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**Salutations in Intercultural Academic Communication: Hungarian  
Instructors' Perceptions of Im/Politeness in Coospace Messages**

PhD dissertation

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## Abstract

Written online communication has become an important channel of interaction in higher education, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic (Domonkosi & Ludányi, 2022). In that period, face-to-face communication in universities was often replaced by digital platforms such as CooSpace at the University of Szeged, where international medical students and Hungarian instructors communicated through written messages. This also affected the way of student-instructor interaction. The objective of the study is to investigate how international students use salutations in their CooSpace messages and how their instructors perceive them in terms of im/politeness. It is framed by intercultural pragmatics (Kecskes, 2013; 2016) and im/politeness research (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Culpeper, 2011; Kádár, 2017; Locher & Watts, 2005), fields that examine how im/politeness is negotiated in communication across different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Most previous studies concentrated on how students write emails (Codina-Espurz & Salazar-Campillo, 2019; Eslami, 2013; Ko et al., 2015). Notably, Pap (2022) investigated international students' emails in Hungary. However, only a limited number of studies have examined instructors' perceptions (Economidou-Koetsidis, 2011; Pinto, 2019; Savić, 2018).

The research is based on 151 authentic CooSpace messages sent during the pandemic, together with instructors' evaluations from a perception questionnaire (22 participants) and semi-structured interviews (13 participants). Data were analyzed using quantitative data analysis and qualitative content analysis. Through the three sources of data, the study explores what forms of salutations students use and how instructors perceive them. The findings show a wide range of variations: some students use highly formal salutations, others prefer informal or unconventional ones, and in some cases, salutations are missing altogether. Instructors evaluated these forms very differently. Titles and formal structures were usually viewed positively, while informal forms were perceived as impolite. At the same time, salutations in Hungarian, even if not perfectly appropriate, were often interpreted by the instructors as signs of cultural effort and respect. The interviews also highlighted how instructors reacted to perceived impoliteness and whether faculty-level guidelines would be helpful.

The study contributes to the field of intercultural pragmatics, specifically to the investigation and understanding of im/politeness in intercultural communication. The findings suggest potential implications for student-instructor written communication: raising students' awareness of academic salutation norms and providing institutional guidance could support clearer and more effective communication. Future research could broaden the focus beyond

salutations in academic emails, such as closings or request strategies. It could also compare instructors' perceptions across different institutions and cultural contexts.

## Dissertation declaration

I declare that all the work presented in my dissertation is the product of my own original research, conducted under the supervision of Senior Associate Professor Dr. Małgorzata Suszczyńska. I confirm that no part of this dissertation has previously been submitted as an application for any other degree or any other qualification in my name, either at this university or at any other institution. All materials that have been previously published or written by others have been appropriately referenced and cited in my dissertation. With the exception of these references, the dissertation is entirely my own work. I hereby grant permission for the final version of my thesis to be made available via the university's research repository, the university, and search engines.

Margit Skadra

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## **List of abbreviations and acronyms**

CMC	Computer-Mediated Communication
DCT	Discourse Completion Task
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
FN	First name
FTA	Face-threatening act
GE	Greeting expression
LN	Last name
NES	Native English speaker
NNES	Non-native English speaker
NNS	Non-native speaker
NS	Native speaker
RQ	Research question
SN	Surname

# **1. Introduction**

The present dissertation investigates how international medical students address their Hungarian instructors in CooSpace messages, with a particular focus on the salutations they use and how these are perceived in terms of im/politeness by the instructors. It aims to uncover which forms students employ in this intercultural academic context and how instructors evaluate them.

My interest in this topic was motivated by my own experience as a university instructor during the COVID-19 pandemic. I observed that salutations in my students' messages varied widely, ranging from highly formal to surprisingly informal. These experiences, together with conversations with colleagues, showed that many instructors had shared similar observations. This realization inspired me to investigate the topic more systematically. As I began to examine the field, I also discovered that the issue was not unique to my own institution but had been noted in various academic settings internationally. This recognition further emphasized my motivation to conduct a study focusing specifically on salutations in intercultural academic communication.

In this introductory chapter, the rationale, the scope, and the focus of the study; the hypotheses and research questions; and the methodology are presented, and an overview of the contents of the dissertation is provided.

## **1.1 Rationale of the study**

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) has significantly influenced people's lives over the past few decades. In education, written communication is now one of the most important tools for interaction between students and instructors, both through emails and dedicated university platforms, such as CooSpace at the University of Szeged. The importance of CMC was further increased by the COVID-19 pandemic (Ogiermann & Spyridoula, 2021). During this period, both synchronous and asynchronous CMC became the primary medium of educational communication (Domonkosi & Ludányi, 2022).

The aim of the present study is to investigate what forms of salutations international students use when sending CooSpace messages to their instructors and, secondly, how those salutations are perceived in terms of their im/politeness by the instructors. Thus, the research focuses not only on the linguistic structures themselves but also on their perception by the

recipients, namely by the Hungarian instructors. While forms of salutations used by international students to their Hungarian instructors have already been studied (Pap, 2022), the instructors' perceptions and evaluations within the Hungarian academic framework seem to be an underresearched area.

The study was primarily motivated by the researcher's personal experiences. CooSpace messages increased significantly during the pandemic, and their content and salutations were very diverse. As the first impression in communication, the salutations often stimulated a wide range of reactions from the researcher. Many messages contained unusual or unexpected forms, which at times were perceived as disrespectful; in some cases, there was no salutation at all. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, such inadequate salutations were less noticeable because face-to-face classes and consultations were more common than written communication, and in classroom communication different forms of opening moves could be used. In several cases, students who had shown respectful behavior in the classroom still used surprisingly impolite salutations in their written messages. These personal experiences and the observed variety in written salutations – many of which did not seem appropriate in the communication between students and their instructors – led to the conclusion that it would be valuable not only to examine them more carefully as the first segments of CooSpace messages but also to investigate the instructors' assessments of these salutations as possibly influencing the instructors' first impressions of the students.

The research took place in an educational context: the Department of Medical Communication and Translation Studies at the University of Szeged's Faculty of Medicine. Here, international medical students study general and medical Hungarian as a foreign language, but most communication with their instructors occurs in English, as students are still beginners in Hungarian. In this environment, English is not the native language of either the students or the instructors (except for a few native speakers among the students) but serves as a shared foreign language for communication in English as a *lingua franca*, while both the students and the instructors bring their own linguistic and cultural backgrounds, including politeness norms, into the interaction – often without realizing it. Based on my personal experience, such differences in norms and expectations frequently lead to misunderstandings, making it particularly important to investigate this specific educational context.

Most of the previous research (AlAfnan & Cruz-Rudio, 2023; Eslami, 2013; Félix-Brasdefer, 2012; Hamiloğlu & Emirmustafaoğlu, 2017; Pan, 2012s; Winans, 2020) focusing on email communication has emphasized the production side, how students compose messages. Much less attention has been paid to how these messages are received by the recipients – in this

case, the instructors – even though successful communication depends on this aspect as well (Bolkan & Holmgren, 2012; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Pinto, 2019). An inappropriate salutation, or the complete absence of one, as the first impression, can significantly influence an instructor's perception of the student. This can affect the overall communication process, including how quickly the instructor responds to the email, how they perceive the student as a person, or even how positively or negatively they respond to a student's message.

The data used in this research consist of 151 authentic messages sent by students to the researcher via Coospace between March 2020 and May 2021. During this period, communication between students and instructors became much more frequent due to the COVID-19 pandemic, providing a large amount of data, as Coospace became one of the main communication channels in the absence of face-to-face classes. As a result, it was possible to work with authentic data that offers a much more realistic view of the topic compared to responses elicited, for instance, through Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) (Codina-Espurz, 2021; Pan, 2021; Spyridoula, 2012; Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010).

