *Hej*, and *Bäste/Bästa* + the recipient's name. In addition, also the opening *Kära* + the recipient's first name was common. Regarding formality, the Spanish L2 Swedish writers preferred formal openings, whereas Persian L2 Swedish writers and Swedish L1 Swedish writers preferred informal openings. In some cases, the Spanish L2 Swedish writers even combined informal openings with formal addressing conventions, where the name signifying the title or status of the recipient is used instead of the first name, such as *Käre direktör* or *Bäste Chef/Direktör*, which are combinations that are regarded as unconventional. All in all, only a quarter of the writers succeeded in being consistent in either formal or informal use of openings, which means that they did not know which forms are regarded as formal and which as informal.

Furthermore, both in informal and formal letters, many L2 writers had omitted the opening completely. One explanation for the absence of openings provided by Carlsson was that the writers regarded it as difficult to be polite in Swedish: if they wanted to be polite, they thought that the opening they were about to use would have been regarded as too intimate or too formal language use. For this reason, they tried to play it safe and omit the opening entirely.

Closings

The most frequently used closings in both informal and formal letters were *Med vänliga hälsningar* (note the use of the plural form) and *Med vänlig hälsning*, the former being more frequent. In private letters, the less formal *Hälsningar*, was also used frequently. The abbreviation *MVH/Mvh* (*Med vänlig hälsning*) (see Englund 2009 in section 2.3.1.3) was preferred by Swedish L1 speakers, even in formal letters, particularly in letters written by men. Today, however, the use of *MVH* is regarded as colloquial (Carlsson 2002: 121). Accordingly, it should be used only in short everyday messages where it usually signals that the message is closed, and therefore it is about to lose its function as a closing. Nevertheless, this abbreviation was not used by L2 Swedish writers in the study by Carlsson,

which can be explained by the fact that they used closings mostly according to the letter writing conventions presented in L2 Swedish textbooks, whereas the writers of L1 Swedish use closings according to their experiences in every day communication in the Swedish speaking environment, of which the L2 speakers might not yet have similar experiences. Thus, it is not always easy to know when to use formal or informal language, and what actually is regarded as formal or informal language. Finally, in Carlsson's study, some letters were closed with a thank you, *Tack*, or a thank you in advance, *Tack på förhand*. This is regarded by Carlsson as a mean for the writer to express that one is sure about that the recipient will fulfill the sender's wish or request, for example.

Further observations made by Carlsson (2002)

Some cultural differences in the practice of using greetings were recognized in Carlsson's study. To illustrate, the fact that Persian L2 Swedish speakers preferred the use of openings in their letters, particularly in formal ones, can be explained by their cultural background: in Iran greetings have a significant role in everyday communication and signify the relations between the interlocutors. On the other hand, Spanish L2 Swedish speakers preferred omitting the opening in formal letters, which according to Scollon and Scollon (1995, as cited in Carlsson 2002: 118) signifies the tendency by the Spanish to show respect and formality by omitting excessive openings. Regarding closings, the Persian writers did not use closings considerably, whereas the Spanish writers preferred using *Med vänlig hälsning* as a closing. The Spanish L2 Swedish speakers' tendency of preferring formal language use illustrates their culture: it is important for the Spanish to show respect towards the other party in communication. When using formal greetings, for example, they can show that they respect the recipient, which is not regarded as important in every culture as in the Spanish culture.

In summary, it was evident that the degree of formality caused problems for letter writers in Carlsson's study, particularly for those writing Swedish as a L2: on many occasions, the L2 writer combined an informal opening with the recipient's full name, which is typical of formal letter writing, such as in *Käre*

direktör. Consequently, it should be born in mind that whether the writers chose to use certain greetings consciously or intentionally in order to be either formal or informal or were they just unaware of the stylistic differences of the greetings is impossible to say. According to Carlsson, formal and informal letter writing conventions are discussed and represented in many Swedish textbooks for teaching Swedish as a L1 and a L2, so in practice they should be aware of these conventions. Further, Carlsson points out that the use of greetings in letter writing is usually the only part of letter writing that is discussed and therefore most emphasized in L2 Swedish textbooks used in teaching in upper secondary school. For this reason, Carlsson expected that the writers would be aware of the different degree of formality, for example, regarding the use of openings and closings. What is the problem for both writer groups, though, is that the distinction between formal and informal language is not always clear, which makes it difficult particularly for L2 Swedish speakers to know, which is the appropriate language form to be used in a particular situation. Although letter writing was practised at school and clear instructions were given in textbooks, it seems difficult for L2 writers to master these conventions. In most cases, however, it was evident that the L2 Swedish writers had not reached the L1 competence in letter writing.

A study on greetings used by university students by Södergård (2005)

Södergård (2005: 271–282) has researched the use of greetings in letters and emails sent to a teacher written by university students. Attention was also paid to the overall language and formality of the messages. The students in her study had either Swedish or Finnish as a L1, and the letters and emails were written in Swedish. The aim of the study was to discover how university students the used greetings when writing letters or emails to a teacher. One of the assumptions was that the students would use greetings differently when writing to a teacher in comparison with when writing to their friends, for instance, because of the different roles of a student and a teacher. Södergård points out that there are no particular fixed norms according to which students should write letters or emails to a teacher, and therefore it is totally up to them

how formally or informally, for instance, they want to express themselves in correspondence with a teacher. It has been suggested that the degree of formality used in letters or emails depends not only on what kind of a text one is writing, and to whom, but also on the medium through which the correspondence occurs (Hässjer 2004, as referred in Södergård 2005: 272). Södergård, however, thinks that the medium through which the correspondence occurs does not have an effect on the manner of writing, but the first thing a student keeps in mind when writing to a teacher is the impression which one wants to convey of oneself to the teacher. This impression can be affected by the choice of expressions and greetings one uses in an email message.

Openings

Most of the messages had an opening, which was a positive observation, but the great variation in the use of different forms of openings was surprising: the most frequent opening *Hej*, for instance, was written in “nine different ways”, when taking into account the use of punctuation, capitalization, and the phrase in which it was used (whether it included the recipient’s name or not, for example) (Södergård 2005: 275). Further, *Hej* was used mostly alone, without the recipient’s name, whereas the variation *Hej* + the recipient’s first name, was the second most frequent opening used. Some of the messages, however, did not have any kind of an opening; most of these messages were emails.

Closings

Great variation was also found in the use of different forms of closings: when taking into account the choice of a closing, the use of punctuation, abbreviations, and the use of capital or lower case letters, no less than 94 different types of closings were found in the data. The most frequent closing was *Hälsningar* + the sender’s name (mostly the full name), and the second most frequent closing was *Med vänlig hälsning* + the sender’s name (mostly the full name). Furthermore, the type of the message affected the choice between these closings: when a student informed the teacher of an absence from a lecture, for example, he/she was likely to use the closing *Hälsningar*, whereas when a

student wished for something, for instance, the use of *Med vänlig hälsning* was more probable. There were also some occasions where the message was closed with a wish for a nice summer, for instance, which Södergård regards as familiar language use, almost intimate, though naturally polite. Similarly, the use of the closing *Vi ses!*, which was used to some extent by the students in her study, is also regarded as familiar language use. Furthermore, Södergård's data included a couple of instances where the abbreviation *t:/T:* (from Finnish's *Toivoo, Terveisin*, greetings, best wishes) was used with the sender's name. In addition, some students tended to thank the teacher in advance if they asked her something, which can be considered polite but it could also be interpreted as demanding, putting pressure on the recipient because the sender emphasizes the fact that he/she is expecting an answer. Finally, similarly to the openings, some messages were closed using the sender's full name only, which is regarded as the most formal way to close a message.

Further observations made by Södergård (2005)

In Södergård's study the students tended to choose the more informal way of expressing themselves when writing to the teacher, using the opening *Hej* + the teacher's first name, for instance. This observation made Södergård wonder why they chose to use the informal tone: did they aim at it consciously, or were they not aware of the stylistic difference between different greetings?

Furthermore, the excessive use of punctuation, such as using more than one or two exclamation marks after an opening *Hej*, caught Södergård's attention. According to Södergård, the recipient interprets also the use of punctuation when reading a message, and because of the excessive use of exclamation mark the otherwise neutral *Hej* loses its neutrality. Moreover, excessively used exclamation marks, particularly in formal language, may be interpreted as demanding, even offensive.

In conclusion, the students in Södergård's study used a great variety of greetings: even one greeting could be written in several different ways, or a greeting could be completely omitted. Though the students preferred more informal greetings, most of them closed their messages with the full name,

which is regarded as formal language. Södergård argues that whether one uses his/her full name or first name only reflects the manner in which the student regards the relationship between him/her and the teacher: if the teacher and a student had known each other for a long time and were often in contact with each other, it was more probable that the student closed the message with the first name only. Södergård found also that it is not always clear to students, even at university level, which forms of greetings, for example, to use when writing to a university teacher. It would therefore be important for students to know the stylistic value of certain greetings and how to use names with them. For this reason, Södergård points out the fact that in Finland it has been discussed whether more emphasis and time should be used for teaching how to write email messages, and particularly, how to write messages of different degrees of formality: what kind of greetings to use when writing to a future employer, for instance.

A study on addressing and communicative procedures in the Finnish matriculation examination of L2 Swedish by Green-Vänttinen and Rosenberg-Wolff (2008)

Green-Vänttinen and Rosenberg-Wolff (2008: 55-63) analysed a relatively new task in the Finnish matriculation examination in L2 Swedish, aiming to find out how students all over from Finland succeeded in it in autumn 2005. The task, in which students were supposed to write letters and email messages in different degrees of formality, was included in the matriculation examination of L2 Swedish in spring 2005. Green-Vänttinen and Rosenberg-Wolff concentrated particularly on how the students opened and closed their letters, and what kind of language they used to thank, invite and complain about something. The main observation was that the new task was demanding for the students, as they were supposed to use the language "in a communicative purpose in order to perform certain task" (Green-Vänttinen and Rosenberg-Wolff's 2008: 62). Nevertheless, Green-Vänttinen and Rosenberg-Wolff were content with the new type of task as it meets the language competence requirements concerning Swedish set by the CEFR. In addition, particularly the authenticity and

interactivity were positive aspects of the task type. Green-Vänttinen and Rosenberg-Wolff point out, however, that it is important to develop and update even new task types so that the tasks would remain diverse.

Openings

The students in the study by Green-Vänttinen and Rosenberg-Wolff's employed a great variety of openings. The easiest task for the students seemed to be writing an informal, personal letter, when the recipient of the letter was known, the most frequently used openings in this type of letters being *Hej*, *Tjena* and *Tjaba*. Contrastively, writing a formal letter, without a given recipient, was more difficult, when neutral openings were required instead of too personal openings, and the uncertainty of which opening to choose, for instance, was evident and reflected in various ways. Firstly, several students omitted the opening, and if an opening was used, some students searched for a neutral style by using openings such as *Goddag, bra herre eller fru*. Secondly, some students also tried to invent a recipient: *Hejdå Herr Kaustinen, Hejsan Kajsa Bärög*. Thirdly, the use of informal openings such as *Tjenare! Tjaba* and *Hallo!* reflects the fact that the students were not aware of the informality of these openings. In fact, the task was not too complex, as it would have been appropriate to open both informal and formal letters by using successfully the neutral *Hej* which some students employed. At this point Green-Vänttinen and Rosenberg-Wolff also noticed that the students were not aware of the difference between the use of greetings *Hej* and *Hejdå*, since they used *Hejdå* often as an opening¹.

Closings

In comparison with opening a letter, it seemed to be remarkably more difficult to close a letter. Firstly, the degree of formality caused problems, similarly to openings, since many students closed the informal letter with a personal closing such as *Puss och kram*, or *puss och kräm*, also some more formal letters were closed inappropriately with this closing. Secondly, the interference of English was evident, as some students used closings such as *Ers XX, Med respekt, Dins*

¹ The greeting *Hejdå* is used only as a closing, and therefore it is inappropriate to use it as an opening.

XX, Deras XX, Med kära, Ser du alla, which are untypical closings in Swedish. In addition, a great variety of ways to end a letter were employed: some students omitted the closing, and a few used the Finnish closing *Terveisin*, but also pre-closings such as *Må väl Maj-Len, Allt gott till dej, Lycka till*, were used. Indeed, in several letters also unidiomatic closings were used to a remarkable extent, such as *Med trevliga hälsningar*. Many closings, however, were employed successfully: *Trevlig vår, Hälsningar, and Vi ses*. Actually, it would have been appropriate to close both informal and formal letters with a neutral *Med vänliga hälsningar*, for instance.

In summary, according to Green-Vänttinen and Rosenberg-Wolff's study, upper secondary school students were not aware of which greetings to use in letters of different degree of formality. This was reflected by the inappropriate use of greetings, the omission of greetings, and by the great variety of greetings that the students used. Moreover, a common problem for several students in the study by Green-Vänttinen and Rosenberg-Wolff was the fact that the students used always the same greetings, which were mostly too informal, regardless of a letter's degree of formality. For this reason, students might need more explicit guidelines or teaching regarding the use of greetings.

A study on openings and closings used in email messages written by L2 Swedish and L2 Finnish learners by Toropainen and Lahtinen (2013)

Toropainen and Lahtinen (2013: 181–199) studied greetings used in email messages written by L2 Swedish and L2 Finnish learners in Finland. The data they used in their study consisted of the material collected for the project Topling¹, i.e. their data was the same as the data used in the present study (see Section 4.1). The aim of the study by Toropainen and Lahtinen was to find out whether greetings were used appropriately regarding the context and formality of messages, when learners were supposed to write three different types of messages: an informal message to a friend, a semiformal message to a teacher, and a formal letter to a web store. Toropainen and Lahtinen were particularly

¹ Further information on Topling in <https://www.jyu.fi/hum/laitokset/kielet/tutkimus/hankkeet/topling>.

interested in how the learners addressed or took into account the recipient of an email message. Also the connection between the CEFR levels of the messages and the use of greetings were considered. Further, L2 Swedish and L2 Finnish learners' use of greetings was compared to L1 Swedish speakers' use of greetings.

Since the present study concentrates on L2 Swedish, only the results concerning L2 Swedish, not L2 Finnish, in Toropainen and Lahtinen's study are discussed below.

Openings

The most frequent openings used by L2 Swedish learners were *Hej* and *Hejsan*, regardless of the degree of formality of the message. As the greeting word *Hej* can be used on most occasions, most learners opened their messages appropriately, according to the Swedish email writing conventions. Also the greeting word *Hejdå* was used to open a message to some extent in all three types of messages. When the CEFR levels of the messages were taken into account, messages without an opening were most frequent in the messages that were under level A1, whereas they were always used at level B1 and B2. In addition, at level A1 a great variety of greetings, such as *God dag*, *Hello*, *Morjens*, *Bästa*, was used, which reflects the learners' unawareness of the email writing conventions of Swedish.

In informal and semiformal messages only a few learners used the recipient's name with an opening, in other words had not addressed their messages to a recipient; this tendency was compared to the L1 Swedish speakers' manner of addressing, and it was found out that most of L1 Swedish speakers did use the recipient's name with an opening. In messages addressed to a teacher the teacher was often addressed with a noun phrase, such as in *Hej lärare*, not with the first name. In formal messages, however, the recipient was addressed in a variety of ways, although a particular recipient was not given in the writing instructions of the task: *Hejsan Lars!*, *Hej Sony Ericsson*, *Bästa försäljaren*, *Hej den svenska nätbutiken*, *Bästa mottagare*, *Bästa itnet*. At CEFR levels under A1 the use of addressing was unlikely, whereas it increased at higher levels.

Closings

In Toropainen and Lahtinen's study the most frequent closings used were *Hejdå*, *Hälsningar* (with a modifier, such as *Vänliga hälsningar* [emphasis added]) and *Hejsan* which was also used as an opening. In formal messages closings such as *mvh* (abbreviation of *Med vänliga hälsningar/vänlig hälsning*) and *Med vänliga hälsningar* were frequently used, whereas in informal messages the closing *Puss och kram* with its variations such as *Kramar*, *Kramisar*, *Puss kram!*, *Puss hej!*, *Puzz* was preferred. Regardless of the type of the message, most of the email messages were closed with a closing and the sender's name or with the sender's name only, although the number of messages without a closing was relatively high. Closings were used already at lower CEFR levels, and as the language competence improved, a greater variety of closings was used.

Furthermore, in Toropainen and Lahtinen's data the use of emoticons was remarkable, which is regarded as a means to maintain the interpersonality of the interaction.

To sum up, in the study by Toropainen and Lahtinen in most cases the learners knew how to open an email message appropriately considering the context, but sometimes it was unclear for them whether a greeting was supposed to be used as an opening or a closing, *Hejdå* being a case in point. They also found that greetings, particularly openings, were more likely to be omitted at lower CEFR levels (A2 and under). Furthermore, most of the messages were opened without the recipient's name. In the messages in which the recipient was addressed, however, it was done appropriately in most cases. Moreover, the recipient was more likely to be addressed at higher CEFR levels. Thus, it was evident that there is a connection between the CEFR level and the use of greetings, as writers at higher CEFR levels seemed to be more aware of the email writing conventions of Swedish.

3 RESEARCH AIMS

Considering the previous research on the use of greetings in letters and email messages reviewed above (see section 2.4) it is evident that further research in this area is needed. Firstly, no previous studies have been conducted on how children and young people in grades 8 to 9 use greetings in written communication. The youngest study participants in the previous studies reviewed were young people at the age of 16 to 19 years, for example, in studies by Carlsson (2002), Green-Vänttinen and Rosenberg-Wolff (2008) and Tella (1992), otherwise the study subjects have been adults, particularly in the research conducted on English. Thus, research on how children and young people use greetings in email messages is needed. Secondly, regarding the use of greetings in email messages no comparisons between L2 English learners and L2 Swedish learners have been made. Thirdly, all of the previous studies reviewed above have been cross-sectional studies. While the present study is a longitudinal study, it is possible to observe whether there is progress or decline in the greeting-user competence of L2 English and L2 Swedish learners. Furthermore, after viewing the results of the previous studies reviewed above, the importance of greetings used in email messages has become evident. Consequently, it is important that L2 learners acknowledge the crucial role of greetings and know how to use them when writing email messages. Therefore, it is important to find out whether Finnish L2 English and L2 Swedish learners are aware of the importance of greetings and whether they know how to use them appropriately. Moreover, when concentrating on the use of greetings, it is also possible to find out what kind of sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences the learners have, based on their use of greetings. Hence, the results of the present study may suggest, whether more or more profound teaching in this area of English as a L2 and Swedish as a L2 is needed.

Considering the findings of the previous studies of English and Swedish reviewed above, it could be expected that also the findings of the present study might show great variation in the use of greetings in email messages, and it is possible that learners of L2 English and L2 Swedish are not always aware of

how to use greetings according to the email writing conventions of a L2, since these were also the findings of the studies by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011: 12–13, 17), Green-Vänttinen and Rosenberg-Wolff (2008: 59) and Södergård (2005: 277, 280–281) (see Section 2.4.1 and Section 2.4.2).

The focus of the present study is on the use of greetings used in email messages written by L2 English and L2 Swedish learners. The aim is to find answers to the following questions:

1. What kind of greetings do Finnish learners of L2 English and L2 Swedish use when writing email messages to a friend and a teacher?
 - 1b. Are the greetings they use equivalent to the email writing conventions of the L2s?
2. How do the learners take the recipient of the message into account (do they address the recipient e.g. by the first name)?
 - 2b. Are there differences between the uses of greetings when writing to a friend, in comparison with when writing to a teacher?
3. Are there different kinds of greeting-user profiles to be identified?
 - 3b. Is it possible to see any progress or decline in the learners' greeting-user competence during three message-writing rounds?
4. How and when are emoticons used as part of greetings?
 - 4b. Are there reasons for their use?