The focus on salutations in Coospace messages aims to contribute to research on im/politeness and perceptions of appropriateness in intercultural communication. From a practical perspective, it is hoped that the findings of the study can help international students communicate more effectively in academic email contexts. Following the previous research (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007), it is assumed that many international students whose salutations were analyzed in this study may have experienced hesitation when trying to follow the politeness norms in academic email writing. In the present context, these norms are approached from an English as a lingua franca perspective, where communicative appropriateness is seen as the outcome of mutual negotiation rather than through fixed norms of any single group of English users (Jenkins 2006; Seidlhofer, 2011). This uncertainty may become even greater when students receive no feedback from instructors about communication expectations. Therefore, another goal of the study is to highlight the importance of awareness in email and Coospace message communication, especially when it involves students and instructors from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

In summary, this research was inspired by personal experience, a specific multilingual university setting, and the unique situation during the COVID-19 pandemic, which provided a large amount of real, authentic data. First of all, the study aims to contribute to the field of CMC between students and instructors and also to the fields of intercultural pragmatics and im/politeness research, with the goal of improving understanding between instructors and international students in multilingual, multicultural digital academic communication.

## **1.2 The pragmatic significance of salutations: scope and focus of the present study**

The present thesis focuses exclusively on the analysis of salutations in computer-mediated academic communication, particularly in messages sent via CooSpace by international students to their instructors. The decision to concentrate on salutations in academic messages is well supported by previous empirical findings (Balogh, 2024; Domonkosi & Ludányi, 2021a). The aim is to provide a detailed investigation of a key element of academic written communication: the salutation.

Salutations serve as the first point of contact between interlocutors and play an important role in shaping first impressions. As Goffman (1967) emphasized in his theory of face-work, the beginning of an interaction is a particularly sensitive social situation. The absence of nonverbal signs such as facial expressions and tone of voice in asynchronous written communication makes the salutation an important element for expressing politeness and respect for sociocultural norms (Crystal, 2006).

Salutations are often routine, yet they carry strong communicative importance. Their perceived in/formality, correctness, and degree of personalization strongly influence how the message is received as a whole. Locher and Watts (2005) argue that all kinds of language use can be interpreted in different ways depending on the context. These expressions might be seen as polite, impolite, or simply appropriate, based on how they are understood in the specific interaction. As such, the salutation in an email becomes a particularly important element, as it plays a key role in affecting the relational tone and how the message as a first impression is perceived.

Several studies in the field of email pragmatics have similarly narrowed their scope to the opening (and in some cases the closing) of emails (Balogh, 2024; Bou-Franch, 2011; Domonkosi & Ludányi, 2021a, 2021b; Imen Aribi Ben, 2018; Salazar-Campillo, 2018; Savić, 2019). Several studies have shown that students' use of salutations has a direct impact on instructors' perceptions of im/politeness and in/appropriateness. In Savić's (2018) mixed-method perception study, instructors consistently evaluated email politeness primarily based on the salutation, often regardless of the actual request content. All interviewees in that study talked about opening parts of the emails, even though they were not directly asked about them. In both the interviews and the survey, salutations were the most common feature mentioned. This is also supported by the study of Domonkosi and Ludányi (2018), who examined the metalinguistic content of teacher-student email exchanges – specifically, the types

of questions users posted in online forums related to the topic. They found that one of the most common types of questions concerned how to politely begin emails to instructors, with many users explicitly asking for advice and recommendations on suitable opening phrases. These studies show that focusing only on certain parts of the message – especially the salutation – is a valid research choice and helps to gain useful information.

Moreover, the data were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic, a period during which most student-teacher communication shifted to written platforms such as CooSpace. In this context, the salutation often carried a more significant function, as the absence of face-to-face interactions meant that first impressions had to be formed often only through written communication, making the opening lines of a written message even more impactful.

Although the primary focus of the present study is on salutations, the body of the emails will be briefly addressed to offer contextual background and a more comprehensive understanding of the data, but it will not be analyzed in detail, as it is outside of the scope of this study. At the same time, the message body has a lot of potential for future research, especially when it comes to face-threatening acts like requests or complaints, mitigation strategies, and email closings. However, since many student-instructor emails involve people from different cultural backgrounds, looking at salutations is a useful starting point to see how cultural expectations show up in small, specific language choices.

### **1.3 Research questions and methodology**

The present study investigates how international medical students address their Hungarian instructors in CooSpace messages, and how these salutations are perceived in terms of im/politeness. The focus is not only on the forms of the salutations but also on their perception and evaluation by the instructors, which is under-researched in academic communication. To address this aim, the study formulates both hypotheses and research questions.

The study formulates the following five hypotheses:

**H1:** There is significant variation in the forms of salutations used by international students in CooSpace messages, reflecting both linguistic diversity and differing levels of pragmatic competence.

**H2:** The instructors' evaluations of salutations are influenced by multiple factors, including the perceived degree of formality, linguistic correctness, and cultural appropriateness.

**H3:** Instructors assign more positive politeness ratings to salutations that conform to Hungarian institutional norms or follow standard academic English norms.

**H4:** Instructors are more tolerant of unconventional or nonstandard salutations when they connect them to the cultural or linguistic background of their students but are less tolerant when they interpret them as a lack of effort or respect.

**H5:** Instructors' attitudes suggest a need for institutional-level guidance regarding appropriate forms of salutation in student-instructor communication, particularly in intercultural educational contexts.

To examine these hypotheses in more detail, the research is guided by 2 quantitative and 7 qualitative research questions, which are as follows:

#### I. Quantitative Research Questions

RQ1: What types of salutations do international students use in CooSpace messages and how often do these forms appear?

RQ2: What politeness ratings did the different types of salutations receive?

#### II. Qualitative Research Questions

RQ3: What factors do instructors consider important when evaluating student salutations in the open-ended questionnaire responses?

RQ4: What similarities and differences can be identified between instructors' written perception questionnaire responses and their reflections shared during the interviews regarding student salutations?

RQ5: To what extent do instructors consider salutations an important element of academic email communication?

RQ6: To what extent do instructors associate specific salutation forms with particular cultural or national backgrounds?

RQ7: How do instructors evaluate the use of Hungarian-language salutations by international students in otherwise English-language messages?

RQ8: What are instructors' typical strategies for handling salutations they perceive as impolite?

RQ9: What are instructors' views on the need for institutional-level guidelines regarding student email salutations?

To investigate these questions, the study employs a mixed-methods approach combining both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Three sources of data were used:

- 1) 151 authentic CooSpace messages: they were analyzed quantitatively to identify the different salutation types and their frequency.
- 2) A perception questionnaire filled in by 22 Hungarian instructors: they provided Likert scale ratings of 36 selected salutations and qualitative comments about their evaluations.
- 3) Semi-structured interviews with 13 instructors: offered in-depth insights into how they perceive and evaluate students' salutations.

The combination of these three data sources provided a detailed analysis: the salutations in CooSpace messages show how they are actually used, the questionnaire offers information about how they are evaluated by instructors, and the interviews give more detailed explanations of the evaluative processes.

## **1.4 Overview of the study**

The thesis is structured into five main chapters. It aims to examine the salutations used by international students in their CooSpace messages and their evaluation by instructors. Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the study, outlining its rationale, scope, and focus, as well as the research questions and methodology. It also highlights that salutation in student–instructor written communication is an important and underresearched element.

Chapter 2 presents the theoretical background, which provides the framework for the study. It discusses three key areas: CMC, intercultural pragmatics, and im/politeness research. Within CMC, the focus is on email communication, whose characteristics are closest to the CooSpace messages. The section on intercultural pragmatics emphasizes the negotiation of meaning in lingua franca communication. Finally, the overview of im/politeness research in the field of pragmatics highlights the three waves of politeness theory. It places the present study



in the second wave of politeness research, emphasizing its focus on context-sensitive, participant-based interpretation.

In addition, Chapter 2 summarises the relevant literature on salutations in academic communication, including findings from Hungarian higher education. It also reviews studies that focus on the perception of email communication between students and instructors. The chapter also explains the choice of the term *salutation*.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology and data sources. It formulates the hypotheses and research questions and presents the three sources of data on which the analysis is based: 1) authentic CooSpace messages collected during the COVID-19 pandemic, 2) a perception questionnaire filled in by 22 Hungarian instructors, and 3) semi-structured interviews with 13 instructors. The chapter also addresses ethical considerations, anonymization procedures, and the rationale for using authentic rather than elicited data.

Chapter 4 presents the results and discussion. The findings are organized according to the three sources of data. First, the quantitative analysis of salutations in the 151 CooSpace messages is described. Second, the questionnaire results are examined. It combines quantitative ratings and qualitative comments on the five most positively and most negatively rated salutations. Finally, the interviews are analyzed, revealing more about the instructors' interpretations and evaluations. In addition, Chapter 4 summarizes the findings of the three data sources. It systematically addresses each research question (RQ1–RQ9) and evaluates whether the results confirm the main hypotheses (H1–H5) of the study.

The final chapter, Chapter 5, summarizes the main findings and their implications for intercultural academic communication. It also discusses limitations of the study, including the sample size and the focus on salutations only. It also suggests directions for future research, such as extending the analysis to the content and closing of the messages and to larger instructor populations.

## **2. Theoretical background**

The chapter is based on three main theoretical areas relevant to the present research: CMC, intercultural pragmatics, and politeness studies. In addition to outlining these theoretical frameworks, it also reviews previous empirical research on email communication in academic settings, with a particular focus on forms of address, salutations, and the perception of im/politeness in student–instructor emails in both international and Hungarian contexts. Taken together, these perspectives help to contextualize the data examined and provide a basis for understanding how students produce, and instructors evaluate, different salutations in intercultural academic interactions. The following subsections review the most important theoretical approaches and research findings related to these areas.

### **2.1 Computer-mediated communication (CMC)**

CMC has become one of the most crucial and influential forms of communication in the 21st century, driven by the expanding use of digital technologies. A majority of studies (Herring, 2001; Kitade, 2012; Peeters, 2022) agree on a common definition of CMC, describing it as any type of human communication that takes place when individuals exchange messages through computers that are connected to a network. This broad category of communication encompasses a wide variety of formats and can occur in two primary modes: synchronous and asynchronous communication. Both of these modes can be further subdivided into more specific types, depending on their distinct characteristics.

According to Franz and Vicker (2010), synchronous communication occurs in real time, meaning that participants engage in the exchange of messages simultaneously and can respond to each other immediately. Common examples of synchronous communication include chats and video calls. This form of communication has also been integrated into education through virtual classrooms, which can be more appealing to today's generation than face-to-face communication. Synchronous communication plays a significant role in supporting and improving student cooperation and making the process more interactive.

On the other hand, asynchronous communication does not require participants to be present or online at the same time. This mode provides more flexibility in responding, enabling individuals to interact with the content and formulate their replies at a pace that suits them. Examples of asynchronous communication include emails, online forums, and blog posts. As

noted by Mohamadi et al. (2024), asynchronous communication is especially advantageous when participants have different schedules, as it fits their different availability. Furthermore, this mode allows individuals the opportunity to reflect on and carefully consider their replies before sending them, unlike synchronous communication, as it fits their different availability. However, while CMC facilitates the exchange of information, it also comes with its set of challenges and limitations. One major drawback of CMC is the absence of non-verbal signals, such as facial expressions and tone of voice, which are essential components of face-to-face communication. The lack of these signals can lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations (Hancock, 2004; Herring, 2001; Leopold, 2015; Samar et al., 2010).

Among the various forms of CMC, email communication is particularly important in academic contexts. It is one of the oldest forms of CMC (Dürscheid & Frehner, 2013; Prószyński et al., 2023). Since email serves a wide range of functions and is not associated with one single, clearly defined communicative situation, it cannot be considered as a unified genre (Domonkosi & Ludányi, 2022; Kuna & Simon, 2017). Several studies also emphasized that, given the wide range of personal and professional contexts in which email communication currently plays a role, it is also not possible to characterize email uniformly from a linguistic perspective (Androutsopoulos, 2006; Domonkosi & Ludányi, 2022). As a result, linguistic analyses of email communication often refer to specific situations of use, such as business or educational settings, where more consistent patterns can be observed.

The integration of CMC into higher education has significantly transformed traditional modes of teaching and learning. Today, CMC appears in various forms across university contexts, including online courses, digital learning platforms, institutional email systems, online appointment scheduling, and online exams. Domonkosi and Ludányi (2018) observed that email communication has generated new forms of written discourse that, although related to traditional letter writing, diverge from it in several important ways. This observation is particularly relevant for the present study. As Chen (2006) notes, email communication is a hybrid form that combines features of spoken and written language and varies in its level of formality. Gains (1999) also showed that academic emails often depart from traditional letter-writing norms, using stylistic features that are more typical of spoken interaction. CooSpace messages show similar characteristics: although they are written texts, they frequently include spoken-like elements and informal expressions. Email communication between university students and instructors has become a specific form of written communication: on the one hand, it has developed into a key channel of communication in recent years, and on the other, it has largely replaced face-to-face interaction. Nowadays it is

almost impossible to imagine a university course without some email interaction between students and instructor (Hassini, 2006). For example, in many cases, emails have taken over the function of in-person office hours. However, in written academic context, students find themselves in a specific position. They are taking part in a hierarchically structured relationship – often for the first time in their lives, due to their young age – and are expected to master its linguistic conventions (Domonkosi & Ludányi, 2021b). Research on academic communication suggests that this area – written student communication with instructors – is one of the most challenging aspects of the student-instructor relationship (Domonkosi & Ludányi, 2018, 2019a).

## **2.2. Intercultural pragmatics**

The present research examines linguistic interactions involving participants from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (international students and Hungarian instructors). To analyze these, the study uses the theoretical framework of intercultural pragmatics, a subfield of pragmatics. As a first step, it is necessary to distinguish the subfield of intercultural pragmatics from cross-cultural pragmatics, as the two are not synonymous. Cross-cultural pragmatics is defined as comparing and contrasting “linguistic behaviours across different languages or different national varieties of the same language, with an emphasis on profiling linguistic realisation strategies and understanding the ways that aspects of social context influence linguistic choices” (McConachy & Spencer-Oatey, 2021, p. 1). The Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984), for example, examined how native and non-native speakers of eight languages performed requests and apologies, with data collection based on discourse completion tasks (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). Intercultural pragmatics, on the other hand, is a new and rapidly developing field within linguistics that examines how speakers with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds construct meaning in interaction. Kecskes’s *Intercultural Pragmatics* (2013) was the first full-length monograph on the topic.

While researchers defined this approach in slightly different ways, they all focus on how individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds communicate using a shared language – most often English. The following three definitions illustrate well that, even though they are phrased differently, they express similar concepts, and they share several core elements. Thus, according to Kecskes (2016, p. 400) “Intercultural pragmatics focuses on the communicative process. It investigates the speech production and comprehension of

interlocutors who represent different cultures and languages, and use a common language (lingua franca) for communication”. Similarly, Stadler (2018, p. 2) defined intercultural discourse as “the complexities that arise from interactional partners approaching a communicative situation with different sets of rules, norms, expectations, and assumptions”. In line with this, McConachy and Spencer-Oatey (2021, p. 2) described it as “a view of communication in which individuals from different (usually national) backgrounds negotiate meaning and construct common ground by bridging differences in communicative preferences, attitudes towards directness / indirectness, and culturally defined role relations”.

Although the three definitions emphasized different aspects of intercultural communication, they all shared the core elements of this field of research. All three definitions highlighted communication between speakers of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The interlocutors have to deal with challenges that affect both sides during communication, and they need to work together to create shared meaning. Instead of simply following a common set of rules, they actively participate in building understanding between them. In this way, intercultural pragmatics represents a dynamic and context-sensitive rather than a static approach to communication. Typical areas of research in intercultural pragmatics include international business communication, workplace interactions, and study abroad contexts (Holmes, 2017; Spencer-Oatey, 2000).

## **2.3 Politeness and impoliteness in intercultural pragmatics**

Pragmatics-based research on politeness began in the early 1980s and has become an important area of pragmatics, and its development has led to several theoretical approaches (Kádár, 2017). The following sections therefore outline the main developments in politeness research and present the conceptual framework through which politeness and impoliteness are interpreted in the present paper.

### **2.3.1 The three waves of politeness research**

The linguistic study of politeness has undergone several stages of development; based on these, research directions are often referred to as three waves of im/politeness research (Bom & Grainger, 2015; Culpeper & Haugh, 2021; Kádár & Haugh, 2013; Kádár, 2017).