In order to find answers to the research questions presented above, greeting used in email messages written by Finnish learners of L2 English and L2 Swedish are analysed. So that it is possible to find out whether there is progress or decline in the learners' use of greetings, longitudinal data is needed. Thus, the learners have written their email messages during three message-writing rounds: the learners of L2 English wrote their messages in grades 4, 5 and 6, whereas the learners of L2 Swedish wrote two messages in grade 8, and one message in grade 9. Moreover, in order to find out how the learners use greetings in their email messages and whether it is possible to identify greeting-

user profiles, the greetings used in email messages written by learners of L2 English and L2 Swedish are analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Thus, the data and the method of analysis are discussed next, in Chapter 4.

4 DATA AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Data

The writers

The data of the present study consisted of the material collected for the project Topling¹ (at Jyväskylä University), in which learners of L2 English, L2 Swedish and L2 Finnish wrote, among other writing tasks, email messages of different degrees of formality at three school levels: primary school, secondary school and upper secondary school. The data was collected from the same learners during two or three years' time, from three data-gathering rounds. In the present study, the focus was on the use greetings used in the email messages written by two groups of learners: primary school learners who studied English as a L2 (data collected from the same group of learners from grade 4 to grade 6), and secondary school learners who studied Swedish as a L2 (data collected from the same group of learners from the autumn and spring of grade 8, and from grade 9). In both learner groups, each message-writing round included messages by 60 learners, so a total of 360 email messages (180 messages in English, 180 in Swedish) were analysed. The L2 learner groups were chosen because in both groups the learners had studied the target language for about a year and finally almost three years. This means that both groups had theoretically, despite the difference in age, studied the language for the same period of time.

The assignments

The learners were asked to write email messages to a friend and to a teacher. The assignments according to which they were supposed to write were written in Finnish, and they presented below.

The first assignment for the L2 English learners was to write an email message to a friend, in order to cancel a meeting and suggest a new time for a meeting.

¹ Further information on Topling in <https://www.jyu.fi/hum/laitokset/kielet/tutkimus/hankkeet/topling>.

In addition, the learners were instructed to open and close the message in an appropriate way.

Viesti ystävälle

Olet luvannut englantilaiselle kaverillesi, että menette illalla yhdessä pelaamaan. Sinulla on kuitenkin muuta tekemistä. Lähetä ystävälle sähköpostiviesti.

- Kerro, miksi et voi tulla.
- Ehdota uusi aika.

*Kirjoita selvällä käsialalla **englanniksi**. Muista tervehtiä ja lopettaa viestisi sopivasti.*

The first assignment for the L2 Swedish learners was to write an email message to a friend, too, in order to cancel a meeting and suggest a new time for a meeting. Again, the learners were instructed to open and close the message in an appropriate way.

Viesti ystävälle

Olet sopinut ruotsalaisen ystäväsi kanssa, että tapaatte lauantaina keskustassa. Et pääse paikalle.

Lähetä kaverille sähköpostiviesti.

- Kerro, miksi et voi tulla.
- Ehdota uusi aika ja paikka.

*Muista **aloittaa** ja **lopettaa** viesti sopivalla tavalla. Kirjoita selvällä käsialalla **ruotsiksi** alla olevaan laatikkoon.*

The second assignment for the L2 English learners was to write an email message to a teacher in order to explain why the learner had been absent and to ask about homework and what the class had done in English lessons. Again, the learners were advised to open and close the message in an appropriate way, but this time the name of the recipient was also given, in addition to the fact that it was said in the assignment that the teacher "is nice".

Viesti opettajalle

Mary Brown on sinun englannin kielen opettajasi ja hän on ihan kiva. Haluat kirjoittaa hänelle sähköpostiviestin englanniksi, koska olet ollut kipeä ja poissa koulusta.

- Kerro, miksi olet ollut poissa koulusta
- Kysy:
 - Kotitehtävistä
 - Kaksi asiaa englannin tunneista

*Kirjoita selvällä käsialalla **englanniksi** alla olevaan laatikkoon. Muista tervehtiä ja lopettaa viestisi sopivasti.*

The second assignment for the L2 Swedish learners was to write an email message to a teacher, too, in order to explain why the learner had been absent, to ask two things about the Swedish test that was held yesterday and to ask two things about the Swedish lessons. Again, the learners were advised to open and close the message in an appropriate way.

Viesti opettajalle

Ruotsin koe palautettiin eilen, mutta et ollut koulussa. Olette sopineet opettajan kanssa, että harjoituksen vuoksi kirjoitatte hänelle aina ruotsiksi. Lähetä opettajalle sähköpostiviesti:

- *Kerro, miksi et ollut koulussa.*
- *Kysy ruotsin kokeesta kaksi asiaa.*
- *Kysy kaksi asiaa siitä, mitä ryhmäsi on tehnyt tunnilla.*

*Muista **aloittaa ja lopettaa** viesti sopivalla tavalla. Kirjoita selvällä käsialalla **ruotsiksi** alla*

Furthermore, the data collected in the project Topling has been evaluated by two to three different raters based on a rating scale of the proficiency levels in the CEFR. In all assignments written by both learner groups the messages were evaluated on the CEFR levels between *under A1* to *B1*. Since the focus of the present study was only on the use of greetings, no more attention will be paid to the CEFR levels of the messages¹. In the evaluation also the message body of the messages was taken into account, which was not of interest of the present study. Therefore, it is possible that a learner's message was evaluated on high CEFR level because of good language use in the message body although his/her use of greetings was inappropriate. For this reason, the CEFR level on which the message is evaluated may not reflect the real stage of the learner's greeting-user competence.

¹ See, however, e.g. the study by Toropainen and Lahtinen (2013), in which the CEFR levels of email messages was taken into account.

4.2 Data Analysis

The present study is a descriptive study, since descriptive research attempts to describe a phenomenon as it occurs naturally and provides more information about it (e.g. Hedrick et al. 1993: 47). The analysis of the greetings used in email messages consisted of two separate stages. First, the greetings used in the messages were analysed separately, in order to find out how the learners use them when writing messages to a friend and to a teacher¹. Second, the use of greetings used in the messages were analysed as a whole in order to find out what kind of greeting-user profiles it was possible to recognise within the learner groups. Thus, at first, all the greetings of the data were selected and separated from the messages in order to analyse them in detail in the light of the research questions presented above. Greetings, i.e. openings and closings, were defined as follows:

An opening – “the use of a person’s name and or greeting word [i.e. an opening] to initiate the email” (Waldvogel 2007: 126), such as *Mary*, *Hello*, or *Hi Mary*.

A closing – “any name sign-off, farewell formula (e.g., *Cheers*), or phatic comment (e.g., *Have a good day*) used to end the email” (Waldvogel 2007: 126).

In addition, *Thank you* or *Thanks* were also regarded as closings when they were used at the end of the message, with or even without the writer’s name.

In some messages a learner had written the opening in the subject-line of the message but not in the message body. On these occasions the greeting on the subject-line was counted as an opening. When an opening was included both in the subject-line and in the message body, only the opening in the message body was taken into account since otherwise the message would have included two openings, which would have been inappropriate.

After the greetings of the data had been selected and separated from the messages, the overall percentages of the greetings used in the email messages were counted. In order to find out whether there were differences in the learners’ use of greetings between the message-writing rounds, the different

¹ No attention was paid on the use of punctuation, such as commas or exclamation marks, with greetings.

openings and closings used in each message type were cross-tabulated to the variables in SPSS, and the statistical significance was calculated by using Cohen's kappa (κ). Then the use of greetings were analysed in the light of the research questions presented above (see Chapter 3). The method of analysis was functional analysis, concentrating on *function-form* relationship between the greetings and their function (Ellis and Barkhuizen 2005: 115–119). Using this method of analysis, it was possible to find out what kind of a greeting they had chosen to perform two particular functions: First, to open or close an email to a friend, when rather informal use of greetings was expected, since the status between friends is supposedly equal and their relationship might be regarded as quite intimate, the degree of solidarity between them being high (Holmes 2013: 9–10). Second, to open or close an email to a teacher, when the greetings should have been slightly more formal, since the status of a teacher is supposedly higher than a pupil's and their relationship might be regarded as distant, the degree of solidarity between them being low (Holmes 2013: 9–10). Thus, it could be found out whether the learners used greetings differently when writing to a friend in comparison with when writing to a teacher, and whether the use of greetings was equivalent to the email writing conventions of the target language. Moreover, the results may provide information on the development of the learners' pragmatic competence: since the learners had written email messages during two or three consecutive years, two messages or one message a year, it was also possible to observe whether there had been any progress in their greeting user competence.

Then, the use of openings and closings in email messages were analysed as a whole in order to find out whether possible greeting-user profiles could be recognised. Thus, the following aspects were regarded as positive factors in greeting-user competence, and therefore the use of them contributed to the learner's competence being regarded as progressed: the use of an opening was appropriate, but opening the message with both an opening and the recipient's name was more appropriate, whereas the use of a signature as a closing was appropriate, similarly as the use of a closing, but the use of both a closing and a signature was more appropriate. Further, phatic comments were regarded as

positive factors in greeting-user competence. The use of emoticons did not have an effect when analysing the greeting-user profiles. Nevertheless, the omission of an opening or a closing was regarded as a negative aspect in greeting-user competence, contributing to the learner's competence being regarded as declined. Accordingly, on the one hand, since messages written to a friend represented an informal email writing style, as the status between friends is supposedly equal and their relationship might be regarded as quite intimate, the degree of solidarity between them being high (Holmes 2013: 9–10), the most appropriate way to use greetings in a message according to both English and Swedish email writing conventions (see Section 2.3.1.2 and Section 2.3.1.3) was to open it with both an opening plus the recipient's name and close it with a closing and a signature, whereas the most inappropriate way to use greetings was not to use them at all. On the other hand, messages written to a teacher represented a little more formal email writing style, as the status of a teacher is supposedly higher than the status of a pupil and their relationship might be regarded as distant, the degree of solidarity between them being low (Holmes 2013: 9–10) (in comparison with a relationship with friends), so according to both English and Swedish email writing conventions (see Section 2.3.1.2 and Section 2.3.1.3) also messages opened with an opening and closed with a signature were regarded as appropriate ways to use greetings, although the use of the recipient's name and a closing plus a signature were appropriate options, too.

The greetings used in Round 1 and 2 were compared with the greetings used in Round 3, since the first round represents the learner's greeting-user competence at the beginning and the third round represents the latest stage of the learner's greeting-user competence. Further, since the use of greetings were analysed as a whole, it means that if only either an opening or a closing represented inappropriate use of greetings, the greeting-user competence was regarded as declined. So, to illustrate, if a learner who wrote his/her message to a friend used only an opening in Round 1 but both an opening plus the recipient's name in Round 2 and in Round 3, the learner's greeting-user competence was regarded as advanced. Thus, this learner's greeting-user competence was

regarded as advanced. More detailed examples of the analysis are provided below (see e.g. Section 5.1.1.3).

Next, in Chapter 5, the findings of the present study are reported, first concentrating on the use of greetings and then describing greeting-user profiles.

5 FINDINGS

5.1 English learners

Research questions 1 and 2 (see Chapter 3) sought to find answers to how learners of L2 English used greetings in email messages and how they took the recipient of a message into account. Furthermore, research question 4 was about how emoticons were used as part of greetings. Next, the findings based on these research questions are reported, beginning with messages written to a friend and then moving on to the messages written to a teacher.

5.1.1 Emails written to a friend

First, the findings on how the learners of L2 English used openings when writing an email messages to a friend are reported, after which the findings on how they used closings in the same message type are described. Finally, the greeting-user profiles identified during the three message-writing rounds in messages written to a friend are presented and illustrated.

5.1.1.1 The use of openings

By analysing the use of openings in the messages written by Finnish learners of L2 English, it was possible to find out what kind of openings they used when writing email messages to a friend and how the learners took the recipient of the message into account.¹ Also the possible presence of emoticons, i.e. whether they were used as part of openings, was considered. In total three different ways were used to open an email message: the message was opened with either an opening or with an opening and the recipient's name, or without an opening at all (see Figure 1).

¹ If the greeting is pragmatically inappropriate language use, the word/phrase is marked with **bold red**.

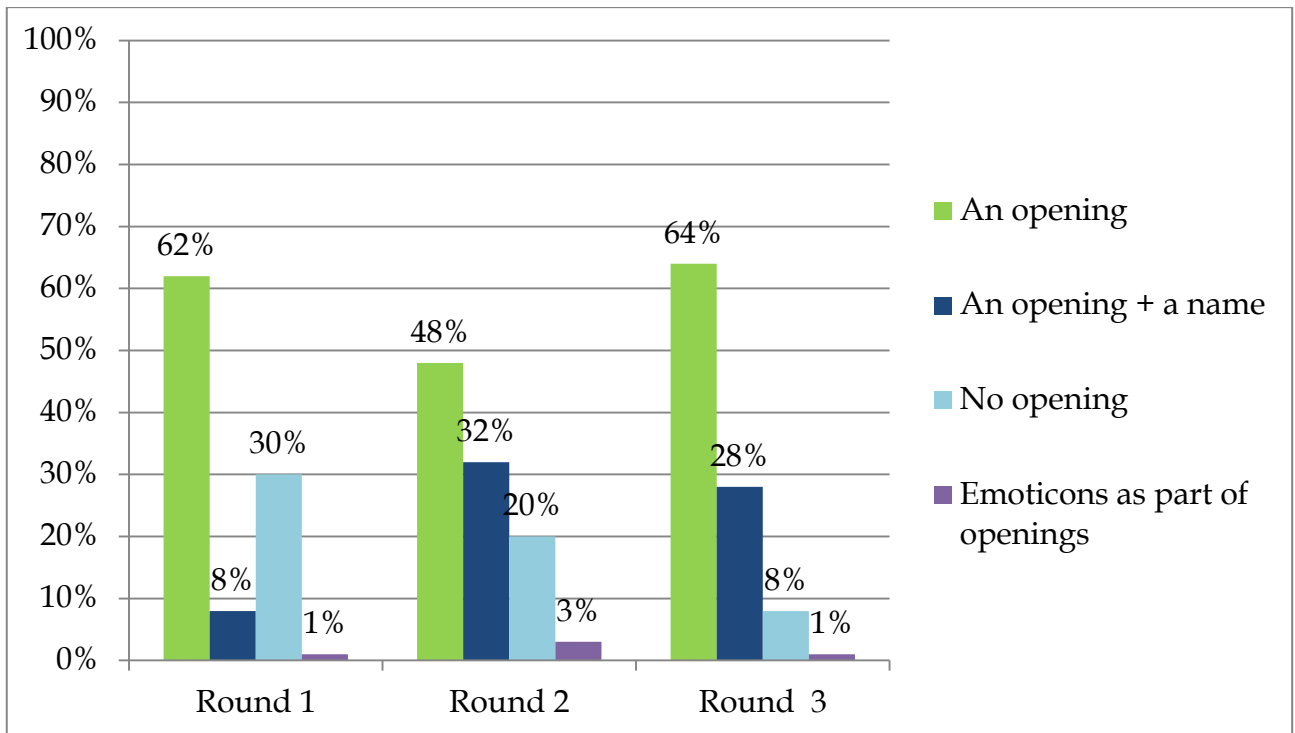


Figure 1. Openings in email messages written to a friend by L2 English learners (n=60)

Round 1 messages

Openings were used in most of the messages written in Round 1: 62 % were opened with an opening and 8 % with an opening plus a first name (only one learner used the recipient's full name). The most frequently used opening was *Hello*, which was used in 62 % of the messages with an opening. Other openings used included *Hi* and *Hey*: *Hi* was the second most frequently used opening (in 31 % of the messages with an opening), whereas *Hey* was used in one message. A phatic comment *How are you?* was used in one of the messages, and one learner used *Bye*¹ as an opening. In 30 % of the messages an opening was omitted. Emoticons, such as ☺, were used with an opening in 1 % of the messages.

Round 2 messages

When the learners wrote their second messages to a friend, most of them used an opening: 48 % opened their messages with an opening and 32 % with an opening plus the recipient's first name or a noun phrase, such as *Hello, my friend*. The most frequently used openings included *Hello* and *Hi* (with

¹ In English, *bye* is used only as a closing, so it is inappropriate to use it as an opening.

orthographical variants such as *Hai*), but also *Hey* was used in a couple of messages. A phatic comment *How are you?* was used in one of the messages. An opening was omitted in 20 % of the messages. Emoticons, such as <3 and =D, were used with an opening in 3 % of the messages.

Round 3 messages

In Round 3, 64 % of the messages were opened with an opening and 28 % with an opening and the recipient's first name (a noun phrase *my friend* was used in one message). *Hello* and *Hi* were the most frequently used openings, but some of the messages were opened with *Hey*, *Hello again* or an apology, such as *Sorry!* or *Hi! I'm Sorry!*. In 8 % of the messages an opening was totally omitted. Emoticons, such as :), were used with an opening in 1 % of the messages.

Summary

There was greater differences in the use of openings between Round 1 and Round 2 than between Round 2 and Round 3¹. In other words, the number of learners who opened their messages differently in Round 2 was higher than in Round 3. In all message-writing rounds, most of the learners opened their messages with an opening. In Round 2, the percentage of messages opened with an opening and the recipient's name increased significantly in comparison with Round 1, but in Round 3 it decreased a little. It is typical of English email writing (see Section 2.3.1.2) to use an opening, and possibly the recipient's first name, in an informal email message. Thus, it is clear that the learners' skills in the use of openings in email messages increased, since most of the learners used an opening, and the percentage of messages opened with both an opening and the recipient's name was higher in Round 2 and in Round 3 than in Round 1. *Hello* was the most frequently used opening in all rounds, *Hi* being always the second most frequent. Both of these openings are typical of English email writing. In Round 1 and Round 2 phatic comments were used, and in Round 3 some of the messages were opened with an apology. The number of messages

¹ The difference in the use of openings between Round 1 and Round 2 were statistically highly significant ($\kappa = .326$, $p = .000$) (when $p < .005$, the difference is statistically significant), whereas the difference in the use of openings between Round 2 and Round 3 was statistically less significant ($\kappa = .181$, $p = .055$).

without an opening decreased round by round, being remarkably low in Round 3. Furthermore, the use of emoticons with an opening was low in all message-writing rounds.

5.1.1.2 The use of closings

In the messages written by L2 English learners four different ways were used to close an email message: the message was closed with either only a closing or with a closing and the sender's signature, with only a signature or no closing at all (see Figure 2). Thus, it was possible to find out what kind of closings Finnish learners of L2 English used when writing email messages to a friend. Also the possible presence of emoticons, i.e. whether they were used as part of closings, was taken into account.

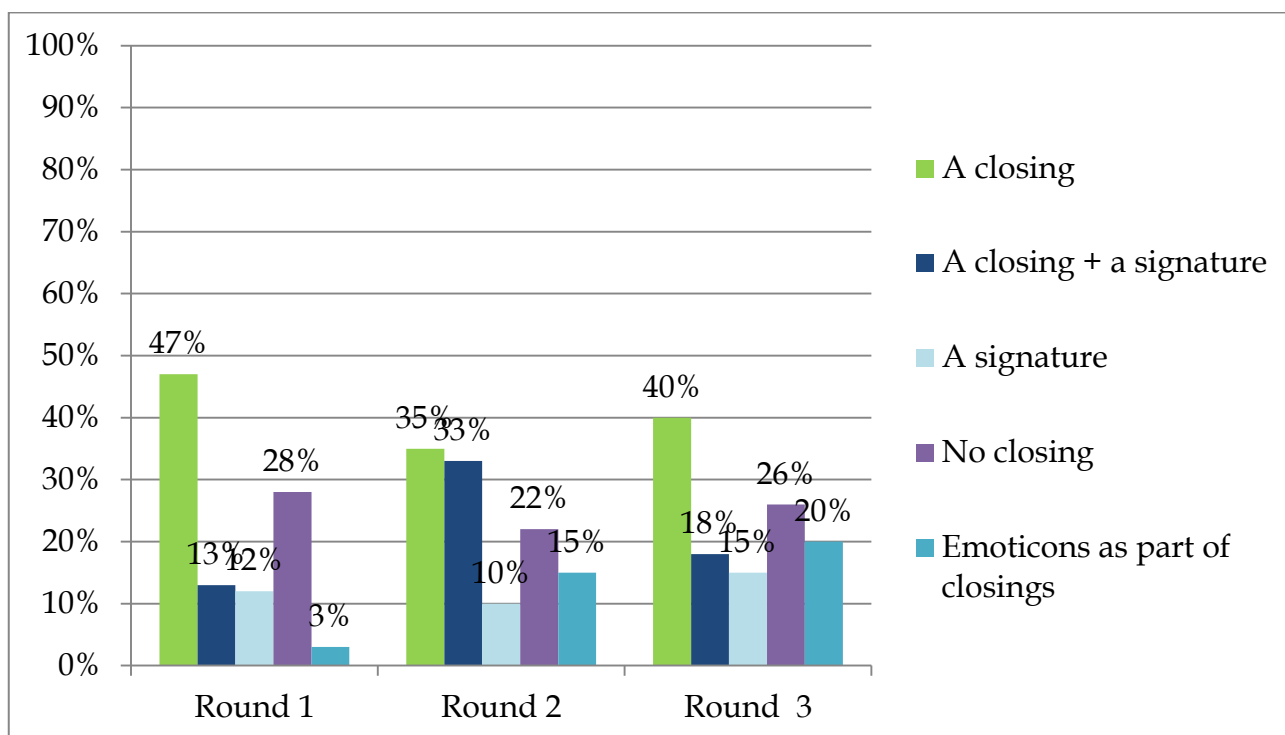


Figure 2. Closings in email messages written to a friend by L2 English learners (n=60)

Round 1 messages

When the learners wrote their first emails to a friend, most of them used a closing: 47 % of the messages were closed with a closing, whereas 13 % were closed with a closing and a signature (one learner used the full name in a signature). The percentage of messages closed with a signature was 12 %. When

a message was closed with either a signature or both a closing and a signature, many of the learners used **T:**¹ preceding the signature, such as **T: Maija**. Further, one learner closed the message by **Terveisin Matt**, and another with *From: Maija*. The most frequently used closings included *See you* and *Bye bye* (with orthographical variants such as *Bay bay*). Some learners closed their messages with *Bye* (with orthographical variants such as *Bya*), and one of them with **Good night**. There was also one message that was closed with *Good bye* (which is usually in spoken language, but because the language use in emails resembles spoken language, it is acceptable to use this closing in emails [see Section 2.3.1]). Many learners used phatic comments with closings, particularly with the closing *See you*, such as

Bye! Se you later! Maija

See you tomorrow in the mc donalds in half past five. BYE BYE !!!!!

See you tomorrow. bye bye :D.

Moreover, one learner closed her message with an apology, and another with a thank you. A closing was omitted in 28 % of all the messages. Emoticons, such as ☺, were used with closings in 3 % of the messages.

Round 2 messages

Most of the messages were closed with a closing in Round 2: 35 % with a closing, and 33 % with a closing and a signature. The percentage of the messages closed with a signature was 10 %. Some of the learners wrote **T:**, **By:** or *From:* preceding the signature, such as **T: Maija**, **By: Matti** or *From: Maija*. In one message, the signature was preceded by the emoticon <3 (<3: *Maija*). The most frequently used closings included *Bye bye* (with orthographical variants such as *By by*, *baibai* and *Bay bay*), *See you* and *Bye*. Some of the learners closed the message with *Love* plus their name, and one learner used *Good bye*. In many of the messages a phatic comment was used, such as

¹ *T:* is an abbreviation for the Finnish closing *Terveisin* or *Toivoo* (see Section 2.3.1.4). Here the use of *t:/T:* is therefore regarded as interference of Finnish, being inappropriate language use in English.

See you leather! From your good friend!
Call me! Bye! T: Maija, I miss you. =)
But have a nice weekend! Your friend, Maija <3.

In addition, relatively many of the learners included an apology in the message, such as *Sorry From: Matti*. In 22 % of the messages a closing was omitted. Emoticons, such as =) and <3, were used with closings in 15 % of the messages.

Round 3 messages

In Round 3, 40 % of the messages were closed with a closing, and 18 % were closed with a closing and a signature. In 15 % of the messages, only a signature was used to close the message, whereas in 26 % of the messages a closing was totally omitted. When a message was closed with either a signature or both a closing and a signature, many of the learners used a hyphen (-), **T:**, **From:** or **By:** preceding the signature, such as - Matti, **T: Maija**, **From: Matti** and **By: Maija**. In a few of messages even the emoticon <3 preceded the signature. The most frequently used closings included *Bye*, *Bye bye* (with orthographical variants such as *By by*) and *See you*. One of the messages was closed with *Yours. Matti*, and two messages with *Good bye*. The number of messages with a phatic comment was high. Here are some examples of phatic language use in Round 3:

See you on Weekend maybe.
So, see you then, if you can come <3 : Maija
Answer me soon, bye!
Text me! Bye!
Write soon? :) <3: Maija
Have a nice day! :) Bye bye!

Moreover, a couple of messages were closed with an apology. Emoticons, such as :), <3 and :-P were used with closings in 20 % of the messages.

Summary

There was no great difference in the use of closings between Round 1 and Round 2. Between Round 2 and Round 3, however, the difference in the use of closings was statistically significant¹. In all message-writing rounds, a closing was used in most of the messages. There were no great changes in the number of messages closed with a signature or messages without a closing during the three rounds. In Round 2, the percentage of messages with a closing and a signature increased considerably, but decreased notably in Round 3. The preference of using only a closing, or not using a closing at all, though, does not comply with the English email writing conventions (see Section 2.3.1.2), since usually email messages are closed at least with a signature. In many of the messages a signature was preceded by either a hyphen, *T:*, *By:* or *From:*, and in a few cases even by the emoticon <3. The use of the abbreviations *t:/T:* or *By:* preceding the sender's name is probably interference from Finnish, in which the use of these abbreviations is common (see Section 2.3.1.4). In English, however, emails are closed with only a signature, without *By:* or any preceding abbreviations of greetings. Furthermore, phatic comments, which have a significant role in establishing and maintaining a relationship between interlocutors, were used in every round, the number of them being at the highest in Round 3, and some of the learners included an apology in their messages, or even used it as a closing. The variety of closings was great in all rounds, the most frequent ones being *Bye bye*, *See you* and *Bye*. According to the English email writing conventions, *See you* is an acceptable closing to be used. *Bye* and *Bye bye*, however, are more typical of spoken language, but since the language use in emails resembles spoken language, it is acceptable to use them as closings in emails (see Section 2.3.1). The use of emoticons increased significantly from Round 1 to Round 3. All in all, it seems that the learners' skills in the use of closings in emails did not increase during the three message-

¹ Statistically, there were hardly any differences in the use of closings between Round 1 and Round 2, since there was no statistical significance ($\kappa = -.005$, $p = .950$). The difference in the use of closings between Round 2 and Round 3, however, was highly significant ($\kappa = .264$, $p = .000$).

writing rounds, because of the high percentage of message that were closed either with only a closing or a closing was totally omitted.

In conclusion, it seems that opening an email message written to a friend was an easier task than closing one. Firstly, when opening the message, most of the learners used an opening, and the percentage of messages opened with an opening plus the recipient's name increased in comparison with the first message-writing round. When closing a message, however, many learners used *t/T:* or *By:* preceding a signature, which is not typical language use in English email writing. Also, in several messages, a closing was omitted, or only a closing was used. In English email writing, an email is usually closed at least with a signature.

5.1.1.3 Greeting-user profiles

Research question 3 sought to find answers to whether different kinds of greeting-user profiles were possible to be identified, and whether any progress or decline in the learners' greeting-user competence during three message-writing rounds was to be seen. When the learners of L2 English wrote their messages to a friend, a total of four different greeting-user profiles were identified:

[Greeting-user] **Profile 1.** Clear progress in greeting-user competence.

Profile 2. Some progress in greeting-user competence.

Profile 3. Greeting-user competence maintained.

Profile 4. Decline in greeting-user competence.

To illustrate, examples of each profile are provided below. The text marked with **green** represents appropriate use of greetings and closings, whereas **red** represents inappropriate use of greetings and closings.

Profile 1 - Clear progress in greeting-user competence

Profile 1 represents learners who showed clear progress in their greeting-user competence during the three message-writing rounds (see Example of Profile 1 below).

Example of Profile 1

English Learner 2015 ¹			
Message-writing round	Opening	Closing	Progress/Decline
Round 1	[nothing] (no opening)	[nothing] (no closing)	
Round 2	Hey! (an opening)	[nothing] (no closing)	An opening was not used in Round 1, but used in Round 2 →Progress
Round 3	Hello! (an opening)	Answer me soon, bye! (a closing)	A closing was not used in Round 2, but used in Round 3 →Progress

English Learner 2015 used neither an opening nor a signature in Round 1, but used an opening in Round 2, which is regarded as progress in his greeting-user competence. In Round 3, he used both an opening and a closing, which shows that there was again progress in his greeting-user competence. Thus, during all message-writing rounds, there was clear progress in this learner's greeting-user competence.

¹ In the data collected for the project Topling, each learner was personalized with a code beginning with 20XX (e.g. 2015).

Profile 2 – Some progress in greeting-user competence

Profile 2 represents learners who showed some progress in their greeting-user competence during the three message-writing rounds (see Example of Profile 2 below).

Example of Profile 2

English Learner 2034			
Message-writing round	Opening	Closing	Progress/Decline
Round 1	<i>Hello!</i> (an opening)	<i>T: Maija</i> (a closing used as in Finnish, a signature)	
Round 2	[nothing] (no opening)	[nothing] (no closing)	An opening and a signature were used in Round 1, but omitted in Round 2 → Decline
Round 3	<i>Hello it's me again.</i> (an opening)	[nothing] (no closing)	An opening was not used in Round 2, but used in Round 3 → Progress

English Learner 2034 used both an opening and a signature in Round 1, but omitted them in Round 2, which is regarded as decline in her greeting-user competence. In Round 3, however, she used an opening, which shows that there was some progress in her greeting-user competence.

Profile 3 – Greeting-user competence maintained

Profile 3 represents learners who showed neither progress nor decline in their greeting-user competence, but maintained the same level during the three message-writing rounds (see Example of Profile 3 below).

Example of Profile 3

English Learner 2072			
Message-writing round	Opening	Closing	Progress/Decline
Round 1	<i>Hello!</i> (an opening)	[nothing] (no closing)	
Round 2	<i>Hai!</i> (an opening)	[nothing] (no closing)	
Round 3	<i>Hello!</i> (an opening)	[nothing] (no closing)	Greetings were used similarly in every round → Competence maintained

English Learner 2072 used an opening but no closing in all message-writing rounds. For this reason, there was neither progress nor decline in this learner's greeting-user competence.

Profile 4 - Decline in greeting-user competence

Profile 4 represents learners who showed decline in greeting-user competence during the three message-writing rounds (see Example of Profile 4 below).

Example of Profile 4

English Learner 2055			
Message-writing round	Opening	Closing	Progress/Decline
Round 1	<i>Hi!</i> (an opening)	<i>bye</i> (a closing)	
Round 2	<i>Hi!</i> (an opening)	<i>Called me bye.</i> (a closing)	An opening and a closing were used both in Round 1 and in Round 2 → Competence maintained
Round 3	<i>Hi!</i> (an opening)	<i>[nothing]</i> (no closing)	An opening and a closing were used in Round 2, but a closing was not used in Round 3 → Decline

English Learner 2055 used both an opening and a closing in Round 1 and in Round 2, whereas he did not use a closing in Round 3, which is regarded as decline in his greeting-user competence.

Summary

When the overall use of greetings in the email messages to a friend written by the learners of L2 English was analysed, a total of four different greeting-user profiles were identified (see above). The percentage of the representatives of each profile is presented below (see Figure 3).

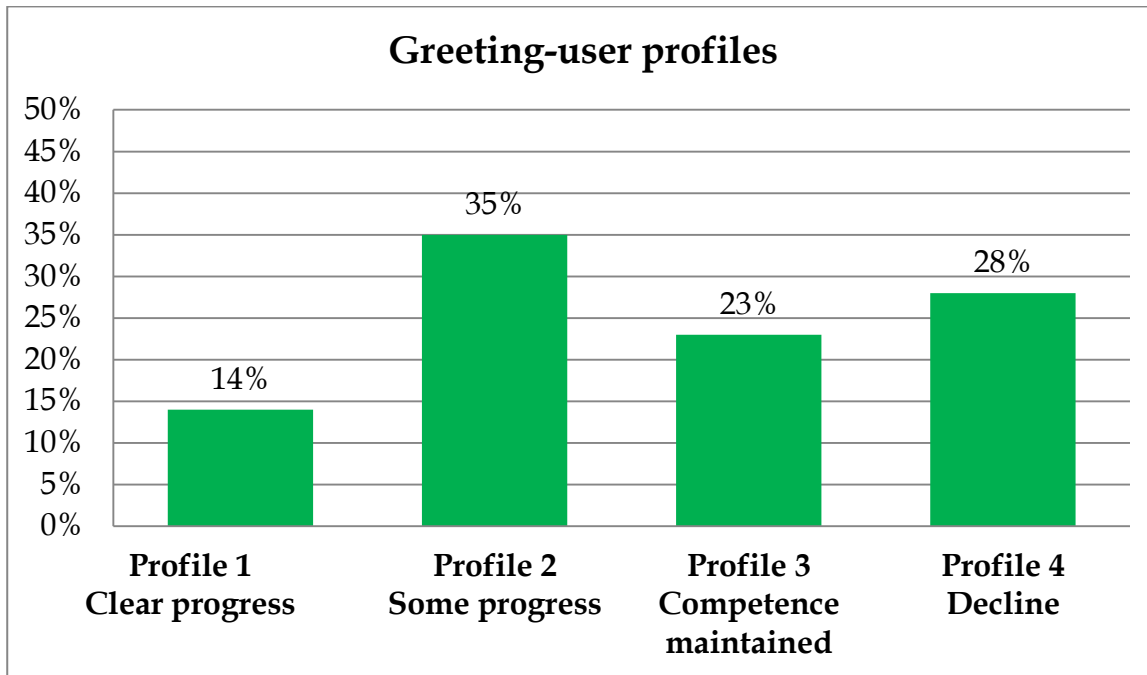


Figure 3. Greeting-user profiles: learners of L2 English (n=60), email messages to a friend

Most of the learners (35 %) were identified as representatives of Greeting-user Profile 2, meaning that they showed some progress in their greeting-user competence during the three message-writing rounds. The percentage of learners who showed decline (Profile 4) was 28 %, which was higher than the percentage of learners who showed clear progress (Profile 1), the percentage of them being only 14 %. The percentage of learners who maintained their greeting-user competence (Profile 3) was 23 %.

5.1.2 Emails written to a teacher

First, the findings on how the learners of L2 English used openings when writing an email messages to a teacher are reported, after which the findings on how they used closings in the same message type are described. Finally, the greeting-user profiles identified during the three message-writing rounds in messages written to a teacher are presented and illustrated.

5.1.2.1 The use of openings

By analysing the use of openings in the messages written by Finnish learners of L2 English, it was possible to find out what kind of openings they used when writing email messages to a friend and how the learners took the recipient of the message into account. Also the possible presence of emoticons, i.e. whether they were used as part of openings, was considered. In total three different ways were used to open an email message: the message was opened with either an opening or with an opening plus the recipient's name, or without an opening at all (see Figure 4).

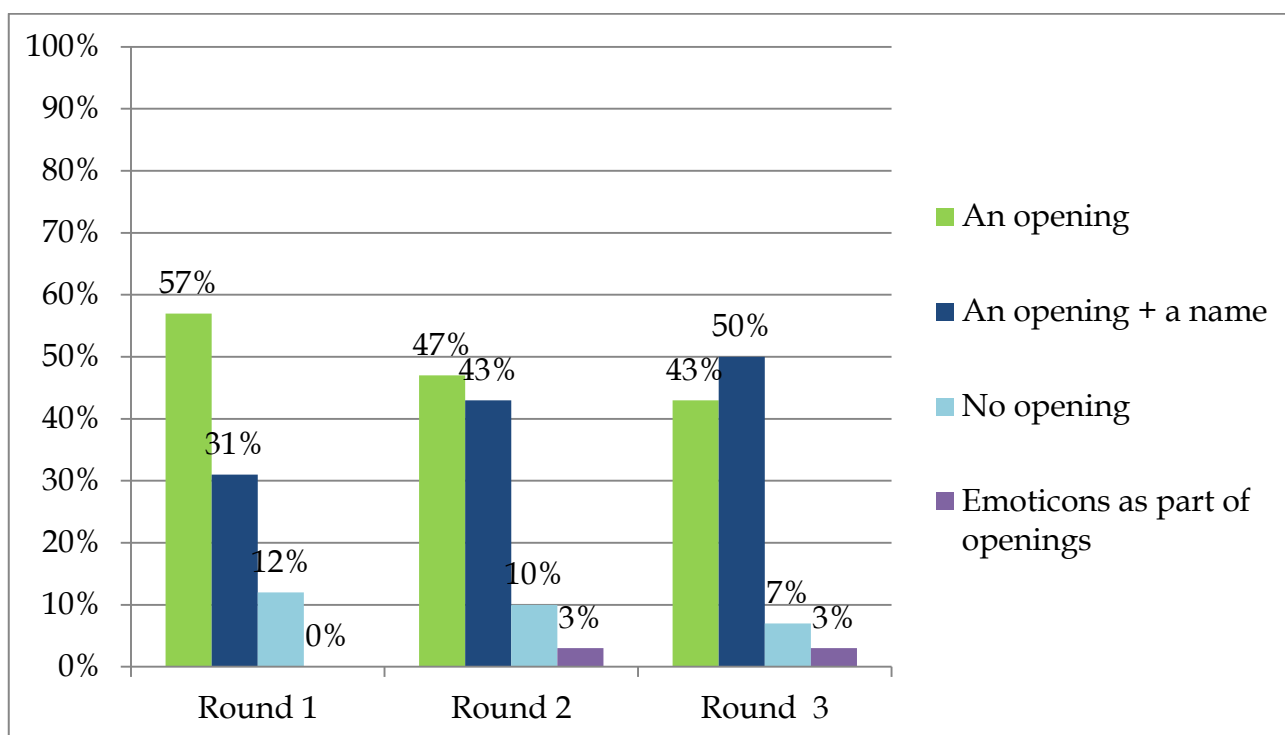


Figure 4. Openings in email messages written to a teacher by L2 English learners (n=60)

Round 1 messages

When the learners wrote their first email messages to a teacher, most of them opened the message with an opening: 57 % with an opening, and 31 % with an opening plus the recipient's first name (in 56 % of the messages with the recipient's name) or full name (in 44 % of the messages with the recipient's name). One learner addressed the teacher with a noun phrase *Hello Theascer*¹ (= teacher). The most frequently used opening was *Hello* (in 67 % of the messages with an opening), but also *Hi* was used. An opening was omitted in 12 % of the messages. Emoticons were not used with openings.

Round 2 messages

In Round 2, 47 % of the messages were opened with an opening, whereas 43 % of the messages were opened with an opening plus the recipient's first name, full name or the noun phrase *teacher* (which is an inappropriate way to address a teacher in English email writing). In three messages the teacher was addressed with either *Miss*, *Mrs* or *Ms*, as for example *Hello miss Mary Brown*. The most frequently used opening was *Hello*, but also *Hi* and *Hey* were used to some extent. In 10 % of the messages an opening was omitted. Emoticons, such as =) and <3, were used with openings in 3 % of the messages.

Round 3 messages

In the third message-writing round most of the messages were opened with an opening: 43 % with an opening and 50 % with an opening plus the recipient's first name, full name or a noun phrase such as *Hello teacher* or *Hi englishteacher!*. One learner used both a noun phrase and a surname, *Hello teacher Brown!*, and another both the first name and a noun phrase, *Hello Mary teacher*. In 27 % of messages with the recipient's name, the teacher was addressed with using either *Miss*, *Mrs* or *Ms*, as for example *Hello Mrs. brown*.