According to Kádár (2017), the first wave includes early universal models of politeness. The most well-known theories are Leech (1983) and Brown and Levinson (1987). Leech (1983)

introduced the concept of *Interpersonal Rhetoric*, which supplements Grice's (1975) model of the *Cooperative Principle*. In addition to Grice's (1975) maxims, Leech (1983) added the *Politeness Principle* and its six interpersonal maxims. These maxims should be observed in interpersonal relationships to minimize potential impoliteness that may arise when speakers follow only Gricean maxims.

A very different model is presented by Brown and Levinson (1987), who, following Goffman (1967), claim that all individuals have a positive and a negative face and face needs, and that protecting face is the main driving force behind interactional politeness. Speakers choose either positive politeness (to build closeness) or negative politeness (to maintain distance and respect autonomy) strategies, depending on how threatening the act is (face-threatening act or FTA) and what the nature of their relationship with the addressee is in terms of status/power difference and social distance. Immediately after its publication, several researchers criticized the model because it did not prove applicable in all cultural contexts. According to Matsumoto (1988), Ide (1989), and Gu (1990), in East Asian societies, for example, the central value is not individual autonomy but the preservation of social harmony. Ide (1989) introduced the concept of discernment politeness, arguing that linguistic politeness is not always a matter of free strategic choice but is often culturally prescribed and obligatory, being predetermined by factors such as social status, gender, age, or the communicative situation. In languages like Japanese or Korean, fine status differences and social relationships are expressed through grammatical structures (levels of politeness), which are fully automatized – they are not consciously chosen by the speaker. As such, Brown and Levinson's universalism (1987) cannot account for culturally dependent, automatic politeness systems. Gu (1990), drawing on Chinese data, similarly pointed out that politeness is often linked not to face-saving but to the maintenance of interpersonal harmony. As Kádár (2017) argued, in many East Asian countries the concept of face itself is communal rather than individual. These classic models therefore presented politeness as a rational, individual, and choice-based strategy rooted in Western values such as equality, self-expression, and freedom of decision. However, such assumptions are often not applicable in non-Western contexts, where communication is based on different motivational foundations.

Since the 2000s, the second wave of politeness research has criticized the universal model of the first wave (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Leech, 1983). Instead, politeness was understood as a co-constructed phenomenon in interactions, which can only be studied in the context of micro-level, natural communication situations; thus, it rejected macro-level generalizations across cultures (Kádár, 2017). This theoretical shift gained particular attention

after the publication of Eelen's (2001) monograph, which criticized the first wave, and was followed by several others (Mills, 2003; Watts, 2003). The second wave brought not only a change in perspective but also a shift in research methodology: while the first wave focused on elicited data (DCT), the second wave emphasized the analysis of natural, spontaneous interactions.

At the same time, a new conceptual framework developed, using the concepts of first-order politeness and second-order politeness (Eelen, 2001; Kádár, 2017). According to Kádár (2017), first-order politeness is the everyday, intuitive interpretation and realization of politeness that language users themselves experience in communication. This reflects the emic, or insider's perspective, which focuses on how politeness is understood and evaluated by the participants themselves in real-life interactions. In contrast, second-order politeness refers to the theoretical, etic perspective used to describe, explain, and classify im/politeness. This etic or outsider perspective is based on metapragmatic reflections of language users and scientific analysis (Kádár, 2017).

Second-wave research (Eelen, 2001; Haugh & Kádár, 2017; Mills, 2003; Watts, 2003) highlighted that theories about politeness (second-order) need to be linked to how people actually understand and use politeness in real situations (first-order). This approach is also reflected in the analysis of natural data from different communication situations, including several areas, for example, family conversations (Locher, 2004), political public speeches (Harris, 2001), police interrogations (Thornborrow, 2002), and reality show communication (Blitvich et al., 2013). Although the second wave highlighted the limitations of the first wave, it did not provide a solution to the problem of how to link individual expressions of politeness to broader social and cultural structures (Kádár, 2017).

The third wave aims to find a solution to this problem by examining individual forms of politeness at the micro-level and trying to link them to larger social patterns at the macro-level (Kádár, 2017). Several publications adopt this approach (Culpeper, 2011; Kádár & Haugh, 2013), and the researchers aimed to answer questions such as how politeness reflects and shapes social categories (e.g., gender, class) and how it changes under the influence of individual style and context.

The development of politeness research has also highlighted the importance of studying impoliteness, which is now recognised as an equally important aspect of im/politeness research. During the first wave, it did not play a significant role in classic models (Brown & Levinson, 1987), as the focus was on facework as a means to avoid conflicts, and thus impoliteness did not receive much attention (Kádár, 2017). Still, it needs to be mentioned that Culpeper's 1996

study, *Towards an Anatomy of Impoliteness*, was the first to consider impoliteness as a central topic of research. The second and third waves emphasized that impoliteness is not necessarily intentional but can often occur accidentally or due to different cultural norms in intercultural situations (Bousfield, 2008; Culpeper, 2011; Haugh & Kádár, 2017). For this reason, research into impoliteness has also become more important in intercultural pragmatics. The early classic cross-cultural studies mainly compared national cultures. In contrast, intercultural studies – which examine how parties with different cultural backgrounds communicate – have only come into focus in recent years. House (2008) pointed out that in intercultural communication, language use that may be interpreted by interlocutors as impolite and that may emerge due to linguacultural differences does not necessarily lead to conflict: the participants are often able to flexibly interpret or even overcome any interpersonally problematic aspects of impoliteness, especially when English is the lingua franca.

### **2.3.2 Conceptual framework for im/politeness in the present study**

In the present research, politeness is interpreted within a functional-pragmatic framework (Verschuieren, 1999; Watts, 2003; Tátrai, 2011). Rather than treating politeness as a fixed set of linguistic forms, the study views politeness as behaviour evaluated by participants in relation to the expectations of the communicative situation. In interpreting politeness, Watts's (2003) distinction between *politic* and *polite behaviour* is particularly useful. In his framework, *politic behaviour* refers to what participants perceive as appropriate, expected or acceptable in a given context, while *polite behaviour* is understood as behaviour that goes beyond this level of expected appropriateness. As the later analysis shows, instructors used not only the labels *polite* and *impolite*, but they frequently evaluated students' salutations in terms of whether they were *appropriate* or *inappropriate* for the university setting, and they used these labels themselves when evaluating the messages. Although in Watts' framework (2003) *polite* and *appropriate* are used as two distinct labels, as Savić (2018) notes, the interviewees often used them interchangeably, so the present analysis also does not separate them strictly. Within this framework, the analysis of the Coospace messages and their salutations is understood as an examination of context-dependent linguistic behaviour that reflects the instructors' perceptions.

Wai Yan Min and Vaskó (2025) found that perceived impoliteness in intercultural communication is often due to differing cultural expectations rather than intentional impoliteness. This aspect is connected to the present research, as it examines im/politeness in an intercultural educational setting, where the salutations used in Coospace messages may



appear impolite to instructors while not being intended as such by the international students. In the present context, the use of salutations may be influenced by several factors, including general cultural and linguistic differences as well as diverse norms regarding written communication between students and their instructors at a foreign university. Therefore, the aim of the research is not only to examine which salutations are considered im/polite by instructors, but also how they perceive them and whether they take into account the possibility that the student was not intentionally impolite, even if the instructors perceive the salutation as such. It is important to highlight that all participating instructors are NNSs of English. Consequently, their evaluations of English-language salutations may be influenced by their own linguistic background and by Hungarian academic politeness norms rather than by NES norms. This does not reduce the validity of their perceptions, however, as it highlights that interpretations of im/politeness in English may reflect ELF-based expectations. In this way, the research also aims to contribute to the study of intercultural im/politeness.