¹ It is pragmatically inappropriate and not typical of English email writing to address the teacher in an email message as *teacher*. However, no clear evidence on this claim was found for the purposes of the present study. Nevertheless, in the study by Harzing (2010) it was found that addressing a teacher with the noun phrase *teacher* is untypical language use in the UK and in the USA. In these cases it would have been more appropriate to open the message with an opening or an opening plus the teacher's first name.

The most frequently used openings included *Hello* and *Hi*. *Dear*, such as *Dear Mary brown*, was used in two messages, similarly to *Hey*, while *Good afternoon* was used once. An opening was omitted in 7 % of the messages. Emoticons, such as ☺ and :D, were used with openings in 3 % of the messages.

Summary

All in all, there were no great differences in the use of openings between Round 1 and Round 2, whereas between Round 2 and Round 3 the difference was a little greater¹. When the learners wrote their messages to a teacher, most of them used openings in all rounds. The number of messages opened with an opening plus the recipient's name increased round by round, being remarkably high in Round 3. Also, the number of messages without an opening decreased round by round, although the number of them was low already in Round 1. As it is typical of English email writing (see Section 2.3.1.2) to use an opening, and possibly the recipient's first name, in an informal email message, it can be said that the learners' skills in the use of openings in email messages increased. Since Round 2, the learners addressed the teacher more frequently with a noun phrase, in addition to the first name or a full name. To address a teacher with a noun phrase, however, is pragmatically inappropriate: it is unacceptable language use. It would have been pragmatically correct to use the teacher's name instead of a noun phrase. Furthermore, also titles such as *Miss*, *Mrs* or *Ms* were used since Round 2 when the teacher was addressed. Titles are typical of formal language use, so when writing to a teacher it is acceptable to use a title. The most frequently used opening was *Hello*, but also *Hi* and *Hey* were used. *Dear* was used for the first time in Round 3. A few emoticons were used with openings in messages written to a teacher.

¹ There was only a little statistically significant difference in the use of openings between Round 1 and Round 2 ($\kappa = .027$, $p = .786$). The difference in the use of openings between Round 2 and Round 3 was greater than between Round 1 and Round 2, but not highly statistically significant: ($\kappa = .188$, $p = .076$).

5.1.2.2 The use of closings

In the messages sent to a teacher written by L2 English learners four different ways were used to close an email message: the message was closed with either only a closing or with a closing and the sender's signature, with only a signature or no closing at all (see Figure 5). Thus, it was possible to find out what kind of closings Finnish learners of L2 English used when writing email messages to a teacher. Also the possible presence of emoticons, i.e. whether they were used as part of closings, was taken into account.

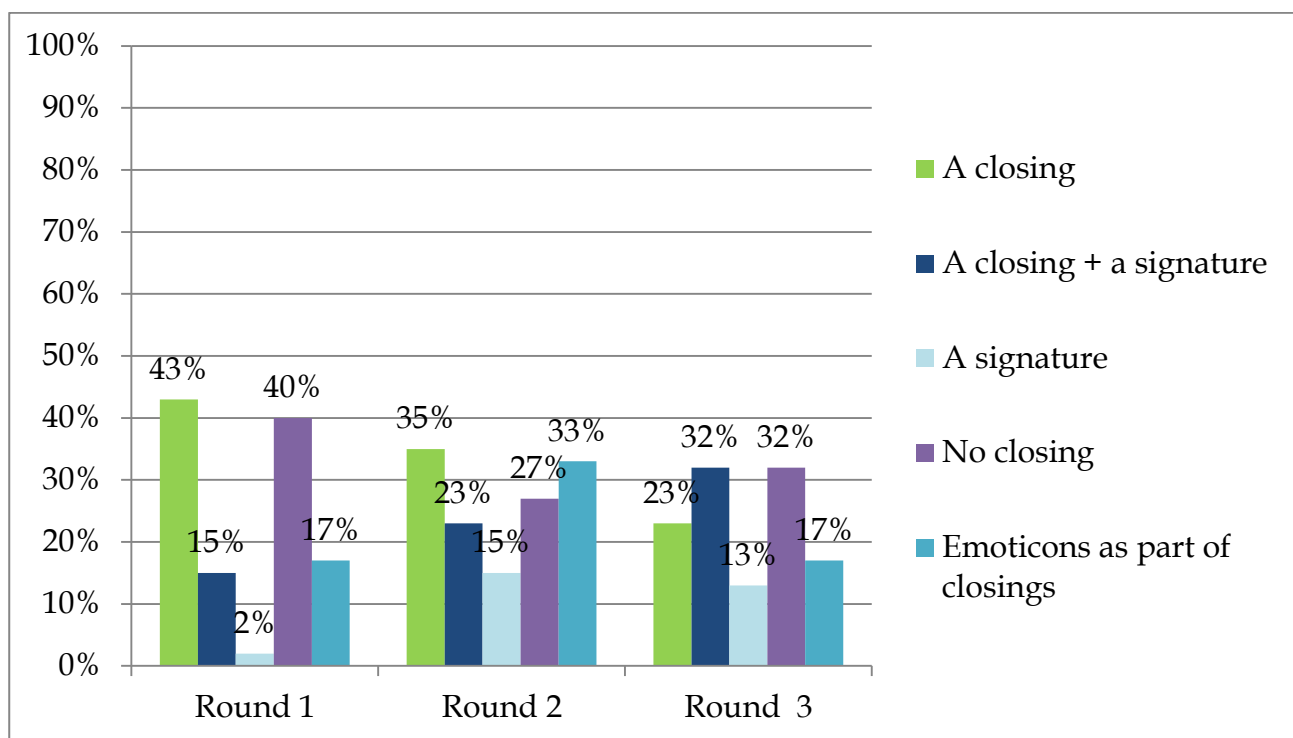


Figure 5. Closings in email messages written to a teacher by L2 English learners (n=60)

Round 1 messages

In Round 1, most of the messages were closed with a closing: 43 % with a closing and 15 % with a closing and a signature. Of all the messages, 2 % were closed with a signature, whereas in 40 % a closing was omitted. Some of the learners wrote *t/T:* or *From:* preceding the signature, such as *t: Matti* or *From: Maija*. The most frequently used closings included *See you* (with orthographical variants such as *Se you* and *Sii you*), *Bye bye* (with orthographical variants such as *By by*, *Bay bay* and *Bey bey*), and *Bye* (with orthographical variants such as *Bai*). *Got bai* (= good bye) was used in one message. In two of the messages

phatic comments were used, such as *bye bye. see you next week! Matt* and *Bye bye see you later*. Also, one learner thanked the teacher, and another addressed the teacher even when closing the message: *Got bai Mr Mary Brown*. Emoticons, such as ☺, <3 and :), were used with closings in 17 % of the messages.

Round 2 messages

When the learners wrote their second messages, 35 % of them used a closing and 23% a closing and a signature (one with only a surname), while 15 % used only a signature (one with a full name). When a message was closed with either a signature or both a closing and a signature, many of the learners used **T:**, **From:** or **By:** preceding the signature, such as *by by! T: Maija* and *By: matti*. The most frequently used closing was *Bye bye* (with orthographical variants such as *By by*, *Bya bya* *Bay bay* and *Buy buy*), but also *See you* (with orthographical variants such as *Se you*) and *Bye* were used to some extent. *Love* was used by three learners, and one learner closed the message with *Good by* (=good bye). Phatic comments were used to a great extent, such as

Please answe me soon!

But Bye Bye and See you later maybe next veek Monday ☺

Bye! See you next week I think.

See you in next mor ning. From Matti =)

I hope good for you! Matti

See you school! from: Maija.

Further, two of the learners thanked their teacher, and one apologised. A closing was omitted in 27 % of the messages. A variety of emoticons, such as <3, ☺, xD and =), were used in 33 % of the messages.

Round 3 messages

In their third messages, 23 % of the learners used a closing, 32 % a closing and a signature (one with a full name), and 13 % only a signature. Some of the learners wrote a hyphen (-), **T:**, **From:** or **By:** preceding the signature, such as - *Matti*, **T: Maija**, **From: Matti** and **By: Maija**. The most frequently used closings

included *Bye bye*, *See you* and *Bye*. *Good bye* was used twice and *Hi*¹ once. *Best wishes* was used by three learners, *Dear*⁷ twice, while *Love*, *Yours* and *Greetings* were used once. Phatic comments were used extensively, for example

So answer me soon! Bye!

Thank you and see you soon! Bye Bye! ☺

Please answer to me. - Maija

Bye and see tomorrow week!

Love= Maija (Ps. Have a nice day! :D)

Moreover, several learners thanked their teacher. In 32 % of the messages a closing was omitted. Emoticons, such as :D, ☺ and :), were used in 17 % of the messages.

Summary

First of all, there were no statistically significant changes in the use of closings between the message-writing rounds, but between Round 2 and Round 3 the difference was greater than between Round 1 and Round 2². In all message-writing rounds, most of the learners used a closing. The number of messages closed with a closing and a signature increased round by round, being relatively high in Round 3. Thus, the learners complied with the English email writing conventions, since it is typical of English email writing to use both a closing and a signature when closing an email (see Section 2.3.1.2). In all message-writing rounds, only a couple of learners used a full name as a signature, which is regarded as typical of formal language use, thus acceptable when writing to a teacher. The percentage of messages closed with a signature increased in Round 2, but decreased slightly in Round 3, being nevertheless higher than in Round 1. When a signature was used, *t:/T:*, or *From:* were used preceding a signature in all rounds, *By:* since Round 2, a hyphen since Round 3.

¹ In English, *Hi* and *Dear* are used as openings, so it is inappropriate to use them as closings.

² The difference in the use of closings between Round 1 and Round 2 was statistically insignificant ($\kappa = .124$, $p = .110$). Similarly, between Round 2 and Round 3 the difference in the use of closings was statistically insignificant ($\kappa = .189$, $p = .012$) but more significant than between Round 1 and Round 2.

The use of the abbreviations *t:/T:* preceding the sender's name is probably interference from Finnish, in which the use of them is common (see Section 2.3.1.4), since in English emails are closed with only a signature, without any preceding abbreviations of greetings. Similarly, *By:* preceding a signature is not typical language use in English email writing. The number of messages without a closing, which is untypical language use in English email writing, was relatively high in Round 1, but it decreased notably in Round 2. Nevertheless, the number of them increased a little in Round 3, remaining lower than in Round 1. A great variety of closings were used, the most frequent ones being *Bye bye*, *See you* and *Bye*. According to English email writing conventions, *See you* is an acceptable closing to be used. *Bye bye* and *Bye*, however, are more typical of spoken language, but since the language use in emails resembles spoken language, it is acceptable to use them as closings in emails (see Section 2.3.1). *Love*, which is a recommendable closing in English, was used for the first time in Round 2, and once in Round 3. *Best wishes*, *Yours* and *Greetings*, which also are recommendable closings in English email writing, were used for the first time in Round 3, but in only a few messages. Phatic comments, which have a significant role in establishing and maintaining the relationship between the interlocutors, were used in every message-writing round, the number of them being the highest in Round 2 and Round 3. Furthermore, in every round, some learners thanked the teacher. The use of emoticons was considerable in Round 2, but the number of them decreased again in Round 3. In conclusion, it could be said that the learners' skills in the use of closings in a little more formal email messages increased slightly: the number of messages closed with a closing and a signature increased round by round, the number of messages without a closing decreased and closings typical of English email writing, such as *See you*, *Best wishes* were used.

To sum up, it seems that both the opening of the messages and the closing of the messages when writing to a teacher caused difficulties to the learners. Firstly, when opening the message, many of the learners addressed the teacher with the noun phrase *teacher*, which is pragmatically inappropriate in English email writing. A positive aspect, however, was the fact that most of the learners

used an opening when opening an email message. Secondly, when closing a message, many learners used *t:/T:* or *By:* preceding a signature, which is not typical language use in English email writing. Also, in several messages, a closing was omitted. In English email writing, an email is usually closed at least with a signature. A positive aspect regarding closings, however, was the fact that the number of messages closed with a closing and a signature increased round by round.

All in all, it could be said that most of the L2 English learners knew how to open an email message according to the English email writing conventions when writing messages to a friend or to a teacher: it seemed that opening a message was easier in both assignments, since most messages included an opening, with or without the recipient's name, whereas in both assignments many messages did not include any kind of a closing. A problem with openings, however, was that many of the learners addressed the teacher with the noun *teacher*, which is pragmatically inappropriate in English. When closing a message, the number of messages closed with both a closing and a signature increased notably, an observation which complies with English email writing conventions, but the number of messages without a closing, which untypical of English email writing, remained high in every round. Moreover, several learners used the abbreviation *t:/T:/TV:* preceding a signature, which is inappropriate in English email writing. Further, the use of phatic language was notable in both message types, the number of phatic comments increasing round by round. This observation indicates that maintaining a good relationship between the interlocutors was important to the learners. Also the use of emoticons could be regarded as a phatic language use signaling friendliness and even politeness, since they were mostly used together with phatic comments and closings.

5.1.2.3 Greeting-user profiles

Research question 3 sought to find an answer to whether different kinds of greeting-user profiles were possible to be identified, and whether any progress or decline in the learners' greeting-user competence during three message-

writing rounds was to be seen. When the learners of L2 English wrote their messages to a teacher, a total of four different greeting-user profiles were identified:

[Greeting-user] **Profile 1.** Clear progress in greeting-user competence.

Profile 2. Some progress in greeting-user competence.

Profile 3. Greeting-user competence maintained.

Profile 4. Decline in greeting-user competence.

To illustrate, examples of each profile are provided below.

Profile 1 - Clear progress in greeting-user competence

Profile 1 represents learners who showed clear progress in their greeting-user competence during the three message-writing rounds (see Example of Profile 1 below).

Example of Profile 1

English Learner 2067			
Message-writing round	Opening	Closing	Progress/Decline
Round 1	<i>Hello Mary!</i> (an opening plus the recipient's name)	[nothing] (no closing)	
Round 2	<i>Hello!</i> (an opening)	<i>Bye Bye!</i> (a closing)	An opening was omitted in Round 1, but used in Round 2 → Progress
Round 3	<i>Hi Mary!</i> (an opening plus the recipient's name)	<i>thank you. <3: Maija</i> (a closing plus a signature)	A closing was omitted in Round 2, but used in Round 3 → Progress

English Learner 2067 used an opening but no closing in Round 1, whereas in Round 2 she used an opening, which is regarded as progress in her greeting-user competence. In Round 3, in addition to the use of an opening and a closing, she used a signature with a closing, which shows that there was again progress in her greeting-user competence. Thus, during all message-writing rounds, there was clear progress in this learner's greeting-user competence.

Profile 2 – Some progress in greeting-user competence

Profile 2 represents learners who showed some progress in their greeting-user competence during the three message-writing rounds (see Example of Profile 2 below).

Example of Profile 2

English Learner 2039			
Message-writing round	Opening	Closing	Progress/Decline
Round 1	<i>Hi Mary!</i> (an opening plus the recipient's name)	[nothing] (no closing)	
Round 2	[nothing] (no opening)	[nothing] (no closing)	Neither an opening nor a closing were used in Round 2 → Decline
Round 3	<i>Hi!</i> (an opening)	<i>Bye! :D >8)</i> (a closing)	Both an opening and a closing were used in Round 3 → Progress

English Learner 2039 used an opening but no closing in Round 1, whereas in Round 2 he used neither, which is regarded as decline in his greeting-user competence. In Round 3, however, he used both an opening and a closing, which shows that there was some progress in his greeting-user competence.

Profile 3 – Greeting-user competence maintained

Profile 3 represents learners who showed neither progress nor decline in their greeting-user competence, but maintained the same level during the three message-writing rounds (see Example of Profile 3 below).

Example of Profile 3

English Learner 2066			
Message-writing round	Opening	Closing	Progress/Decline
Round 1	Hi! (an opening)	[nothing] (no closing)	
Round 2	Hello, Miss Brown (an opening)	[nothing] (no closing)	
Round 3	Hello! Mary Brown. (an opening)	[nothing] (no closing)	Greetings were used similarly in every round → Competence maintained

English Learner 2066 used an opening but no closing in all message-writing rounds. For this reason, there was neither progress nor decline in this learner's greeting-user competence.

Profile 4 – Decline in greeting-user competence

Profile 4 represents learners who showed decline in their greeting-user competence during the three message-writing rounds (see Example of Profile 4 below).

Example of Profile 4

English Learner 2074			
Message-writing round	Opening	Closing	Progress/Decline
Round 1	<i>Hello Mary Brown</i> (an opening plus the recipient's name)	<i>Bey Bey</i> (a closing)	
Round 2	<i>hello</i> (an opening)	[nothing] (no closing)	An opening and a closing were used in Round 1, but a closing was not used in Round 2 → Decline
Round 3	[nothing] (no opening)	[nothing] (no closing)	Neither an opening nor a closing were used in Round 3 → Decline

English Learner 2074 used both an opening and a closing in Round 1, but only an opening in Round 2, which is regarded as decline in his greeting-user competence. In Round 3, however, he used neither an opening nor a closing. Thus, there was decline in this learner's greeting-user competence during the three message-writing rounds.

Summary

When the overall use of greetings in the email messages to a teacher written by the learners of L2 English was analysed, a total of four different greeting-user profiles were identified (see above). The percentage of the representatives of each profile is presented below (see Figure 6).

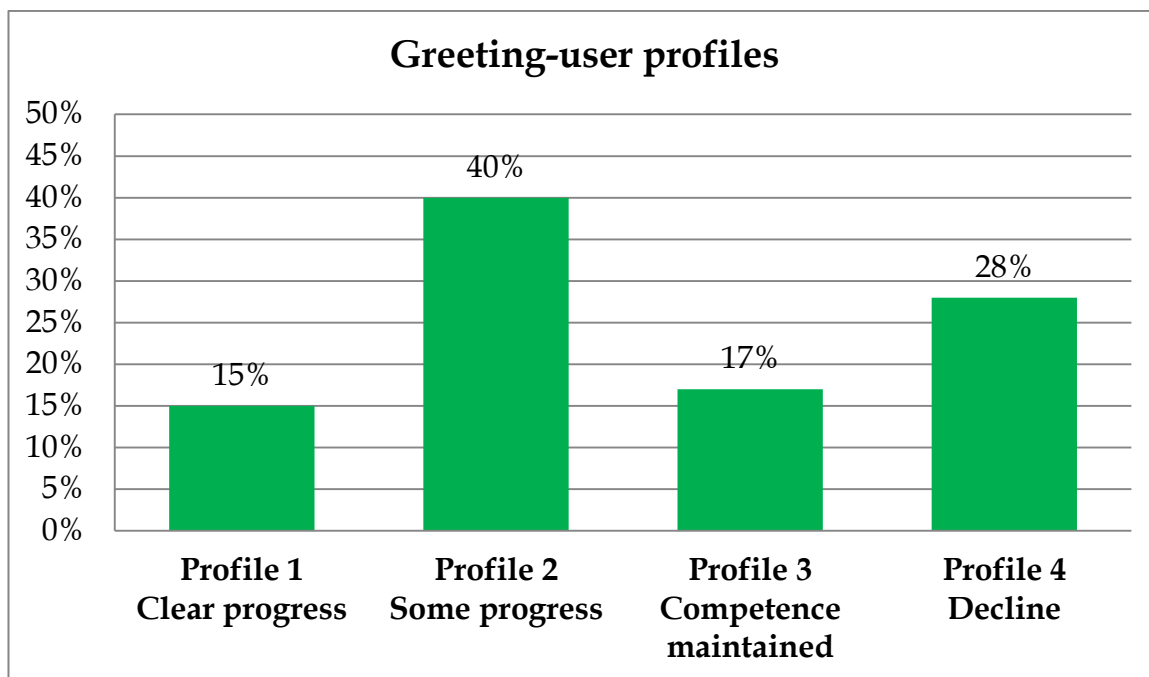


Figure 6. Greeting-user profiles: learners of L2 English (n=60), email messages to a teacher

Most of the learners (40 %) were identified as representatives of Greeting-user Profile 2, meaning that they showed some progress in their greeting-user competence during the three message-writing rounds. The percentage of learners who showed decline (Profile 4) was 28 %, which was higher than the percentage of learners who showed clear progress (Profile 1), the percentage of them being only 15 %. The percentage of learners who maintained their greeting-user competence (Profile 3) was 17 %.

5.2. Swedish learners

Research questions 1 and 2 (see Chapter 3) sought to find answers to how learners of L2 Swedish used greetings in email messages and how they took the recipient of a message into account. Furthermore, research question 4 was about how emoticons were used as part of greetings. Next, the findings based on these research questions are reported, beginning with messages written to a friend and then moving on to the messages written to a teacher.

5.2.1 Emails written to a friend

First, the findings on how the learners of L2 Swedish used openings when writing an email messages to a friend are presented, after which the findings on how they used closings in the same message type are described. Finally, the greeting-user profiles identified during the three message-writing rounds in messages written to a friend are presented and illustrated.

5.2.1.1 The use of openings

When concentrating on the use of openings in the messages written by Finnish learners of L2 Swedish, it was possible to find out what kind of openings they used when writing email messages to a friend and how the learners took the recipient of the message into account. Also the possible presence of emoticons, i.e. whether they were used as part of openings, was considered. In total three different ways were used to open an email message: the message was opened with either an opening or with an opening plus the recipient's name, or without an opening at all (see Figure 7).

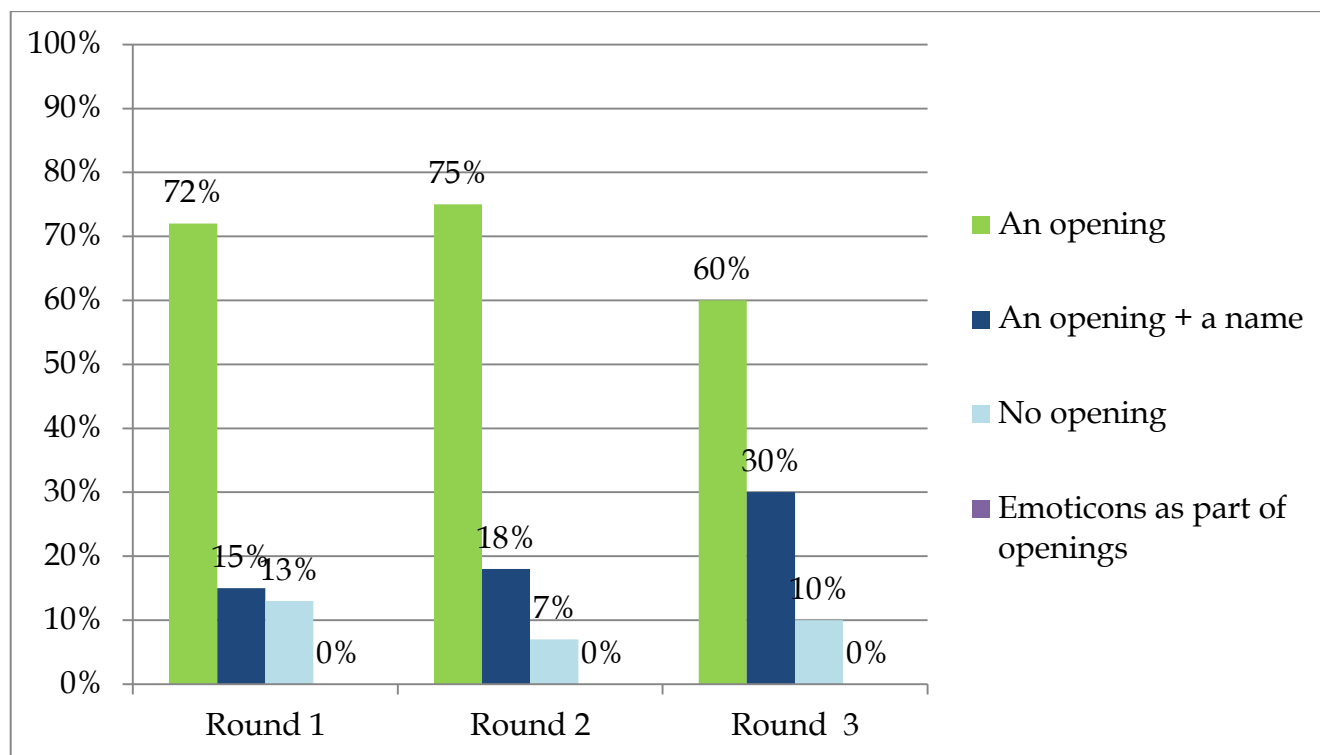


Figure 7. Openings in email messages written to a friend by L2 Swedish learners (n=60)

Round 1 messages

In their first messages most of the learners used an opening: the overall percentage of messages with an opening was 87 %. Most of the messages were opened with an opening (72 %), whereas in 15 % the recipient was addressed, in all cases by his/her first name. The most frequently used opening was *Hej* (with orthographical variants such as *Heij* and *Hei*), which was used in 63 % of all messages with an opening. *Hejsan* (13 %) (with orthographical variants such as *Heissan*) was also relatively frequent, and also *Hejdå* (7 %), which should only be used as a closing, was used as an opening to some extent. Further, a couple of learners used other openings such as *God dag*, *Moj*, och *Tjena*. The percentage of messages without an opening was 13 %. Moreover, no emoticons were used with the openings in the first round.

Round 2 messages

Most of the learners opened their second email messages with an opening: the overall percentage of messages with an opening was 93 %. The majority of the messages were opened with an opening (75 %), whereas 18 % with an opening plus the recipient's name. In other words, the number of messages with an

opening increased, the overall percentage of messages without an opening being merely 7 %, and a greater number of learners addressed their recipients, in all cases by the first name. *Hej* (with the orthographical variants such as *Heij* and *Heii*) was again the most popular opening, being used in 67 % of the messages with an opening. The opening *Hejsan* (with orthographical variants such as *Heissan*, *Hejssan*, *Heijsan*) was used in 13 % of the messages with an opening and the closing *Hejdå* (with variants *Hejdo*, *Heido*) was used in 7 % of the messages with an opening. In addition, there were a couple of messages were also openings such as *God dag* and *Tjena* were used. Emoticons were not used with the openings.

Round 3 messages

When the learners wrote their third email messages, the overall percentage of messages with an opening was 90 %. The percentage of openings with a name was 30 % of all the messages with an opening. In most of these messages opened with an opening and a name the first name of the recipient was used, but interestingly, in 12 % of the messages the learners addressed the recipient with a noun phrase, such as *Hej kompis!* *Hej där min bäst vän.* *Hejdå min bästis!* and *Hejsan mina kompisar,* (emphasis added). The most frequent opening was again *Hej* (with the variants *Heij*): altogether it was used in 70 % of all the messages with an opening. *Hejsan* (with variants such as *Hejssan* and *Heissan*) was the second most frequent, being used in 15 % of all the messages with an opening. In a few messages also the openings *Morjens*¹ was used. In this round *Hejdå* was used in just one of all the sixty messages. Further, the opening was omitted in a greater number of the messages in this round (10 %) than in the second round (7 %). No emoticons were used with the openings.

¹ The opening *Morjens* is typical of Swedish spoken in Finland, but it is not used in Swedish spoken in Sweden.

Summary

All in all, there was only little difference in the use openings between Round 1 and Round 2, whereas the difference in the use of openings between Round 2 and Round 3 was greater¹. As most of the messages in all message-writing rounds included an opening, of which *Hej* was the most frequent, it seems that opening an email message according to Swedish email writing conventions was a relatively easy task for the L2 Swedish learners: Firstly, *Hej* was used to a great extent since the first round. Secondly, in all message-writing rounds most of the learners used some kind of an opening, and the number of the messages opened with an opening and a name increased round by round, and in Round 3 the overall percentage of them was 30 % of all the messages with an opening. As Englund (2009) pointed out, the use of the recipient's first name is typical language use in informal email messages, such as in messages written to a friend (see Section 2.3.1.3). Thirdly, the use of *Hejdå* as an opening reduced significantly in Round 3, indicating that the learners had probably become more aware of the fact that *Hejdå* is used only in closings. Thus, it can be claimed that the learners' skills in the use of openings in email messages increased. Further, since in Round 3 a greater number of learners addressed their recipient with the first name or a noun phrase, they opened the messages in compliance with the informal Swedish email writing conventions (see Section 2.3.1.3). Emoticons, however, were not used with an opening.

5.2.1.2 The use of closings

In the messages written by L2 Swedish learners four different ways to close an email message were used: the message was closed with either only a closing or with a closing and the sender's signature, with only a signature or no closing at all (see Figure 8). Thus, it was possible to find out what kind of closings Finnish learners of L2 Swedish use when writing email messages to a friend. Also the

¹ Between Round 1 and Round 2 the difference in the use of openings was not statistically not very significant ($\kappa = .179$, $p = .067$), whereas between Round 2 and Round 3 the difference in the use of openings was statistically significant ($\kappa = .283$, $p = .004$).

possible presence of emoticons, i.e. whether they were used as part of closings, was taken into account.

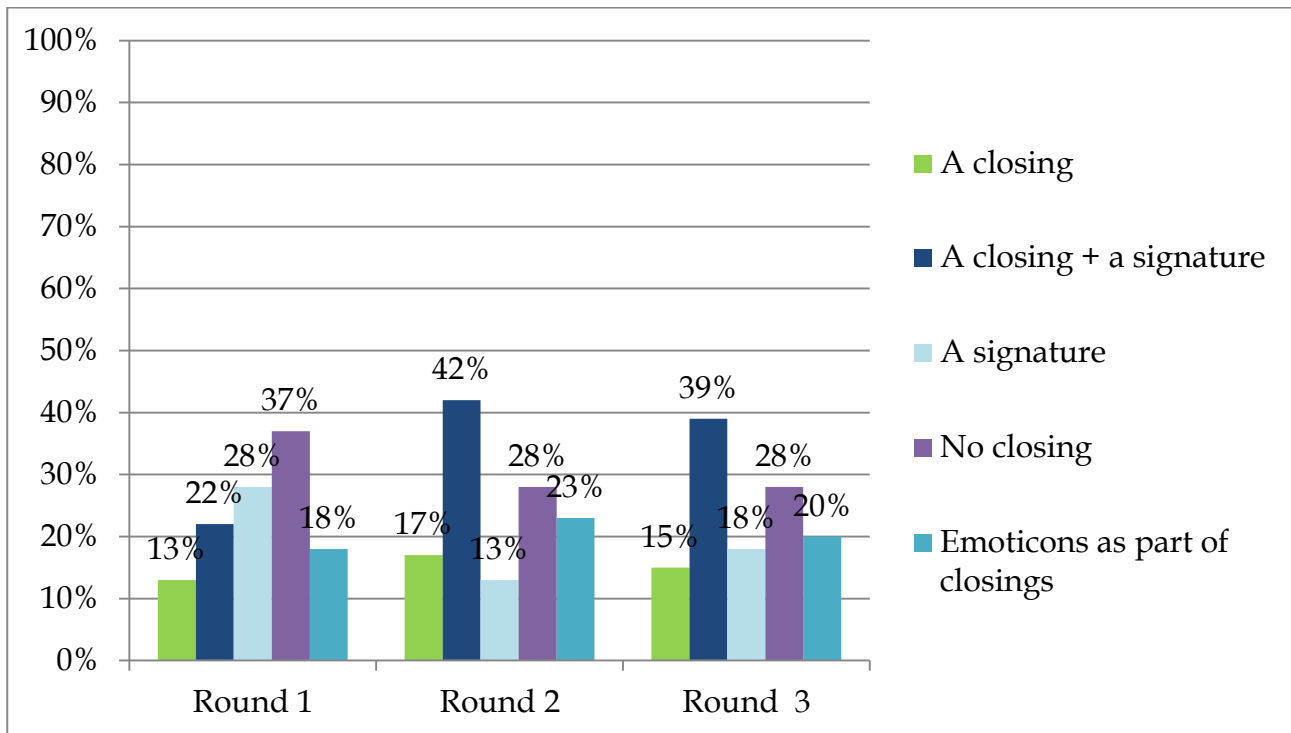


Figure 8. Closings in email messages written to a friend by L2 Swedish learners (n=60)

Round 1 messages

When writing their first email messages to a friend, most of them did not close their message in any way: a closing was omitted in 37 % of the all the messages. Of all the messages, 28 % were closed with only a signature, which in most cases was the sender's first name only; only one learner closed the message with a first name and the first letter of the surname. Nevertheless, closings were used: 22 % of the messages included both a closing and a signature, and 13 % only a closing. When a message was closed with either a signature or both a closing and a signature, many of the learners wrote a hyphen (-), *t/T:* or *Från* preceding the signature (which is untypical language use in Swedish email writing), such as *-Matti*, *T: Maija* or *Från, Maija*. The most frequently used closings included *Vi ses* (with orthographical variants such as *Vises*), *Hälsningar* (with orthographical variants such as *Hälsningar från/fron* and *Helsningar*), *Hejdå* and *Hej hej*. Also *Puss och kram* was used in a couple of messages. Also phatic comments, such as *Jag älskar dig*, *Se du, min bästis*, *Ha en bra dag*, were frequently used. Further, in the first message-writing round a great variety of emoticons

were used: 18 % of the messages included some kind of an emoticon, such as <3, ☺, :D, :P. In most cases the emoticon was placed after a signature or a closing.

Round 2 messages

In their second messages to a friend, in most messages (42 %) both a closing and a signature were used, whereas only 13 % of the messages were closed with only a signature, and 17 % with only a closing. When a message was closed with either a signature or both a closing and a signature, many of the learners wrote a hyphen (-) or *Från* preceding the signature, such as *-Matti* or *Från Maija*, and in some messages even an emoticon preceded the signature, such as <3: *Maija*. The most frequently used closing was *Vi ses* (with orthographical variants such as *Vises*), but also closings such as *Hejsan* (with orthographical variants such as *Hejssan*, *Heissan*, *Hejisan*), *Hejdå* (with orthographical variants such as *Hejdo*), *Hälsningar* (with orthographical variants such as *Hälsningar från* and *Helsningar*). Also phatic comments such as *Ha en bra dag*, *Ringa/Skriva till mig*, *Jag älskar dig*, were used. In 23 % of the messages a closing was omitted. In Round 2, a great variety of emoticons were used: 23 % of the messages included an emoticon, such as :), <3, :D. In most cases the emoticon was placed after a signature or a closing, sometimes even after both a signature and a closing.

Round 3 messages

Most of the messages written in Round 3 included both a closing and a signature (39 %). Of all the messages, 15 % were closed with only a closing, and 18 % with only a signature. When a message was closed with either a signature or both a closing and a signature, many of the learners wrote a hyphen (-) or *t:/T:/TV:* preceding the signature, such as *-Matti* or *T: Maija*. In some messages, even an emoticon preceded the signature, such as <3: *Maija*. The most frequently used closing was *Vi ses* (with orthographical variants such as *Vises*), but also closings such as *Hejdå* (with orthographical variants such as *Hej då*) and *Hejsan* (with orthographical variants such as *Heissan*) were used. In Round 3 *Med vänlig hälsning* was used for the first (and only) time in one of the messages. In several messages a phatic comment, such as *Ha en bra dag och veckoslut*, *Ringer*

till mig, Jag älskar dig, was used. Interestingly, some of the messages were closed with an apology: *Förlåta mig! Vi ses! Maija* (emphasis added). The percentage of messages without a closing was 28 %. Further, emoticons were used in 20 % of all messages, the most frequent ones being <3 and :).

Summary

There were great differences in the use of closings between all message-writing rounds, particularly between Round 2 and Round 3¹. In all message-writing rounds the percentage of messages without a closing was relatively high, particularly in Round 1. In Round 2, however, the percentage of messages closed with a closing and a signature increased remarkably, but decreased a little in Round 3. Nevertheless, the percentage of messages closed with a closing and a signature remained higher in Round 3 than the percentage of messages without a closing. The number of messages closed with only a closing, however, was almost the same in all message-writing rounds. Since the use of both a closing and a signature is typical of informal email writing in Swedish, these notions indicate that the learners' skills in the use of closings in email messages increased as most of the learners used closings according to the Swedish email writing conventions (see Section 2.3.1.3). The observation of the high percentage of messages without a closing, particularly in Round 1, may reflect the fact that at that point the learners did not know yet how to close an email message written to a friend. Further, what was typical of the messages in all rounds, was that in some of the messages with a signature, a hyphen or *t:/T:/TV:* preceded the signature. The use of the abbreviations *t:/T:/TV:* preceding the sender's name is probably an interference from Finnish, in which the use of them is common (see Section 2.3.1.4), since in Swedish emails are closed with only a signature, without any preceding abbreviations of greetings. In all rounds the most frequent closings included *Vi ses* and *Hejdå* in messages with a closing. Both *Vi ses* and *Hejdå* are more typical of spoken language, but since the language used

¹ Between Round 1 and Round 2 the difference in the use of closings was statistically highly significant ($\kappa = .306$, $p = .000$). Similarly, between Round 2 and Round 3 the difference was highly significant ($\kappa = .525$, $p = .000$), but a little more significant than between Round 1 and Round 2.

in email is relatively close to spoken language (see Section 2.3.1), it is acceptable to use these closings as closings. Furthermore, many of the learners used phatic comments, which have a significant role in establishing and maintaining the relationship between the interlocutors, in their messages. A great variety of emoticons were used in all message-writing rounds, a heart (<3) and a smiley face (:)) being the most frequent ones.

In summary, it could be claimed that the learners of L2 Swedish knew pretty well how to both open and close an email message when writing messages to friend. When opening a message, most of the learners used an opening, and the percentage of messages opened with both an opening plus the recipient's first name increased. A problem was, though, the use of *Hejdå* as an opening. When closing a message, the number of messages closed with both a closing and a signature increased notably, and the number of messages without a closing decreased round by round, both observations complying with Swedish email writing conventions. However, several learners used the abbreviation *t;/T;/TV:* preceding a signature, which is not typical of Swedish email writing. Further, emoticons were used to some extent when writing to a friend.

5.2.1.3 Greeting-user profiles

Research question 3 sought to find an answer to whether different kinds of greeting-user profiles were possible to be identified, and whether any progress or decline in the learners' greeting-user competence during three message-writing rounds was to be seen. When the learners of L2 Swedish wrote their messages to a friend, a total of four different greeting-user profiles were identified:

[Greeting-user] **Profile 1.** Clear progress in greeting-user competence.

Profile 2. Some progress in greeting-user competence.

Profile 3. Greeting-user competence maintained.

Profile 4. Decline in greeting-user competence.

To illustrate, examples of each profile are provided below. The text marked with **green** represents appropriate use of greetings, whereas **red** represents inappropriate use of greetings.

Profile 1 - Clear progress in greeting-user competence

Profile 1 represents learners who showed clear progress in their greeting-user competence during the three message-writing rounds (see Example of Profile 1 below).

Example of Profile 1

Swedish Learner 2050			
Message-writing round	Opening	Closing	Progress/Decline
Round 1	[nothing] (no opening)	[nothing] (no closing)	
Round 2	Hejsan! (an opening)	Moido. -maija (a closing plus a signature)	Neither an opening nor a closing were used in Round 1, but in Round 2 they were → Progress
Round 3	Heissan! (an opening)	Krattis hejdo Maija (a phatic comment, a closing plus a signature)	In addition to the use of an opening and a closing plus a signature, a phatic comment was used in Round 3 → Progress

Swedish Learner 2050 used neither an opening nor a closing in Round 1, but used them in Round 2, which is regarded as progress in her greeting-user competence. Moreover, in Round 3, she used both an opening and a closing plus a signature, but also a phatic comment, which shows that there was again progress in her greeting-user competence. Thus, during all message-writing rounds, there was clear progress in this learner's greeting-user competence.

Profile 2 – Some progress in greeting-user competence

Profile 2 represents learners who showed some progress in their greeting-user competence during the three message-writing rounds (see Example of Profile 2 below).