Based on these theoretical backgrounds, the present research belongs primarily to the second wave, but it also tries to take into account the aims of the third wave. This theoretical approach is also characteristic of the studies by Savić (2018), Lai and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2025), and López-Serrano (2025), who all examined student-instructor email communication in university contexts, with a similar focus on how politeness is perceived and evaluated by the participants themselves. The present study does not work with predetermined categories and universal models, as was characteristic of the first wave, but focuses on how language users, in this case instructors, interpret and evaluate students' salutations. The research therefore follows the emic, or internal, perspective of politeness, which focuses on the interpretations and evaluations of language users themselves, rather than analyzing the phenomena based on external, theoretical categories developed by researchers, which fits into the framework of first-order politeness. The data are also based on authentic data (CooSpace messages), which is one of the methodological characteristics of the second wave. The research focuses on the instructors' own evaluations and on the criteria reflected in their responses, which served as the basis for the categories developed in the coding process. The research mainly focuses on the micro level but also aims to reach macro-level conclusions (e.g., the role of institutional norms, cultural and linguistic background), which is why it can also be linked to the third wave of im/politeness research.

## **2.4 Literature review**

This section reviews empirical research on email communication in academic contexts. It focuses on previous findings related to salutations, how students formulate their messages, how instructors evaluate them, and which linguistic and pragmatic features influence the perception of im/politeness. The subsections summarise the main findings of previous studies on salutations, as well as research on the perception of student–instructor email communication in both international and Hungarian contexts.

### **2.4.1 Forms of address in previous studies**

In recent years, email communication in university settings has received increasing attention from both pragmatic and intercultural perspectives. Most of these studies examine request strategies, with a particular focus on the request head act. Over time, a growing number of studies have also started to address openings, approaching them from various perspectives: native versus non-native usage (Eslami, 2013; Ko et al., 2015), intra-cultural variation (Balogh, 2024; Hamiloğlu & Emirmustafaoğlu, 2017; Merrison et al., 2012), instructional implications (Codina-Espurz & Salazar-Campillo, 2019), as well as the perception of im/politeness by instructors (Bolkan & Holmgren, 2012; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Economidou-Kogetsidis et al., 2020; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Huang & Chen, 2022; Pinto, 2019; Savić, 2018; Stephens et al., 2009). Their findings suggested that the perception of im/politeness in emails is influenced by a number of factors, including the language used, the norms of the specific academic situation, and cultural background.

Eslami's study (2013) examined the differences in requests made by non-native English speaking (NNES) students and native English speaking (NES) students, with a specific focus on the opening and closing sequences. The study analyzed emails written in English sent by 66 native English and 34 Iranian students to a professor at an American university, collected over six semesters. Out of the 502 emails, 300 were selected (198 NES emails and 102 NNES emails), which contain requests. The data can be adapted for comparing emails from two groups with different cultural backgrounds in an academic context. The two research questions aimed to find out the differences that could be observed between the two groups. The three main parts of the emails were first identified in the data: opening, requesting, and closing. The opening and closing sequences were further divided into segments. For the opening sequences, the parts identified are greeting, self-identification, and small talk. The analysis examined various

aspects, such as the frequency of opening, the mean number of words and moves used in these sequences, and the expressions used for positive and negative politeness. The study's results showed that opening sequences are present in high numbers in the data, contrary to previous studies. The mean number of words and moves indicated that Iranian students use longer opening sequences than native English-speaking students and employ a higher number of moves in a sequence. Additionally, in both groups, opening sequences were longer than closing sequences. These findings suggested that Iranian students put more effort into developing an interpersonal relationship with the teacher compared to native students. Furthermore, small talk in the opening sequence was used more frequently by Iranian students (55%) than by native students (10%), indicating that Iranian students prioritize socialization before making the actual request.

The opening sequences are compared not only across cultural groups but with reference to gender. Hamiloğlu and Emirmustafaoğlu (2017) examined Turkish EFL students' requests to determine whether there is a gender difference in email politeness. The study investigates three factors: the formality of the address phrase, the degree of imposition, and directness. Twenty Turkish university students (10 male and 10 female) participated in the study, so a total of 20 emails written in English were collected and analyzed. They were asked to write an email to their instructor with a request, but the subject of the email was not specified. After coding, figures were presented to show the frequency of factors that influence politeness. For the opening, the research indicated the number of formal and informal forms of address. The results showed that female students used more formal forms of address.

Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) examined Greek Cypriot students' emails written in English to faculty members, focusing on various aspects such as forms of address and degree of directness. The study looks at 200 requests sent by students to 11 faculty members. The data included address constructions that are grammatically incorrect but pragmatically acceptable, as well as forms that are acceptable but too direct, even abrupt. The study analyzed the forms of address in two respects: the percentage of people using or omitting *dear* and the *greeting+form of address*, and it also investigated the overall patterns found in the data. Results showed that 37% of the emails used *dear* in different constructions, 31% omitted *dear*, 14.5% omitted *dear* but used a greeting form, and 29 out of 200 emails (14.5%) used no form of greeting at all. The study also highlighted that NNSs often use the politeness norms of their own language. Many emails used the form *title+FN*, which is grammatically accepted in Greek but not in English. This research was conducted in what the authors refer to as a hybrid culture, where Greek students in Greece, but at an English-language university, correspond with

lecturers. This raised the question of whether the politeness norms of the local culture or the target culture should be followed.

Ko et al. (2015) conducted a longitudinal study comparing the request emails of native English-speaking (NES) and non-native English-speaking (NNES) students. From a corpus of 300 emails, they analyzed 198 requests (99 from NES and 99 from NNES) written by 33 NES and 33 NNES students over four semesters. The NNES emails were divided into three groups based on the time they were written: those at the beginning of the first two semesters, those in the third semester, and those written at the end of the last semester. One aspect of the study focused on the opening, small talk, and closing sequences. It identified the same opening sequences as Eslami (2013), namely greeting, self-identification, and small talk. Ko et al. (2015) used the same criteria for analysis as Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011), investigating the use/omission of *dear* and the use of the *greeting+address form*, providing an overall view of the structures used. The study analyzed the data in four groups: three for NNES based on the phases when the requests were written and one for NES. In the first two phases, almost half of the letters written by NNES preferred a formal form of address (dear title + LN), but in the third phase, the use of *greeting title + LN* increased, which was also the preferred form of address by NES. A chi-square test detected that the difference between the NNES and NES groups was statistically significant. The opening strategies used by NNES were not significantly different from those used by NES in either phase.

Burgucu-Tazegül et al. (2016) examined the request emails of 34 Turkish EFL learners using Baugh's (2011) and Ho's (2011) coding and scoring schemes, focusing on several criteria, including the use of openings. The study found that only 32.35% of the emails included a greeting or some form of address.

Economidou-Kogetsidis (2018) studied Greek Cypriot EFL students' request emails. The data consisted of 200 authentic emails written to 11 faculty members. The research investigated various aspects of the requests, including the forms of address used by the students. The study also looked at the relationship between the choice of forms of address and the degree of imposition and directness. The study did not investigate the forms of closing. The results indicated that 59.5% of the emails used formal forms of address, 22.3% used informal forms of address, 10.5% did not use any form of address, and 3.5% used only greetings. All subcategories of formal and informal forms of address were listed in a table. Pearson's chi-square test was used to determine whether there is a relationship between the forms of address used and the degree of imposition of requests. The results indicated that there is no relationship between the two variables. However, the Pearson Chi-square test indicated an unexpected correlation

between the forms of address and the degree of email directness. Emails that started with formal forms of address primarily used direct request strategies, while a significantly smaller number used conventionally indirect strategies. For emails with informal forms of address, fewer unexpected results were obtained, with informal forms of address being more prevalent.

Salazar-Campillo (2018) examined emails from Spanish EFL students, analyzing 50 emails: 25 written in Spanish and 25 in English. All emails were first-contact emails with the instructor, where the relationship status was consistently unequal. The study was innovative in several respects compared to previous research, which primarily focused on comparing emails between NES and NNES students. Instead, Salazar-Campillo's research contrasted emails only from Spanish students, comparing those written in Spanish and English. The investigation focused particularly only on the opening and closing sequences, which featured less frequently in previous studies, and it did not emphasize the request head act. The research questions aimed to explore the forms of opening and closing used by Spanish students in both languages and assessed if significant differences exist between the forms used in Spanish versus English. The openings and closings were categorized, and frequencies were compared between the two language groups. Significant differences between Spanish and English emails were observed in the categories *only greeting* and *greeting + lecturer's first name*. Specifically, 44% of the Spanish emails consisted of *only greetings*, which is more than double the percentage (20%) found in English emails. Conversely, the category *greeting + lecturer's first name* was more prevalent in English emails, accounting for 68% compared to 44% in Spanish emails.