Example of Profile 2

Swedish Learner 2069			
Message-writing round	Opening	Closing	Progress/Decline
Round 1	<i>Hej!</i> (an opening)	<i>hej hej!</i> (a closing)	
Round 2	<i>Hej!</i> (an opening)	<i>-Maija-</i> (a signature)	An opening was used in both rounds, in Round 1 a closings and in Round 2 a signature → Competence maintained
Round 3	<i>Hej,</i> (an opening)	<i>Vi ses!- Maija</i> (a closing plus a signature)	A closing plus a signature were used in Round 3 → Progress

Swedish Learner 2069 used both an opening and a closing in Round 1 and both an opening and a signature in Round 2, so her greeting-user competence was maintained. In Round 3, however, she used both a closing and a signature, which is regarded as progress in her greeting-user competence. Thus, during all message-writing rounds, there was some progress in this learner's greeting-user competence.

Profile 3 – Greeting-user competence maintained

Profile 3 represents learners who showed neither progress nor decline in their greeting-user competence during the three message-writing rounds (see Example of Profile 3 below).

Example of Profile 3

Swedish Learner 2010			
Message-writing round	Opening	Closing	Progress/Decline
Round 1	Hej! (an opening)	[nothing] (no closing)	
Round 2	Hej! (an opening)	[nothing] (no closing)	
Round 3	Hej! (an opening plus the recipient's name)	[nothing] (no closing)	Greetings were used similarly in every round → Competence maintained

Swedish Learner 2010 used an opening but no closing in all message-writing rounds. For this reason, there was neither progress nor decline in this learner's greeting-user competence.

Profile 4 - Decline in greeting-user competence

Profile 4 represents learners who showed decline in their greeting-user competence during the three message-writing rounds (see Example of Profile 4 below).

Example of Profile 4

Swedish Learner 2076			
Message-writing round	Opening	Closing	Progress/Decline
Round 1	[nothing] (no opening)	[nothing] (no closing)	
Round 2	hejdo! (an opening, though inappropriate to use as an opening)	[nothing] (no closing)	An opening and a closing were not used in Round 1, but an opening was used in Round 2 → Progress
Round 3	[nothing] (no opening)	[nothing] (no closing)	Neither an opening nor a closing were used in Round 3 → Decline

Swedish Learner 2076 used neither an opening nor a closing Round 1, but used an opening in Round 2, which can be regarded as progress in his greeting-user competence. In Round 3, however, he used neither an opening nor a closing. For this reason, there was decline in this learner's greeting-user competence.

Summary

When the overall use of greetings in the email messages to a friend written by the learners of L2 Swedish was analysed, a total of four different greeting-user profiles were identified (see above). The percentage of the representatives of each profile is presented below (see Figure 9).

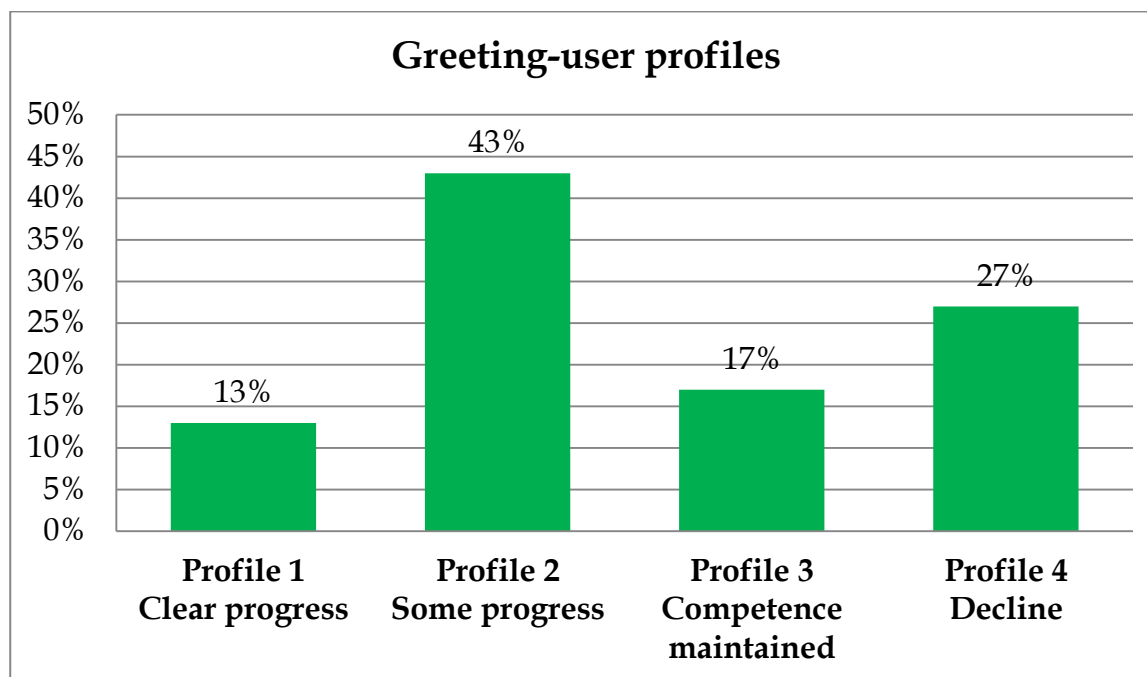


Figure 9. Greeting-user profiles: learners of L2 Swedish (n=60), email messages to a friend

Most of the learners (43 %) were identified as representatives of Greeting-user Profile 2, meaning that they showed some progress in their greeting-user competence during the three message-writing rounds. The percentage of learners who showed decline (Profile 4) was 27 %, whereas the percentage of learners who maintained their greeting-user competence (Profile 3) was 17 %. The percentage of learners who showed clear progress (Profile 1) was only 13 %.

5.2.2 Emails written to a teacher

First, the findings on how the learners of L2 Swedish used openings when writing an email messages to a friend are presented, moving on to describing the findings on how they used closings in the same message type. Finally, the greeting-user profiles identified during the three message-writing rounds in messages written to a friend are presented and illustrated.

5.2.2.1 The use of openings

By analysing the use of openings in the messages written by Finnish learners of L2 Swedish, it was possible to find out what kind of openings they used when writing email messages to a friend and how the learners took the recipient of the message into account. Also the possible presence of emoticons, i.e. whether they were used as part of openings, was considered. In total three different ways were used to open an email message: the message was opened with either an opening or with an opening and the recipient's name, or without an opening at all (see Figure 10).

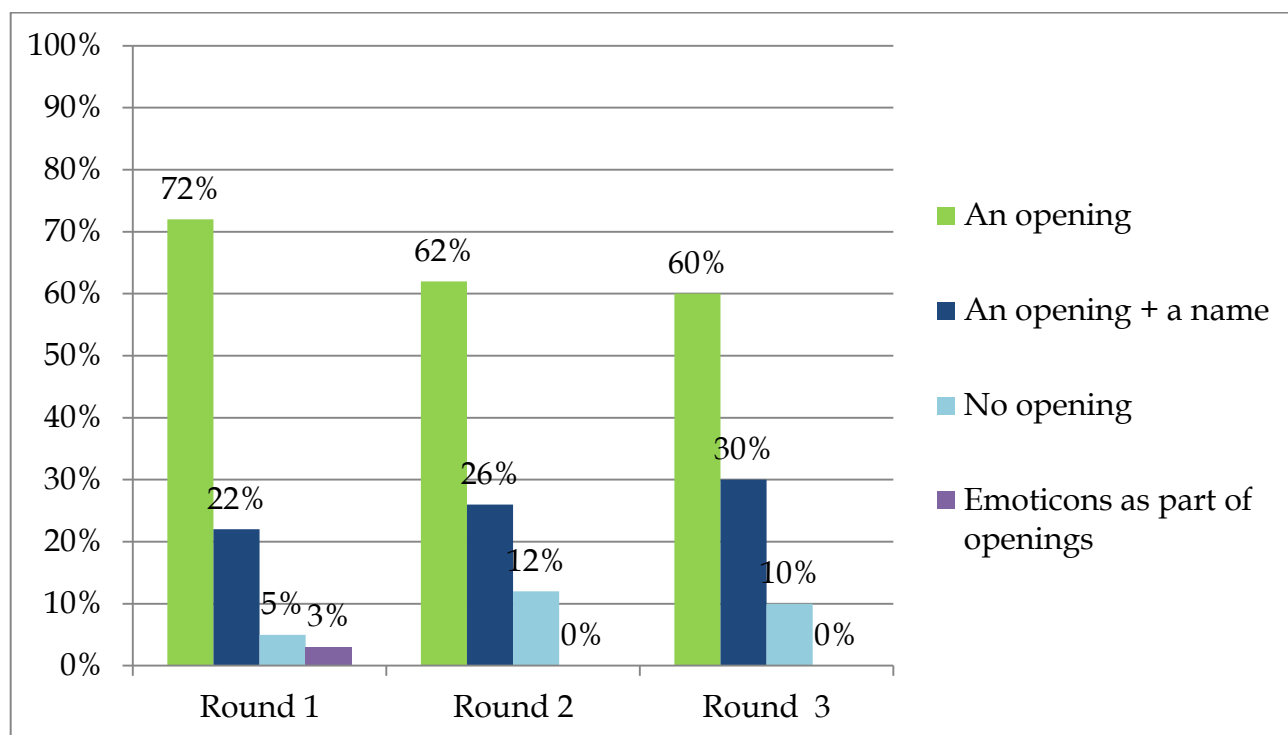


Figure 10. Openings in email messages written to a teacher by L2 Swedish learners (n=60)

Round 1 messages

In the first message to a teacher, most of the learners opened their messages with an opening: 72 % of the messages with an opening and 22% with an opening plus a noun phrase, such as *Hej lärare*¹, only one of these messages being opened with the recipient's first name. The most frequently used openings included *Hej* (in 66 % of all the messages with an opening) and *Hejsan* (with orthographical variants such as *Heissan*, *Heijsan* and *Hejssan*). In a couple of messages also openings such as *God dag*, *Morjens*, *Moj* and *Tjena* were used. *Hejdo* was used only in one of the messages. In the first message-writing round emoticons were used in 3 % of the messages, in all cases the emoticon being <3.

Round 2 messages

In Round 2, in most of the messages an opening was used: 62 % of the messages were opened with an opening whereas 26 % were opened with an opening plus the recipient's first name or a noun phrase (such as *Hej lärare*). In 12 % of the messages an opening was omitted. The most frequently used opening was *Hej* (88 % of all the messages with an opening) (with orthographical variants such as *Hejj* and *Heij*). Other openings used included *Hejsan* (with orthographical variants such as *Heissan* and *Hejssan*) and *God dag*. *Hejdå* was used twice as an opening. There were only a few messages without an opening (5 %), and no emoticons were used with openings in Round 2.

Round 3 messages

When writing their third messages to a teacher, most of the learners used openings: 60 % of the messages were opened with an opening and 30 % with an opening plus the recipient's name or a noun phrase. The most frequently used openings included *Hej* (71 % of all the messages with an opening) (with orthographical variants such as *Heij*) and *Hejsan* (with orthographical variants such as *Heissan* and *Hejssan*). Also openings such as *God dag*, *God fredag-morgon*

¹ It is pragmatically inappropriate and not typical of Swedish email writing to address the teacher in an email message as *lärare*. However, no clear evidence on this claim was found for the purposes of the present study. In these cases it would have been more appropriate to open the message with an opening or an opening plus the teacher's first name.

and *Hallå* were used. *Hejdå* was used twice as an opening. The percentage of messages without an opening was 10 %. In Round 3, no emoticons were used with openings.

Summary

There were great differences in the use of openings between all message-writing rounds, particularly between Round 1 and Round 2¹. In all message-writing rounds, openings were used in most of the messages, *Hej* being the most frequently used openings in all rounds. Interestingly, *Hejdå* was used only a few times in each round, once in Round 1, and twice in Round 2 and in Round 3. In Round 2 the percentage of messages with an opening plus the recipient's name increased slightly, and in Round 3 the percentage of these kinds of openings increased notably in comparison with Round 1. The number of messages without an opening increased slightly in Round 2 and Round 3, although it remained low in all rounds. Thus, it can be claimed, that basically the learners wrote their messages to a teacher according to the Swedish email writing conventions (see Section 2.3.1.3), since both in informal and formal email writing it is acceptable to open an email message either with only an opening or with both an opening plus the recipient's first name. However, it is not typical of Swedish email writing to address the teacher in an email message as *lärare*; it would be more acceptable to open a message assigned to a teacher either with an opening or with an opening plus the teacher's first name. So in this aspect the learners did not comply with the Swedish email writing conventions. The extensive use of the noun phrase *lärare* in the email messages written by L2 Swedish learners may represent the fact that the learners regard their relationship with teachers as distant. It may also be that because the teacher's name was not told the learners in the writing assignment they did not to even invent the name. Moreover, there were great orthographical variations to be seen in the openings that the learners used, and in many cases they were

¹ Between Round 1 and Round 2 the difference in the use of closings was statistically highly significant ($\kappa = .388$, $p = .000$). Similarly, between Round 2 and Round 3 the difference was highly significant ($\kappa = .315$, $p = .001$), but a little less significant than between Round 1 and Round 2.

written incorrectly. This may indicate the uncertainty in remembering the correct orthographical forms of openings. Emoticons were used with openings only in a few messages in Round 1, but in other message-writing rounds they were omitted.

5.2.2.2 The use of closings

In the messages sent to a teacher written by L2 Swedish learners four different ways to close an email message were used: the message was closed with either only a closing or with a closing and the sender's signature, with only a signature or no closing at all (see Figure 11). Thus, it was possible to find out what kind of closings Finnish learners of L2 Swedish used when writing email messages to a teacher. Also the possible presence of emoticons, i.e. whether they were used as part of closings, was taken into account.

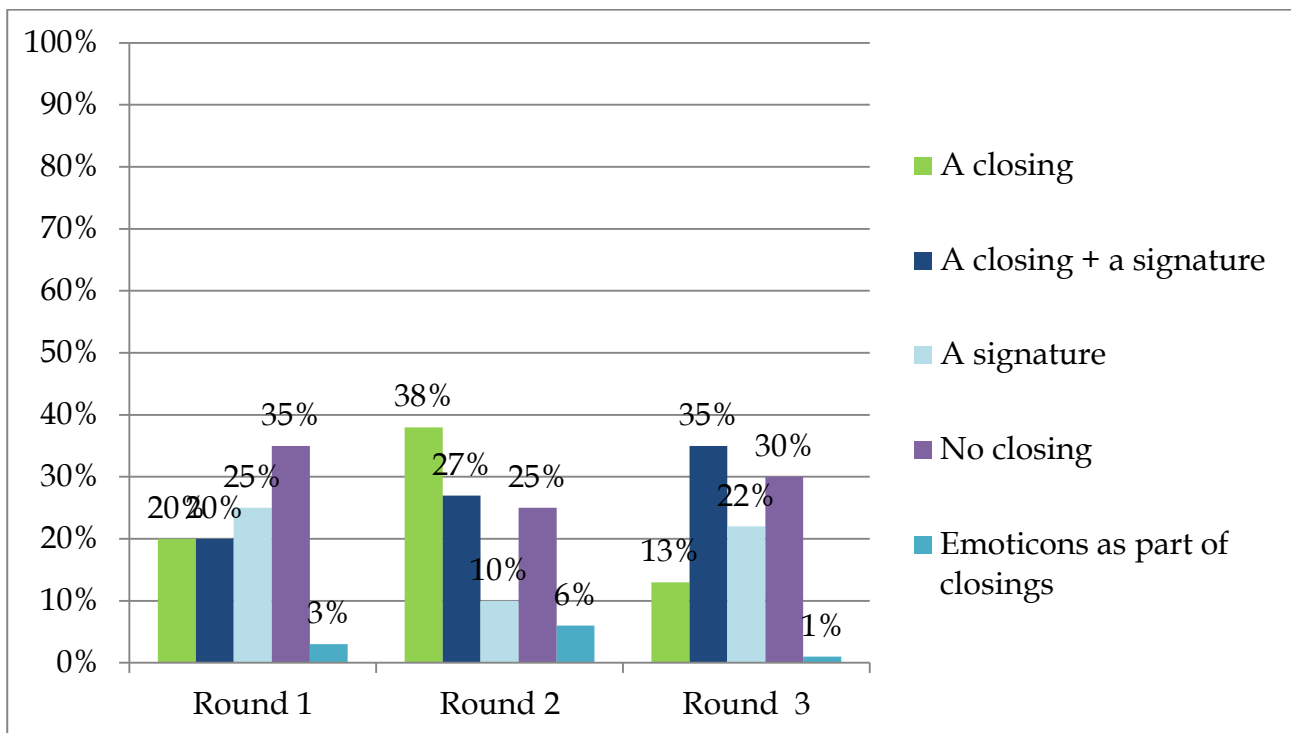


Figure 11. Closings in email messages written to a teacher by L2 Swedish learners (n=60)

Round 1 messages

In the first messages-writing round 40 % of the learners of L2 Swedish used a closing when writing to a teacher: 20 % of all the messages were closed with a closing, whereas 20 % were closed with a closing plus a signature. Of all the messages, 25 % were closed with a signature. The sender's full name was used

in 8 % of the messages with a signature. When a message was closed with either a signature or both a closing and a signature, some of the learners wrote a hyphen (-), *Från* or *t:/T:* preceding the signature (which is untypical language use in Swedish email writing), such as *-Matti* or *T: Maija*. The most frequently used closings included *Hejdå* (with orthographical variants such as *Hejdo*) and *Vi ses* (with orthographical variants such as *vises*). Also *Hälsningar (från)* and *Hejsan*¹ were used. Some of the learners used phatic comments, such as *Vi ses nästa veckan! - maija*, in their messages. Moreover, 20 % of the learners included a thank you in the closing phrase, such as *TACKAR OCH HOPPAS VI SES SNART! MAIJA* or *Tack! Från, Maija*. A closing was omitted in 35 % of the messages. Emoticons, such as =) and ☺ were used in 3 % of the messages.

Round 2 messages

In their second messages, most of the learners used a closing: 38 % closed their messages with a closing, whereas 27 % with a closing and a signature (in all cases only the first name). Of all the messages 10 % were closed with only a signature. Some of the messages in which a signature was included, a hyphen (-) or *T:*, or even an emoticon, preceded the signature, such as *-Maija T: Matti*, or *:) : Maija*. The most frequently used closing was *Hejdå* (in 36 % of all messages with a closing) (with orthographical variants such as *Hejdo*, *Heido* and *Hejdo*). Also *Hejsan* (with orthographical variants such as *Heijjsan*, *Heissan* and *Hejsån*), *Vi ses* and *Hälsningar (från)* were used. In a few messages also *Hej* and *Hej hej* were used as closings. Some of the learners used phatic comments or included a thank you in their messages, such as

God veckan!

Tack så mycket! Hälsningar från Maija

Vi ser på nexta vecka, hejsån! -Maija.

A closing was omitted in 25 % of the messages. Emoticons, such as :) and <3, were used in 6 % of the messages.

Round 3 messages

¹ *Hejsan* is supposed to be used as an opening, so it is inappropriate to use it as a closing.

In Round 3, the percentage of messages closed with a closing was 13 %, whereas the percentage of messages closed with a closing and a signature was 35 %, and 22 % were closed with only a signature. Some of the messages in which a signature was included, a hyphen (-) or *t:T*: preceded the signature, such as *t: Matti*. The most frequently used closings included *Vi ses, Hejdå* (with orthographical variants such as *Hejdo* and *Hejdo*), *Hejsan* (with orthographical variants such as *Heissan*) and *Hälsningar (från)*. *Med vänlig hälsning* was used in one of the messages. Some of the learners used phatic comments and thanked their teacher in their messages:

Vi se i morgon i svenskaclass! Hejdå! -Maija,

Tackar till dig och ha en trevlig veckoslut! Hälsningar från Maija and

Tack så mycket! Hälsningar Maija Solki, 9a.

In 30 % of all the messages a closing was omitted. Emoticons were used in only 1 % of the messages.

Summary

There were great differences in the use of closings between all message-writing rounds, particularly between Round 1 and Round 2¹. In the first message-writing round the percentage of messages without a closing (i.e. closed with a signature or the closing being omitted) was higher than in Round 2, in which most of the learners used a closing. In Round 3, however, most of the learners closed their messages with a signature or did not use a closing at all. Thus, in all messages-writing rounds, the number of messages without a closing was relatively high. The number of messages with a closing and a signature increased round by round, and in Round 3 most of the learners used also a signature if they used a closing. Furthermore, in all rounds, particularly in Round 3, phatic comments, which have a significant role in establishing and maintaining the relationship between the interlocutors, were used, and some

¹ Between Round 1 and Round 2 the difference in the use of closings was statistically highly significant ($\kappa = .282$, $p = .000$). Similarly, between Round 2 and Round 3 the difference was significant ($\kappa = .211$, $p = .002$), but a little less significant than between Round 1 and Round 2.

learners even wanted to thank their teacher. Further, what could be seen in all message-writing rounds, was that in some of the messages with a signature, a hyphen, *t/T:* or *Från* preceded the signature. The use of the abbreviations *t/T:* preceding the sender's name a probably interference from Finnish, in which the use of them is common (see Section 2.3.1.4), since in Swedish emails are closed with only a signature, without any preceding abbreviations of greetings. The most frequently used closings (with various orthographical variants, see above) included *Vi ses*, *Hejdå*, *Hejsan* and *Hälsningar (från)*. Both *Vi ses* and *Hejdå* are more typical of spoken language, but since the language used in email is relatively close to spoken language (see Section 2.3.1), it is acceptable to use these closings as closings. *Hejsan* is supposed to be used only as an opening, but *Hälsningar (från)* is a recommended closing in emails messages according to Swedish email writing conventions. Emoticons were used only in a few messages in all rounds, the number of them being the highest in Round 2. All in all, advancement in the learners' skills in the use of closings can be seen: In Round 3 the number of messages with both a closing and a signature increased, representing the language use in Swedish email writing, though the percentage of messages without a closing remained high. The only occasions in which the learners did not comply with the Swedish email writing conventions were the use of a hyphen, *t/T:* or *Från* preceded the signature, and the use of the opening *Hejsan* as a closing. Emoticons were used only in a few messages written to a teacher.

All in all, it could be said that the learners of L2 Swedish knew pretty well how to both open and close an email message when writing messages to a friend and to a teacher. When opening a message, most of the learners used an opening, and the percentage of messages opened with both an opening plus the recipient's first name increased. A problem was, though, that many of the learners addressed the teacher with the noun phrase *lärare*, which is pragmatically inappropriate in Swedish email writing. Also, the use of *Hejdå* as an opening was problematic. When closing a message, the number of messages closed with both a closing and a signature increased notably, and the number of messages without a closing decreased round by round, both observations

complying with Swedish email writing conventions. However, several learners used the abbreviation *t:/T:/TV:* preceding a signature, which is not typical of Swedish email writing. Also the use of the opening *Hejsan* as a closing was problematic. Furthermore, the use of phatic language was notable in both message types, the number of phatic comments increasing round by round. This observation indicates that maintaining a good relationship between interlocutors was important to the learners. Also the use of emoticons, which were more frequently used in messages to a friend than in messages to a teacher, could be regarded as a phatic language use signaling friendliness and even politeness, since they were mostly used together with phatic comments and closings.

5.2.2.3 Greeting-user profiles

Research question 3 sought to find an answer to whether different kinds of greeting-user profiles were possible to be identified, and whether any progress or decline in the learners' greeting-user competence during three message-writing rounds was to be seen. When the learners of L2 Swedish wrote their messages to a teacher, a total of four different greeting-user profiles were identified:

[Greeting-user] **Profile 1.** Clear progress in greeting-user competence.

Profile 2. Some progress in greeting-user competence.

Profile 3. Greeting-user competence maintained.

Profile 4. Decline in greeting-user competence.

To illustrate, examples of each profile are provided below.

Profile 1 - Clear progress in greeting-user competence

Profile 1 represents learners who showed clear progress in their greeting-user competence during the three message-writing rounds (see Example of Profile 1 below).

Example of Profile 1

Swedish Learner 2043			
Message-writing round	Opening	Closing	Progress/Decline
Round 1	<i>Hej!</i> (an opening)	[nothing] (no closing)	
Round 2	<i>Hejj!!</i> (an opening)	<i>Hejdo!</i> (a closing)	A closing was not used in Round 1, but used in Round 2 → Progress
Round 3	<i>Hej!</i> (an opening)	<i>Hejdo! – Maija</i> (a closing plus a signature)	A signature was used with a closing in Round 3 → Progress

Swedish Learner 2043 used an opening but no a closing in Round 1, but used both of them in Round 2, which is regarded as progress in her greeting-user competence. Moreover, in Round 3, she used both an opening and a closing plus a signature, which shows that there was again progress in her greeting-user competence. Thus, during all message-writing rounds, there was clear progress in this learner's greeting-user competence.

Profile 2 – Some progress in greeting-user competence

Profile 2 represents learners who showed some progress in their greeting-user competence during the three message-writing rounds (see Example of Profile 2 below).

Example of Profile 2

Swedish Learner 2012			
Message-writing round	Opening	Closing	Progress/Decline
Round 1	<i>Hej!</i> (an opening)	[nothing] (no closing)	
Round 2	<i>Hejssan!</i> (an opening)	[nothing] (no closing)	An opening was but a closing was not used in Round 1 and in Round 2 → Competence maintained
Round 3	<i>Hej!</i> (an opening)	<i>Maija</i> (a signature)	A signature used in Round 3 → Progress

Swedish Learner 2012 used an opening but no closing in Round 1 and in Round 2, but used a signature in Round 3. Thus, during all message-writing rounds, there was some progress in this learner's greeting-user competence.

Profile 3 - Greeting-user competence maintained

Profile 3 represents learners who showed neither progress nor decline in their greeting-user competence, but maintained the same level during the three message-writing rounds (see Example of Profile 3 below).

Example Profile 3

Swedish Learner 2010			
Message-writing round	Opening	Closing	Progress/Decline
Round 1	Hej! (an opening)	[nothing] (no closing)	
Round 2	Hej! (an opening)	[nothing] (no closing)	
Round 3	Hej! (an opening)	[nothing] (no closing)	Greetings were used similarly in every round → Competence maintained

Swedish Learner 2010 used an opening but no closing in all message-writing rounds. For this reason, there was neither progress nor decline in this learner's greeting-user competence.

Profile 4 – Decline in greeting-user competence

Profile 4 represents learners who showed decline in their greeting-user competence during the three message-writing rounds (see Example of Profile 4 below).

Example of Profile 4

Swedish Learner 2022			
Message-writing round	Opening	Closing	Progress/Decline
Round 1	<i>Hej!</i> (an opening)	<i>Matti</i> (a signature)	
Round 2	<i>Hej</i> (an opening)	<i>God veckan!</i> (a closing)	An opening was used in both rounds, a signature in Round 1, and a closing in Round 2 → Competence maintained
Round 3	[nothing] (no opening)	[nothing] (no closing)	Neither an opening nor a closing was used in Round 3 → Decline

Swedish Learner 2022 used both an opening and a signature in Round 1, and an opening and a closing Round 2, which means that he maintained his greeting-user competence. In Round 3, however, he used neither an opening nor a closing. For this reason, there was decline in this learner's greeting-user competence.

Summary

When the overall use of greetings in the email messages to a teacher written by the learners of L2 Swedish was analysed, a total of four different greeting-user profiles were identified (see above) (The percentage of the representatives of each profile is presented below see Figure 12).

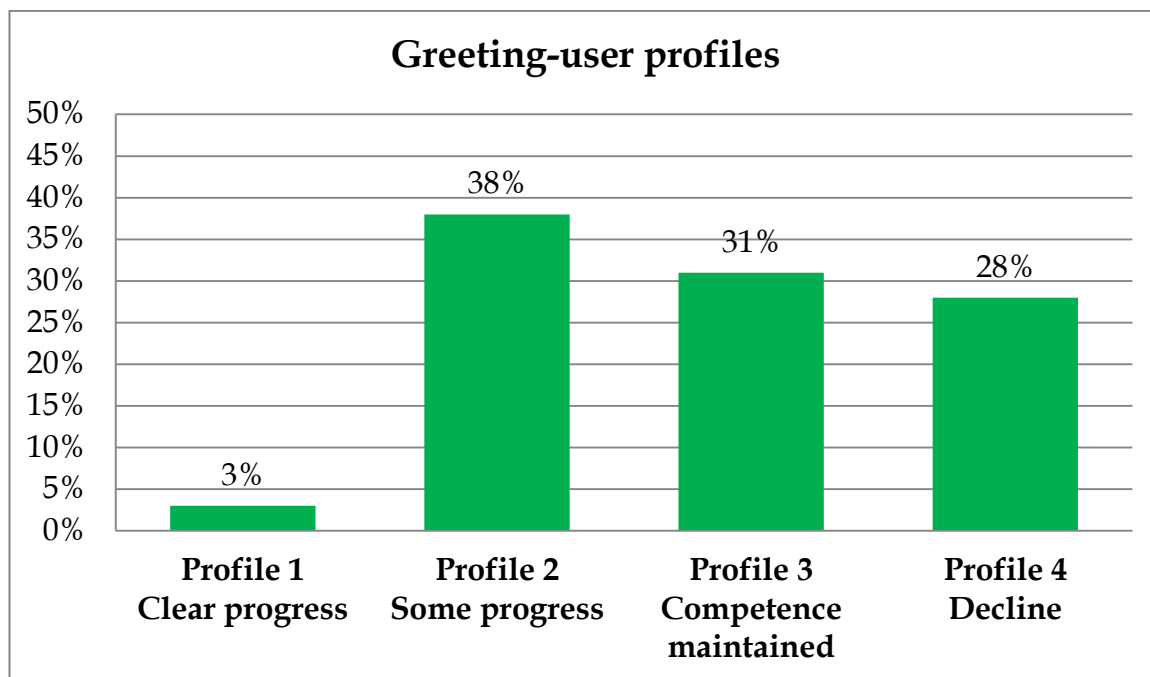


Figure 12. Greeting-user profiles: learners of L2 Swedish (n=60), email messages to a teacher

Most of the learners (38 %) were identified as representatives of Greeting-user Profile 2, meaning that they showed some progress in their greeting-user competence during the three message-writing rounds. The percentage of learners who maintained their greeting-user competence (Profile 3) was 31 %, whereas the percentage of learners who showed decline (Profile 4) was 28 %. The percentage of learners who showed clear progress (Profile 1) was only 3 %.

6 DISCUSSION

In this chapter the findings of the present study are summarized and discussed in more detail, providing answers to the four research questions and concentrating on the main findings of the study.

6.1 The use of greetings

Research question 1 sought to find out what kind of greetings and closings Finnish learners of L2 English and L2 Swedish used when writing email messages to a friend and a teacher. In addition, the aim was to discover, whether the greetings they used complied with the email writing conventions of the L2s.

English

When writing an email message to a friend, the most appropriate way to open a message according to the English email writing conventions (see Section 2.3.1.2) was to use both a greeting plus the recipient's first name, which is typical of informal email writing. When writing an email message to a teacher, the use of the recipient's name was not necessary, since in formal email writing it was appropriate to open the message with only a greeting. The omission of a greeting in both message types was inappropriate. Recommendable greetings to be used included *Hi*, *Hello*, and *Dear* + the first name of the recipient, but in more formal messages the use of the recipient's name was not necessary (Crystal 2001: 101; Waldvogel 2007: 131). When closing the message, the most appropriate way to use closings was to use both a closing and a signature. A signature alone was more appropriate than the use of only a closing, or not closing the message at all. In messages written to a teacher, however, it was appropriate to close the message with only a signature. Recommendable closings to be used included *Best wishes*, *Lots of love*, *See you soon*, or *Thank you* (Crystal 2001: 106, 103).

Thus, when the learners of L2 English wrote email messages to a friend, most of them opened their messages with only a greeting in all message-writing

rounds, which actually does not comply with the email writing conventions. Nevertheless, there were two observations indicating that the learners' use of greetings complied with the email writing conventions increased during the three message-writing rounds. First, the number of messages opened with a greeting plus the recipient's name was higher in Round 2 and in Round 3 than in Round 1. Second, the number of messages without a greeting decreased during the three message-writing rounds. When the learners wrote their messages to a teacher, the number of messages opened with only an opening was high. Since Round 1, however, the number of messages opened with an opening plus the recipient's name increased round by round, being remarkably high in Round 3, which means that eventually the learners complied with the English email writing conventions. Similarly to the messages written to a friend, the number of messages without a greeting decreased during the three message-writing rounds. *Dear* was not used in messages to a friend whereas it was used only twice in messages to a teacher. Thus, the most frequently used greetings included *Hello* and *Hi*, which were appropriate greetings to be used both in informal and formal messages. Also in Waldvogel's (2007: 128) study, the most commonly used opening in both workplaces was *Hi* plus the recipient's first name. In addition, some learners opened their message to a friend with an apology, the use of which can be interpreted as an effect caused by the assignment since the learners had been asked to cancel a meeting with their friend.

A great variety of closings was used in both message types. When closing the messages to a friend and to a teacher, most of the learners used only a closing or used neither a closing nor a signature in all message-writing rounds, which does not comply with the email writing conventions. The use of closing, however, would have been important since they function as a positive politeness strategy (Economidou-Kogetsidis 2011: 16), for instance. One reason for the omission of a closing might be the fact that the learners regarded the use of a closing or a signature as unnecessary, since closings are seldom used in SMSs, for instance, and the sender's name can often be seen already in an email

address, so the recipient's knows who the sender of the message is even without a signature. When closing the messages to a teacher, however, the number of messages closed with a closing and signature increased round by round, the number of them being the highest in Round 3, which means that their awareness of the English email writing conventions had increased. The most frequently used closings in both message types included *Bye bye*, *See you* and *Bye*, which are typical closings in spoken language. One reason for the use of these closings in email messages may be that the main emphasis in language learning in grades 4 to 6 is on spoken language (NCC 2004: 139). Hence, it may seem natural for L2 English learners to close a message similarly to when they depart from their friend, for example. Nevertheless, it is typical of the language used in email that it includes features of spoken language (Severin-Eriksson 1997: 119–120, as quoted in Södergård 2005: 272), so it is appropriate to use *Bye bye* and *Bye*, for instance, as closings. Further, in messages to a teacher, many learners closed their messages with a thank you, which was a common way to close email messages also in Waldvogel's (2007: 131) study, in compliance with the English email writing conventions. Closings such as *Best wishes*, *Love* and *Yours* were used in only a few messages. Moreover, a closing typical of Finnish, such as *t:/T:* preceding the sender's name, were used to a great extent, which can be regarded as pragmatic transfer (Žegarac and Pennington 2006: 143; see Section 2.2.1). This finding is in line with Södergård's (2005: 278) study, in which the abbreviation *t/T:* was also used with the sender's name. Probably the learners did not know how to close a message according to the English email writing conventions, so they used the Finnish alternatives. Further, in contrast to Tella's (1992: 117) study, in which the writers neglected the use of phatic language, the learners of L2 English used phatic comments frequently in both message types and in all message-writing rounds, the number of them being the highest in Round 3. Thus, it seems that it was important for the learners to maintain the positive relationship with their friends and with their teacher and to show affection to them. In addition, since the comments became more complex round by round, it is evident that their language skills had improved.

When the learners of L2 English wrote their email messages to a friend and to a teacher, the greatest statistically significant differences in the use of greetings could be seen between Round 2 and Round 3. What comes to the use of greetings in email messages, it seems that opening a message was an easier task than closing one, since the learners were more likely to use openings according to the English email writing conventions than closings. Furthermore, most of the messages included an opening, whereas the number of messages with neither a closing nor a signature was high even in Round 3. This was an interesting observation, since in the assignments for both message types the learners were reminded of opening and closing the message appropriately. Nevertheless, many of them did not use a closing. Perhaps they did not know how to close a message, or they had simply forgotten to close it. Moreover, since there were no great differences in the ways the learners of L2 English used greetings in messages written to a friend in comparison with the messages written to a teacher, it could be suggested that they did not make a difference between the degrees of formality of the two message types.

Interestingly, although Crystal (2001: 101) and Waldvogel (2007: 131) stated that *Dear* is a commonly used opening in email writing, it was not used in any of the messages written to a friend and only twice in messages to a teacher. Also in the study by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011: 12–13) the Greek university students did not use this opening. One reason for the omission of *Dear* by the learners of L2 English in the present study might be the influence of Finnish: keeping in mind the reserved and moderate Finnish culture, it might be that for Finns the use of *Dear* would feel too intimate. If one wrote an email message in Finnish, he/she would hardly ever greet anybody by calling him/her *Dear*, because the direct translation to Finnish means the same as honey, or love (*kulta, rakas*), i.e. words that are used only with people we share a close or an intimate relationship. Therefore, Finns are not used to that kind of openings, which might affect their language use in English. So, the use of *Dear* is not yet a part of the learners' sociolinguistic competence (see Section 2.2.2).

Swedish

When writing an email message to a friend, the most appropriate way to open a message according to the Swedish email writing conventions (see Section 2.3.1.3) was to use both a greeting plus the recipient's first name, which is typical of informal email writing. When writing an email message to a teacher, the use of the recipient's name was not necessary, since in formal email writing it is appropriate to open the message with only a greeting. The omission of a greeting in both message types was inappropriate. The recommendable opening to be used was *Hej* + the first name of the recipient, but in more formal messages the use of the recipient's name was not necessary (Andersson 1996: 31–42 as cited in Södergård 2005: 276; Englund 2009; Södergård 2005: 276, 280). The most appropriate way to use closings in an email message written according to the Swedish email writing conventions was to use both a closing and a signature. A signature alone was more appropriate than the use of only a closing, or not closing the message at all. In messages written to a teacher, though, it was appropriate to close the message with only a signature. The closing to be used in informal messages was *Hälsningar* + the sender's name, whereas in more formal messages the use of *Med vänlig hälsning* + the sender's (full) name was recommended.

When the learners of L2 Swedish wrote email messages to a friend and to a teacher, they used openings similarly in both message types. Most of them opened their messages with only an opening in all message-writing rounds, which actually does not comply with the Swedish email writing conventions. Nevertheless, two observations indicated that the learners' use of greetings complying with the email writing conventions increased slightly during the three message-writing rounds. First, the number of messages opened with a greeting plus the recipient's name increased round by round. Second, the number of messages without an opening was lower in Round 3 than in Round 1 in both message types. The most frequently used opening was *Hej*, which was an appropriate opening to be used both in informal and formal messages. Also in studies by Carlsson (2002), Södergård (2005) and Green-Vänttinen and

Rosenberg-Wolff (2008) the most commonly used opening was *Hej*, with or without the recipient's name. In the present study, other frequently used openings included *Hejsan*, which was also used extensively in the study by Carlsson (2002: 118), and *Hejdå* (both with a great variety of orthographical variants). Also in a study by Green-Vänttinen and Rosenberg-Wolff (2008: 59) *Hejdå* was used frequently as an opening, pointing out that the students in their study were not aware of the difference between the use of greeting phrases *Hej* and *Hejdå*, since *Hejdå* is used only as a closing in Swedish. Therefore, it seems evident that also the L2 Swedish learners in the present study were not aware of the appropriate use of *Hejdå*.