Codina-Espurz and Salazar-Campillo (2019) examined the opening and closing of emails written to a professor in English by two groups of students who learned English through the Content and Language Integrated Learning framework. One group had fewer English classes (three hours per week), while the other group learned all their subjects in English. The study analyzed 20 request emails from each group. The authors identified three components of the opening: salutation, pleasantries, and self-identification. In the group with fewer English classes, 90% of students used the greeting expression + first name combination in the opening. In contrast, in the group learning all subjects in English, 55% started with the greeting expression + first name combination, and 45% used the greeting form alone. Based on their findings, the authors emphasized the importance of teaching effective opening and closing strategies in email communication. They suggested a pedagogical approach called the Five Es Approach: Expose, Examine, Enact, Evaluate, and Expand. The objective of this strategy was to improve students' proficiency in developing and maintaining efficient communication in academic and professional settings using email.

Codina-Espurz (2021) examined politeness in academic settings, focusing on the opening and closing parts of emails, analyzing 60 emails written by 20 female Spanish students. The study required students to write three emails in English: one to a professor, one to a classmate, and one to the school director. The scenarios were designed with female recipients, ensuring gender consistency between senders and recipients. The emails simulated different levels of social distance (close and distant) and social power (unequal and equal). The study found that the opening part was present in all emails. For emails to classmates, GE (greeting expression) + FN was used in all cases. In emails to professors, 65% employed GE+FN, while 75% of emails to the director used GE+title+LN. The study emphasized the need to analyze salutations in the Spanish university context, where omitting titles when addressing professors is generally seen as inappropriate. However, Spanish students often transferred norms from their native language, resulting in the use of less formal forms of address, which are common between professors and students in Spanish universities. Pleasantries in the opening were included in almost half (45%) of the emails to classmates but were rare (5%) in emails to professors and absent in emails to directors. Conversely, self-identification was negligible in emails to classmates (5%) but occurred in 95% of emails to the director.

In summary, the opening sequence of academic emails plays a key role in the perceptions of im/politeness. Studies conducted across diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds have shown that forms of address strongly influence how polite or impolite a message is (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Eslami, 2013; Ko et al., 2015; Savić, 2018). The findings indicate that NSs generally conform more closely to institutional norms when writing emails, while NNSs often transfer patterns from their first language, which may lead to pragmatic mistakes (Salazar-Campillo, 2018; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). The inappropriate use of salutations – or omitting them altogether – has been identified as a key indicator of impoliteness (Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Savić, 2018).

#### **2.4.1.1 Forms of address in the Hungarian academic context**

Research on address forms in Hungarian higher education has become important in recent years. Domonkosi's (2024) monograph also includes separate chapters on instructor-student address practices in this context, focusing primarily on spoken interaction and highlighting the hierarchical expectations that characterise Hungarian academic communication. At the same time, studies examining email communication between students

and instructors have also increased within the Hungarian context (Balogh, 2024; Domonkosi & Ludányi, 2018, 2019a, 2019b, 2020, 2021a, 2021b, 2022; Ludányi & Domonkosi, 2020; Pap, 2022).

Domonkosi and Ludányi (2018, 2019a, 2019b, 2020, 2021a, 2021b, 2022) and Ludányi and Domonkosi (2020) have published numerous studies on the topic. In their study (Domonkosi & Ludányi, 2018) examined metadiscourses appearing on internet forums concerning email communication between students and instructors. They identified the issues that most often lead to uncertainty and analyzed the variety of suggestions offered in the metadata to resolve these issues. The most frequent type of question posted on forums focused on the formulation of email openings to instructors, for example, how to address the teacher and whether to include a title. These questions indicated that students often lack sufficient familiarity with the expected norms of behavior in such academic contexts. Most respondents recommended the formula *Tisztelt Tanárnő/Tanár Úr!* (Honored Professor!), occasionally suggesting the use of *Kedves* (Dear) instead of *Tisztelt* (Honored). Addressing by students was particularly problematic in cases where the message is directed to a younger instructor who has previously offered to switch to the informal form.

The study by Domonkosi and Ludányi (2019a) analyzed 200 emails written in Hungarian by students to two male and three female Hungarian instructors. The instructors were asked to submit anonymized versions of the last 40 emails received from students. These emails were taken from a larger database of 680 messages. The study also included three student focus group interviews and a questionnaire completed by 50 students, who were asked to compose opening and closing formulas for emails, taking into account the gender, age, and status of the addressee. Based on the data, 65% of students used the formula *Tisztelt Tanárnő / Tanár Úr!* (Honored Professor!) regardless of status or age, although *Kedves* (Dear) also appeared in some cases. It can also be observed that there is greater variation in how female recipients are addressed. The data also included instances of the formula *Jó napot kívánok!* (Good afternoon!) without any explicit address form. The researchers suggested that this may reflect the fact that, in digital communication, the greeting function of the opening has higher priority than the addressing function. Additionally, forms such as *Jó reggelt* (Good morning), *Jó napot* (Good afternoon), and *Jó estét* (Good evening) also occurred, which may suggest that Generation Z students assume that instructors are continuously present in the online space. Although non-traditional forms of address that deviate from *Tisztelt/Kedves Tanárnő/Tanár Úr* (Honored/Dear Professor!) did not occur in particularly high numbers, instructors still tended

to perceive student emails as problematic, which may indicate that forms of address constitute a main element of written communication.

Pap (2022) examined emails written in Hungarian by international university students studying in Hungary, focusing on several linguistic and pragmatic features. In addition to forms of address, the study also investigated email closings and the speech act of requesting. The data consisted of emails from 74 students (62 women and 12 men) representing 18 nationalities; all were enrolled in Hungarian Studies programs in Budapest. As for email openings, the most frequent form of address was *Kedves + titulus* (dear + title), (e.g., *Kedves Tanárnő*), appearing in 37.7% of cases. The second most common form was *Tisztelt + titulus* (Honored + title) (e.g., *Tisztelt Tanárnő*), which occurred in 22.95% of the emails. According to the study, the *Tisztelt + titulus* (Honored and title) form is a conventionally polite and distant address form, while *Kedves + titulus* (Dear + title) also shows politeness but implies a more familiar and personally closer teacher-student relationship. The data also contained *Tisztelt + vezetéknév + keresztnév* (Honored + LN + FN) (6.56%) and the pragmatically inappropriate *Tisztelt + keresztnév + titulus* (Honored + FN + title) (1.64%). A notable 31.15% of the data included *Kedves + keresztnév* (Dear + FN); however, the study explained this high frequency as due to the informal relationship that existed in some of the student groups. In addition to conventional address forms, expressions characteristic of spoken greetings were also present, such as *Jó napot/estét!* (Good afternoon/evening!), *Jó napot/estét + titulus* (Good afternoon/evening + title), and even the informal *Szia + keresztnév* (Hello + FN). The study also noted the presence of pragmatic errors in some emails, including inappropriate word choice (*kedves tanár*) (dear teacher), mixing of formal and informal registers (*Szia tanárnő!*) (Hello teacher!), or structurally incorrect address forms (*Tisztelt + keresztnév + tanárnő*) (Honored + FN + teacher).