Again a great variety of closings was used in both message types. When closing the messages to a friend and to a teacher, the number of messages opened with an opening plus the recipient's name increased round by round. In fact, in messages written to a friend most of the messages were opened with an opening plus the recipient's name. Thus, it could be said that most of the learners used closings complying with the Swedish email writing conventions and their awareness of the conventions had increased. However, the number of messages without a closing or a signature remained relatively high during all rounds, which does not comply with the email writing conventions. The most frequently used closings in both message types included *Vi ses* and *Hejdå*, both of which are typical closings in spoken language. One reason for the use of these closings in email messages may be that the emphasis in language learning in grades 8 to 9 is on spoken language, the emphasis on written language increasing gradually until grade 9 (NCC 2004: 121-122). Hence, it may seem natural for L2 Swedish learners to close a message similarly to when they depart from their friend, for example. Nevertheless, it is typical of the language used in email that it includes features of spoken language (Severin-Eriksson 1997: 119-120, as quoted in Södergård 2005: 272), so it is appropriate to use *Vi ses* and *Hejdå* as closings. Further, in messages to a teacher, many learners closed their messages with a thank you, which was a common way to close email messages also in studies by Carlsson (2002), Södergård (2005) and Green-

Vänttinen and Rosenberg-Wolff (2008), in compliance with the Swedish email writing conventions. Furthermore, a closing typical of Finnish, such as *t/T:* preceding the sender's name, were used to a great extent, which can be regarded as pragmatic transfer (Žegarac and Pennington 2006: 143; see Section 2.2.1). Södergård (2005: 278) made a similar observation in her study, in which the abbreviation *t/T:* was also used with the sender's name. Probably the learners did not know how to close a message according to Swedish email writing conventions, so they used the Finnish alternatives. Furthermore, the learners of L2 Swedish used phatic comments frequently in both message types and in all message-writing rounds, the number of them being the highest in Round 3. Thus, it seems that it was important for the learners to maintain a positive relationship both with their friends and with their teacher and to show affection to them. In addition, since the comments became more complex round by round, it is evident that their language skills had improved.

All in all, it could be said that the learners of L2 Swedish knew pretty well how to both open and close an email message when writing messages to a friend and to a teacher. Also in the study by Toropainen and Lahtinen (2013: 196) most of the learners used greetings in their messages appropriately, according to the Swedish email writing conventions. In the present study, when opening a message, most of the learners used a greeting, and the percentage of messages opened with both a greeting plus the recipient's first name increased. When closing a message, the number of messages closed with both a closing and a signature increased notably, and the number of messages without a closing decreased round by round, both observations complying with Swedish email writing conventions. Further, when the learners of L2 Swedish wrote their email messages to a friend and to a teacher, there were statistically significant differences in the use of greetings between all message-writing rounds. Moreover, since there were no great differences in the ways the learners of L2 Swedish used greetings in messages written to a friend in comparison with the messages written to a teacher, it could be suggested that they did not make a difference between the degrees of formality of the two message types.

Comparison between the languages

If the uses of greetings by L2 English and L2 Swedish learners are compared together, it seems that the Swedish learners complied with the Swedish email writing conventions better than the English learners with the English email writing conventions.

In both message types, there were no significant differences between the two learner groups in the use of openings, but the English learners were more likely not to use an opening in the first two message-writing rounds. In Round 3, however, the use of openings was very similar between the two learner groups. What comes to closings, however, the Swedish learners closed their messages more often with a closing and a signature, particularly in messages to friend, which complies with the Swedish email writing conventions, whereas the English learners were more likely to close their messages with only a closing, which does not comply with the English email writing conventions. Thus, the Swedish learners complied with the Swedish email writing conventions better than the English learners with the English email writing conventions. Furthermore, what was similar to the use of closings in both learner groups was that the learners preferred using the Finnish abbreviation *t:/T:*. It could be claimed that the frequent use of *t:/T:* indicates that the learners were uncertain of how to close a message, since they have resorted to use a closing typical of Finnish instead of a closing appropriate to English respectively to Swedish. Moreover, when the learners of L2 English wrote their email messages to a friend and to a teacher, the greatest statistically significant differences in the use of greetings could be seen between Round 2 and Round 3. However, when the learners of L2 Swedish wrote their email messages to a friend and to a teacher, there were statistically significant differences in the use of greetings between all message-writing rounds.

The most significant difference in the use of greetings between the two learner groups could be observed when the learners wrote their messages to a teacher. The English learners opened their messages more often with an opening plus the recipients' name than the Swedish learners. One reason for this might be the

fact that in the assignment where the learners were asked to write a message to a teacher (see Section 4.1), the teacher's name (*Mary Brown*) was given to the English learners in all message-writing rounds, whereas it was not given to the Swedish learners. Since there were gradually hardly any differences between the frequency of messages opened with an opening plus the recipient's name in the messages written to a friend, it is evident that the assignment had an effect on the use of the recipient's name.

6.2 How the recipient of the message was taken into account

Research question 2 focused on how the L2 learners took the recipient of the message into account, and whether there were differences between the uses of openings and closings when writing to a friend, in comparison with when writing to a teacher.

English

When the learners of L2 English wrote their messages to a friend, most of them opened their messages with an opening, but the ones who used an opening plus the recipient's name addressed their friend with either the first name or with a noun phrase *friend/my friend*, which is a common way to address a friend when writing emails in English (Kankaanranta 2005: 344-345). The use of the recipient's first name is typical of informal email writing in English, whereas the use of noun phrases is not (Crystal 2001: 101; Waldvogel 2007: 131). Further, the extensive use of phatic comments with closings indicates that the learners took the recipient of the email message into account, since the use of phatic comments establishes and maintains the relationship between interlocutors (Tella 1992: 217).

When the learners of L2 English wrote their messages to a teacher, the number of messages opened with an opening was high, but when they addressed the teacher they used either the teacher's first name, full name or the noun phrase *teacher*, the use of which is not typical of English (Harzing 2010). Since messages written to a teacher could be regarded slightly more formal than messages to a

friend and the status of a teacher could be regarded as a little higher (Hofstede 1992: 56–57), it would have been appropriate to open a message, for instance, with the recipient's full name (Crystal 2001: 103). In fact, many of the learners did so when writing to a teacher, but in most cases the teacher was addressed with the first name. The frequent use of the first name of the teacher reflects the low power distance between the learners and their teacher in Finnish culture (Hofstede 1992: 46, 54). In addition, since Round 2, also titles typical of English such as *Miss*, *Mrs* or *Ms* were used with the first or a full name when the teacher was addressed, the number of them increasing in Round 3. Similarly to the messages written to a friend, phatic comments were used with or as closings also when writing messages to a teacher.

So, when writing to a teacher the learners of English were more likely to address their teacher than their friend when opening their email messages. One reason for this might be the difference in the assignment, again: in the writing assignment for a message written to a teacher the teacher's name was given to the learners, whereas in the assignment for a message written to a friend no name of the recipient was given. Thus, some learners invented a name for the recipient when writing to a friend, but most of them did not. Nevertheless, phatic comments were used with closings in both message types, which means that it was important for the learners to take the recipient into account both when writing to a friend and to a teacher.

Swedish

When the learners of L2 Swedish wrote their messages to a friend, the most frequent way of addressing their friend was either with the friend's first name, which is typical of Swedish email writing conventions (Englund 2009) or with noun phrases *kompis* and *vän*. When they wrote their messages to a teacher, however, in most cases the teacher was addressed with the noun phrase *lärare*. Also in the study by Toropainen and Lahtinen (2013: 189) the learners of L2 Swedish addressed their teacher with the noun phrase *lärare*. In contrast to Södergård's (2005: 276) study in which the student had addressed their teacher mostly with the first name, in the present study the teacher was addressed with

the first name only a few times. Phatic comments were used extensively in both message types, indicating that the learners took the recipient of the email message into account, since the use of phatic comments establish and maintain the relationship between interlocutors (Tella 1992: 217).

To sum up, the greatest difference was the fact that the learners addressed their friend more often with the first name than their teacher. Otherwise there were hardly any differences in the use of greetings by L2 Swedish learners when they wrote their messages to a friend and to a teacher, since phatic comments, for instance, were used extensively in both message types.

Comparison between the languages

As already stated and discussed above, the learners of L2 English opened their messages to a teacher more often with an opening plus the recipient's name than the learners of Swedish. As already mentioned, it may be that the learners of English used the teacher's first or full name more extensively because of the different writing assignment (see Section 4.1) in which the teacher's name was given to them, whereas the teacher's name was not given to the learners of Swedish. When writing to a friend, however, both learner groups addressed their friend with either the first name, which is typical of informal email writing in Swedish (Englund 2009), or the noun phrases *friend* respectively *kompis/vän*. Similarly, when writing to a friend, both learner groups preferred addressing the teacher with a noun phrase *teacher* respectively *lärare*. The use of a noun phrases might be due to the pragmatic transfer from Finnish, since in Finnish schools the learners use the noun phrase *ope* or *opettaja* when addressing a teacher in a class room, for instance.

The use of phatic comments was extensive in the email messages written by both groups. It could therefore be claimed that the learners regarded it important to establish or maintain a good relationship with both their friend and their teacher.

6.3 Greeting-user profiles

Research question 3 sought to discover whether different kinds of greeting-user profiles were to be identified, and whether it was possible to see any progress or decline in the learners' greeting-user competence during three message-writing rounds that took place in two or three years' time.

English

When the learners of L2 English wrote their messages to a friend and to a teacher, a total of four different greeting-user profiles were identified (see Section 5.1.1.3 and Section 5.1.2.3). In both message types, most of the learners were identified as representatives of Greeting-user Profile 2, i.e. they showed some progress in their greeting-user competence during the three message-writing rounds. Thus, some progress in the learners' greeting-user competence could be observed. Further, in a few messages clear progress was also possible to be recognized, but the number of learners who maintained their greeting-user competence or who declined in it was much higher.

Swedish

When the learners of L2 Swedish wrote their messages to a friend and to a teacher, a total of four different greeting-user profiles were identified (see Section 5.2.1.3 and Section 5.2.2.3). In both message types, most of the learners were identified as representatives of Greeting-user Profile 2, i.e. they showed some progress in their greeting-user competence during the three message-writing rounds. Thus, some progress in the learners' greeting-user competence could be observed. Further, when the learners wrote to a friend, in a few messages clear progress was also possible to be recognized, whereas in messages written to a teacher there were hardly any cases in which clear progress could be recognized. In both message types, however, there were also many learners who maintained their greeting-user competence or who declined in it.

Comparison between the languages

In both learner groups, most of the learners showed some progress in their greeting-user competence, but there were also learners who maintained their greeting-user competence or who declined in it. The most significant difference between the learner groups was that in messages written to a teacher by the learners of Swedish there were hardly any learner who showed clear progress in his/her greeting-user competence. However, in messages written to a friend by the learners of Swedish and in both message types written by the learners of English there were a few learners who showed clear progress in their greeting-user competence. In summary, it can be stated that most of the learners in the present study showed some progress in their greeting-user competence, but there were also many learners who maintained their greeting-user competence or who declined in it.

6.4 The use of emoticons

Research question 4 focused on how and when emoticons were used as part of greetings and closings, and if there were possible reasons for their use.

English

Emoticons were used with greetings to some extent in both message types by the learners of L2 English, mostly with closings, but also in some cases with openings. The variation in the emoticons used was great in both message types, different kinds of smiley faces and the symbol of a heart (<3) were the most frequently used ones. Interestingly, in some messages the learners had used an emoticon preceding a signature, the emoticon functioning as a kind of a closing, such as <3: *Maija*. Since Toropainen and Lahtinen (2013: 193) regarded the use of emoticons as a means to maintain the interpersonality of the interaction, this might be the reason for their use with greetings in the present study as well. In other words, emoticons could be regarded as phatic language use since they express often politeness and desire to co-operate (Vauras 2008: 214). In addition, the young people of today are used to using emoticons in communication in the Internet, so the use of them might seem even more natural than the omission of them (Vauras 2008: 217-218).

Swedish

The learners of L2 Swedish did not use emoticons with openings in messages written to a friend, and in messages written to a teacher only one learner used an emoticon with an opening in Round 1, but no one used them in Round 2 or in Round 3. With closings, however, emoticons were used extensively in messages to a friend, which was also the case in the study by Toropainen and Lahtinen (2013: 193), but only a few times in messages to a teacher. Perhaps the learners regarded writing an email message to a friend more personal and intimate, which might explain the extensive use of emoticons with closings in messages written to a friend, whereas they may have regarded their relationship with not as close than with a friend, hence the low number of emoticons in messages to a teacher.

Comparison between the languages

The learner of L2 English used emoticons more frequently with greetings than the learners of L2 Swedish. The learners of L2 Swedish did not use emoticons with openings in messages written to a friend and only once in messages written to a teacher. With closings, however, many learners of L2 Swedish used emoticons when they wrote their messages to a friend, but only a few learners used emoticons with closings in messages written to a teacher. The learners of L2 English, however, used emoticons extensively with both openings and closings, in both message types. Thus, there was a significant difference in the uses of emoticons between the two learner groups. One reason for this could be the age of the learners: the learners of L2 English were from 10 to 13 years of age whereas the learners of L2 Swedish were from 14 to 16 years of age. Thus, the older learners may have regarded writing a message to a teacher as a more formal writing task in which the use of emoticons would have been inappropriate, whereas the younger learners may not have made the difference in formality between the tasks but used emoticons extensively in both messages. In both learner groups, however, the most frequently used emoticons were different kinds of smiley faces and the symbol of a heart.

The next and final chapter will summarize the findings of the present study. Also, the strengths and limitations of the present study are discussed and suggestions for further research are given.

7 CONCLUSION

The aim of the present study was to find out how the learners of L2 English and L2 Swedish use greetings when writing email messages to a friend and to a teacher, and whether they regard the use of greetings in emails important. The status of the recipient and solidarity between the interlocutors was supposed to affect the use of greetings (Holmes 2013: 9–10): When writing to a friend, rather informal use of greetings was expected, as the status between friends was supposedly equal and their relationship might be regarded as quite intimate. When writing to a teacher, however, a little more formal email writing style could be expected, as the status of the teacher was supposedly higher than that of a pupil's and their relationship might be regarded as more distant, since the degree of solidarity between them is lower.

Implications

The main findings revealed that in most cases the learners used greetings according to the email writing conventions of the L2's, the learners of L2 Swedish succeeding in it slightly better than the learners of L2 English. In both learner groups, opening a message seemed to be an easier task than closing one, since the openings that the learners used complied more often with the email writing conventions of the L2's than the closings they used. However, there were no great differences in the ways the learners of L2 English and L2 Swedish used greetings in messages written to a friend in comparison with the messages written to a teacher, it could be suggested that they did not make a difference between the degrees of formality of the two message types, which was affected by the status of the recipient and solidarity between the interlocutors (Holmes 2013: 9–10). Typical of the greetings used by the learners of the present study, however, was that they resembled greetings used in spoken language, which is appropriate language use in email writing (Severin-Eriksson 1997: 119–120, as quoted in Södergård 2005: 272; Tella 1992: 214). Gradually, it was evident that both learner groups regarded the use of greetings in email messages as important since the number of messages without either an opening or a closing decreased round by round during the three message-writing rounds, although

the number of messages without a closing remained relatively high in every round. Moreover, most of the learners in both learners groups showed some progress during the three message- writing rounds. There were, however, many learners who maintained their greeting-user competence or who declined in it. Also the use of emoticons was examined in the present study. Indeed, emoticons were used extensively by the learners of L2 English in both message types, but the learners of L2 Swedish used them mostly only with closings in messages written to a friend. The difference in age of the learners may have had an effect on the use of emoticons, the learners of L2 Swedish, who were the older learner group, regarding the use of them inappropriate, particularly in messages to a teacher.

The findings of the present study show that more teaching on the use of greetings in email messages and email writing conventions of the L2's, which are important parts of pragmatic and sociolinguistic competences (CEFR 2001: 123, 125-126; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2011: 2), are needed. Firstly, in the present study the learners of L2 English and L2 Swedish could have used greetings to a greater extent, and more in compliance with the email writing conventions. Secondly, although most of the learners showed some progress in their greeting-user competence during the three-message writing rounds, there were, however, many learners who maintained their greeting-user competence or who declined in it. For this reason, more teaching in the use of greetings in email messages in L2 English and in L2 Swedish is needed, so that more learners would have a possibility in future to show clear progress in their greeting-user competence, or so that even the number of learners showing some progress would be higher. Thirdly, typical of the greetings used by the learners of the present study was that they resembled greetings used in spoken language. Although the language used in emails is often similar to spoken language (e.g. openings such as *Hello* or *Hi* used without the recipient's first name in email messages, as if trying to catch someone's attention), particularly the learners of L2 English could have used greetings typical of English email writing, such as *Dear* plus the recipient's name as an opening and *Love* plus the sender's name as a closing, more often. In order to use these kinds of greetings,

pragmatic and sociolinguistic competences in language use are required, so that learners would become more aware of the appropriate use of greetings. It would therefore be important to increase the learners' pragmatic and sociolinguistic competences through more teaching of the use of greetings in email messages. Furthermore, the importance of the use of greetings should be emphasised, since the number of messages without closings, for example, was relatively high in every message-writing round.

Evaluation of the study

There were several strengths in the present study. First, no research on the use of greetings by Finnish primary school learners who learn English as a L2 has been conducted, so this study provides new insights into this issue. In Swedish, a few studies on the use of greetings by Finnish learners of L2 Swedish were conducted, but in every study the subjects had been older than in the present study. Second, the previous studies reviewed above (see Section 2.4) were cross-sectional studies, whereas the present study was a longitudinal study, so it was possible to follow how the learners' used greetings during the three message-writing rounds and whether there was any progress in their greeting-user competence over time. Third, no comparison between the two languages in this area had been made before, but in the present study it was possible to compare the use of greetings by the two learner groups, since the focus was on the learners of L2 English and L2 Swedish. Fourth, the present study focused also on the use of emoticons in email messages written by learners of L2 English and L2 Swedish, which has not been done in earlier studies on L2 English and L2 Swedish.

There were also limitations in the present study. First, the number of email messages analysed in the present study was relatively small, so the findings cannot be generalized in a larger scale. Second, it has to be taken into account that the learners represented two different age-groups: children from 10 to 13 years of age and young people from 14 to 16 years of age. Thus, some of the differences between the uses of greetings of the two groups might be due to the difference in age: the older learners' pragmatic and sociolinguistic competence

in using greetings in Finnish, for instance, might be higher than the pragmatic and sociolinguistic competence of the younger learners, which may affect the use of greetings of both learner groups. To illustrate, the learners of L2 Swedish opened their messages to a teacher more often with only an opening than the learners of L2 English, who preferred using an opening plus the recipient's name when opening the message to a teacher. In other words, it could be suggested that because the learners of L2 Swedish were older than the learners of L2 English they were more aware of the higher status of the teacher and regarded their relationship with the teacher distant. Hence the more formal way of opening a message to a teacher. Third, the present study did not take into account the CEFR levels of the messages written by the learners, although the messages were evaluated making use of a compilation of the proficiency levels in the CEFR. Fourth, the situation in which the learners wrote their message was unauthentic: writing email message on paper, to an imaginary friend or an imaginary teacher, which does not necessarily reveal how the learners would have used greetings in real life. Moreover, because of the new communication channels and mediums provided by the Internet, it might be that children and young people of today prefer using more direct and quicker communication channels, such as different chat applications and flash messages. Therefore, sending emails, particularly to a friend, may not be the first option children and young people would choose to use when they want to contact somebody.

Suggestions for further research

As the situation in which the learners of the present study wrote their email messages was unauthentic, a study on how learners of L2 English and L2 Swedish use greeting in email messages in real life could be conducted. Also the number of email messages analysed in the present study, a study similar to the present one could be conducted on a larger number of messages. Since today email may not be the first option children and young people choose to use when contacting their friend, for instance, it could be researched how they use greetings in chat forums or in SMSs, for example. Also, since the present study did not take the CEFR levels of the email messages written by the learners of L2

English and L2 Swedish into account, it would be interesting to find out whether learners of L2 English or L2 Swedish evaluated on high CERF levels (e.g. on B1) are more likely to use greetings in compliance with the email writing conventions of the L2 than learners evaluated on low CERF levels (e.g. on under A1). Perhaps this could be a subject to be studied in future. It would also be interesting to see how the learners of L2 English and L2 Swedish use greetings in messages of different formality: in messages sent to a web store, for instance. In the present study, messages to a friend and to a teacher represent rather informal message types in which the learners knew the recipient, probably sharing a quite close relationship with him/her. Furthermore, since the present study concentrated on the use of greetings by children and young people, it would be interesting to find out how adult learners of L2 English or L2 Swedish use greetings in email messages. Moreover, in future studies, the focus could also be on the use of emoticons by adults when they write email messages.

In conclusion, more teaching on the use of greetings and email writing conventions of L2's is needed, so that people would be more aware of the importance of the use of greetings in email messages and they would be more competent to use them according to the email writing conventions of the L2 they are using.

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