Balogh (2024) conducted a detailed examination of the forms of address used by Hungarian university students in their email correspondence with instructors, with all three of the research questions focusing on this topic. The study investigated the address forms students use when writing emails to their instructors, as well as the choices they would make in a hypothetical scenario when required to address an unfamiliar male or female instructor in both Hungarian and English. Furthermore, the research investigated what considerations influence their choice of address form. The study analyzed 200 emails written by 91 Hungarian university students, who sent their emails to their instructor. Among these, 177 emails were written in Hungarian, while 23 were in English. The results indicated that most Hungarian students used formal address forms, and in the Hungarian emails, the majority addressed the instructor with a professional title; 82% used the term *tanárnő* (female teacher). Similarly, in English-language



emails, students applied equivalent terms such as *teacher* or *professor* when addressing their instructor. In the case of 11 emails, no explicit form of address was used at all; instead, these messages began with a general greeting, without directly addressing the recipient. In 19 cases the students addressed the instructor by name only, most frequently using the full name, rather than just the first or last name alone. However, in six emails – three in Hungarian and three in English – the students addressed the instructor by first name only, without including a title. The researcher suggested two possible explanations. The students may not be fully aware the norms of addressing instructors in academic settings or their choices may be the case of pragmatic transfer from English, where informal address forms are more commonly accepted in professional or academic interactions. Additionally, 16 emails contained a combination of titles and names, which appeared in a variety of different formats. Some students used academic titles such as *Dr.*, while others employed general or professional titles like *Professor*, often in combination with either the instructor's full name or last name only. The second part of the study focused on a controlled hypothetical scenario in which students were required to select an appropriate form of address for an unfamiliar instructor of both genders in both Hungarian and English. The study involved 44 students; half of the participants were asked to select a form of address from a list for a female instructor, while the other half made their selection for a male instructor in both languages. The available choices were based on the data collected from the previous email analysis. The results revealed that the most common choice among students was to combine the instructor's academic title with their full name, reflecting a preference for maintaining a high degree of formality in their communication. The study found that students tend to use formal address terms as a way to express respect. Moreover, they considered the use of academic titles essential, as omitting them might be perceived as impolite. However, in English emails, students sometimes showed uncertainty regarding which form to use. In addition to Ms. and Mr., the data included a single instance of the gender-neutral Mx. form. The findings also revealed that instructors do not always provide clear guidance on how they prefer to be addressed, which increases students' confusion. This suggested that more explicitness from instructors regarding their preferred forms of address could help students handle academic email communication more effectively.

In summary, these studies demonstrated that salutations are a researched and significant area within academic email communication in Hungary, both among native and international students. The present dissertation contributes to this field by exploring Hungarian instructors' perspectives on im/politeness in salutations in an intercultural context.

### 2.4.1.2 The structure and terminology of email salutations

Goffman (1967) emphasized the significance of openings in social interaction. Later studies also highlight its importance within the context of email communication (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2005; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Salazar-Campillo, 2018). Researchers in their studies used different terms when defining opening sequences in emails (see table 1).

Table 1. Structures of the openings in different studies

Study	Element(s) of openings	Example(s) from the study
Biesenbach-Lucas (2005)	Greetings	- <i>Dear Professor X,</i>
Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011)	Greeting/opening	- <i>Hi/Hello/Good morning</i> - <i>How are you?</i> - <i>I am sorry to hear that you are not well.</i>
Eslami (2013)	Greeting	- <i>Hi</i> - <i>Hello</i>
	Self-identification	- <i>This is Rachel Parker</i>
	Small talk	- <i>I hope your day is going well.</i>
Ko et al. (2015)	Greeting	no particular examples
	Self-identification	no particular examples
	Small talk	no particular examples
Savić (2018)	Greeting	- <i>Hi</i> - <i>Hi Milica</i> - <i>Hello</i>
Codina-Espurz and Salazar-Campillo (2019)	Salutation: greeting expression + address form	- <i>Dear FN</i> - <i>Good morning FN</i>
	Pleasantry (gratitude, apology, etc.)	- <i>I hope this email finds you well.</i>
	Identification of self	sender's identification
Economidou-Kogetsidis et al. (2020)	Greetings/forms of address	- <i>Dear Professor</i>

Biesenbach-Lucas (2005) used the term *greeting* in her study without specifying its components in detail. The study also employs the term *opening greeting* once. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) and Economidou-Kogetsidis et al. (2020) demonstrated inconsistency in the terminology, using *greeting*, *opening*, and *forms of address* interchangeably. They interpreted these terms as evidenced by examples like *Hi*, *How are you?* and *I am sorry to hear that you are not well*. However, they also use the term *salutation* several times in their studies. Eslami (2013) provided a more detailed definition of opening, dividing it into three main parts and offering examples: 1) greeting, 2) self-identification, and 3) small talk.

Although Ko et al. (2015) did not use specific examples in their study, they adopted the same classification as Eslami (2013). Savić (2018) identified opening along with closing as part of the framing move, but she referred to it only as greetings in her study. Codina-Espurz and Salazar-Campillo (2019) offered a more detailed description of opening moves, dividing them into the following parts, supported by examples for the first two groups: 1) salutation, 2) pleasantries, and 3) self-identification. This classification is similar to Eslami's (2013); however, Codina-Espurz and Salazar-Campillo (2019) used the term salutation for what Eslami called greeting, and they further split it into *greeting expression* and *address term*. For Eslami's *small talk*, they used the term *pleasantries*, but the examples in both studies indicated that the terms share the same content.

The studies have highlighted a wide range of classifications and terminological choices regarding email openings. The structural element examined in the present study typically consists of two parts: the *greeting expression* and the *form of address*. The most detailed and systematic description of this two-part structure can be found in the study of Codina-Espurz and Salazar-Campillo (2019), who referred to the combination as the salutation. Other studies either used only the term *greeting expression*, or employed the terms *greeting* and *form of address* interchangeably. In this study, the term *salutation* is used consistently when referring to the present data and findings, as it provides the clearest and most detailed way to describe this structure.

#### **2.4.2 Perception studies on student–instructor email communication**

Most studies have analyzed various aspects of emails, including the specific purposes for which they are composed, the structure of the messages, and the grammatical forms used within them (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Bou-Franch, 2013; Salazar-Campillo, 2023; Samar et al., 2010; Winans, 2020). While these studies have given researchers useful information about how students formulate their emails, there has been considerably less focus on how these messages are interpreted and perceived by instructors. As has been mentioned earlier, recognizing how these emails are received is essential, as it significantly influences the nature of student-instructor interactions and the overall effectiveness of academic communication.

One of the earliest studies that examined the perception side of student emails was conducted by Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996). The research investigated the requests made by 34 native speakers (NS) and 65 non-native speakers (NNS) of English, specifically analyzing how they were received by instructors. The findings presented notable differences between the

two groups in terms of politeness strategies and the degree of formality used in their requests. Non-native speakers (NNS) tended to use fewer downgraders compared to the native speakers. Furthermore, NNS students often arranged their requests based on their own schedules, without considering the instructor's availability or workload, which, in some cases, was perceived negatively by faculty members. The study found that both native and non-native students received more positive responses when their requests included mitigation strategies and when they demonstrated an awareness of the instructor's status. These findings emphasize the importance of politeness in student-instructor email interactions and highlight the role of sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic competence in academic communication. In conclusion, the study underscored the need for students to develop effective and culturally appropriate politeness strategies when communicating with their instructors. Since email communication plays a significant role in academic settings, students must be mindful of how their messages are perceived.

Stephens et al. (2009) examined the impact that overly casual email messages have on instructors. A total of 152 NES instructors participated in the study. The research investigated how the level of formality in email communications influences not only instructors' attitudes toward their students but also how they assess the credibility of the students and determine their willingness to provide assistance. The findings indicated that instructors respond much more positively to formal emails, while overly casual messages tended to generate a negative reaction. Additionally, the study revealed that instructors attach significantly greater importance to students signing their emails and avoiding using abbreviations, in contrast to the views of the students, who considered these practices to be less problematic. These results suggested that an overly informal email can have a negative impact on the instructor-student relationship. Also, it demonstrated that there may be differences between students' and instructors' perceptions as assessments. These findings correspond with the present study. They show that instructors' evaluations are not limited to content but extend to small features such as formality and the inclusion of signatures.

Baugh (2011) emphasized writing email requests to teachers as an essential aspect of academic life. Effective communication through email is a necessary skill for students, particularly in academic settings. However, despite the importance of this form of communication, many students were often unprepared for the expectations that come with composing emails in an academic context. To explore this issue in depth, the study conducted an analysis of 80 student emails to examine the typical moves included in their messages. The findings revealed that student emails commonly contain a total of 14 moves. Some of the most

frequently observed moves included addressing, acknowledging, and referencing earlier communication. By identifying these moves, the study aimed to provide a clearer understanding of how students construct their email requests and how closely they follow the expected standards of academic communication. To gain further insight into the appropriateness of these email moves, interviews were conducted with both teachers and students. The purpose of these interviews was to determine which moves interviewees regarded as appropriate or inappropriate. Based on the insights gathered from interviews with nine teachers, the study underscored the importance of specific features in influencing how email requests are perceived. For an email to be received positively, certain elements should be included in requests. Additionally, it was crucial that the request itself be formulated clearly and directly to avoid misinterpretation. These factors contributed to how the email is perceived by the recipient, influencing the probability of receiving a favorable response. It is important to acknowledge a key limitation: only five students participated in the interview phase of the research. As a result, the study's findings cannot be generalized to a broader population of students. Nevertheless, the study suggested that students tend to be mindful of how they present themselves in their emails, making an effort to create a positive impression on their teachers. The findings can be applied in educational contexts. Students could benefit from explicit guidance on how to compose well-structured and effective email requests. The research demonstrated that teachers' perceptions of in/appropriateness depend on the presence of several structural moves. Similarly, the present study emphasizes that salutations play an important role in shaping the reception of academic messages.

Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) conducted a study that investigated the way Greek Cypriot students write emails in English to their university professors. In this study, the researcher conducted a detailed analysis of the various forms of address employed by the students, along with an examination of the types and degrees of supportive moves and lexical/phrasal modifiers they incorporate into their email requests. Additionally, the study explored how these specific linguistic features influence the instructors' perceptions of the messages. To conduct this analysis, a total of six emails written by the students were evaluated by a group of 24 NES professors. The study's findings revealed that the emails written by the students were often negatively perceived by the professors due to the use of incorrect or missing titles and the omission of several important components, such as the appropriate closing forms. These issues led the instructors to interpret the written communication as abrupt, rude, and lacking the expected level of respect. Overall, the research highlighted that for NNSs of English, the use of pragmatically incorrect forms and elements in email communication can support

negative stereotypes among instructors. These results underlined that some address forms or missing address forms are often perceived as disrespectful. This directly supports the rationale of the present study to focus on salutations in academic setting, where inappropriate forms may unintentionally create negative perceptions.

Bolkan and Holmgren (2012) conducted a study to explore how instructors perceive student emails, using hypothetical email samples. The research involved a total of 125 university instructors, who were asked to evaluate five different emails, each varying in politeness level, using a 1–9 rating scale. The primary objective of the study was to determine whether the degree of politeness in student emails had an impact on instructors' motivation to interact with the student, as well as whether it influenced their overall perception of the student's competence and potential for academic success. To systematically assess the role of politeness in email communication, the researchers designed the five email variations based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies, ensuring that each email corresponded to a different strategy. Accordingly, the five emails included a direct email without any politeness strategies, an email with positive politeness, an email using negative politeness, an email combining both positive and negative politeness and one email containing an indirect request. The result indicated that the email that combined both positive and negative politeness strategies was rated as the most polite. The findings of the study demonstrated that the type of politeness strategy in student emails significantly influenced instructors' perceptions and their willingness to engage with students. The results indicated that instructors showed a much greater motivation to invest their time and effort in assisting students when the email was more polite. In contrast, when it lacked politeness, the instructors were less open to respond positively. Impolite emails not only reduced their willingness to cooperate but also led to a less positive perception of the student who sent them. Furthermore, instructors tended to evaluate students who wrote polite emails as more polite, perceiving them as more competent, and instructors also predicted higher academic success for them. Based on these results, the study concluded that students can receive clear advantages from consciously making an effort to compose polite and professional emails when communicating with their instructors. Therefore, it would be important for students to be aware of proper email etiquette. Moreover, email writing skills could be taught at the university to help students develop effective communication. The study explicitly shows that politeness strategies affect instructors' willingness to respond. This finding connects with the present investigation of whether Hungarian instructors react differently to salutations they consider polite or impolite.

Hallajian and David (2014) conducted a study that explores the nature of email communication in English between Iranian postgraduate students and faculty members at Malaysian universities, with a particular emphasis on the use of greetings and closings in academic correspondence. The research specifically aimed to analyze how students address their professors and which opening and closing conventions they use in their emails. The study focused on two key research questions: what forms of address do Iranian postgraduate students use when writing to faculty members, and what types of opening and closing moves are present in their email communication. To answer these questions, the researchers collected and examined emails from a sample of 13 Iranian postgraduate students studying at the University of Malaya. Unlike previous studies that used DCT, the research employed a more authentic data collection method. The students were asked to submit ten email requests each, which they had sent to their respective supervisors. From this corpus collection, the researchers selected emails that contained requests for action, information, permission, or feedback, resulting in a final dataset of 91 emails. The study conducted a detailed analysis of the email openings, examining the presence and frequency of address terms, salutations, greetings, and phatic communication. The findings detected a pattern in the students' use of these elements. A significant majority (93%) of the emails contained some form of address term, while 87% included a salutation. However, the use of greetings (29%) and phatic communication (26%) was considerably lower, indicating that while students paid attention to formal address conventions, they were less consistent in incorporating additional politeness markers into their email openings. A more detailed analysis of forms of address revealed that the majority of emails (57%) used the *Dr.* or *Professor + FN* format. The title without a first name or last name was the second most common choice (19%), while six emails (7%) contained no form of address at all. One of the key cultural insights of the study was that Iranian students appear to adapt to Malaysian academic conventions in their email communication. While in Iran, it is common for students to address their professors using their last name; the data suggested that Iranian students writing to Malaysian faculty members adopted the local norm of using first names in professional interactions. This shift was an example of a situation in which students adapted their communication style to meet the expectations and standards of their academic environment. Regarding email closings, the study presented additional evidence of cultural adaptation. A particularly noteworthy finding is that one student used *Salam* – a Malay farewell expression – as a closing phrase, which the researchers interpreted as a gesture of linguistic respect toward the recipient's first language. This example reinforced the idea that students make conscious choices about their language use to foster positive relationships with their faculty members.

Overall, the findings indicated that Iranian students generally write formal emails, as reflected in the high percentage of emails containing forms of address (93%) and closings (87%). The students adapted to the Malaysian academic environment by addressing their professors by their first names. Most emails were polite in terms of forms of address, except for a few that omitted these and the greeting. The study recommended that students should understand that the opening and closing of an email have a significant impact on the recipient. It highlighted the need for students to recognize that the way they structure the opening and closing of an email can significantly impact how their message is received. Additionally, the study emphasized the importance of being culturally aware when writing academic emails, as differences in address norms and politeness conventions can influence the instructors' perception. The evidence of cultural adaptation in forms of address was especially relevant. The present research also considers how international students adapt to Hungarian academic norms in their salutations.

Savić's (2018) study investigated the framing and content moves in English requests written by Norwegian students, focusing on their perception regarding politeness rather than describing the opening and closing moves. The research used three main data sources: authentic emails, questionnaires, and interviews. One of the three research questions specifically examined the role of framing moves in the instructor's perception of im/politeness and in/appropriateness. Out of the 278 authentic emails, 20 were selected for a questionnaire based on five main criteria. These also formed the basis for the selection criteria in the present study (see Chapter 3.4). The perception questionnaire was answered by 32 university teachers. It had two main purposes: to select the emails used for the interview and to identify features that influence the perception of im/politeness and in/appropriateness. Participants rated the emails on a 5-point Likert scale between *very impolite* and *very polite* and could also add additional comments to the emails. Seven emails were selected for interviews based on the questionnaire results: two most polite, three most impolite, and two that received mixed polite or impolite ratings. Ten lecturers participated in the interviews, which consisted of two main parts: the first one asked for background information, and in the second one, the interviewees shared their perception of the seven emails. The coding of the results was divided into two parts: first, a priori codes such as greetings, head movements, etc. were identified based on previous research, and then inductive codes were assigned to the interviews that emerged from the data. These codes served as the main themes of the study. In the interviews, all participants mentioned the framing move as a significant factor in determining im/politeness and in/appropriateness, even though this was not explicitly prompted by the researcher. The opening sequence was particularly highlighted by interviewees, indicating its strong relevance in the perception of



im/politeness and in/appropriateness. The perception of various forms of greeting varied greatly among participants. Conversely, the closing sequence did not appear to be as significant to the participants as the opening sequences. Savić's (2018) research provided a valuable model for the present investigation. It offered methodological inspiration for the present research both in terms of data selection and the combination of methods (see Chapter 3.4).

Pinto (2019) conducted a study of the types of excuses that university students provide in their emails to faculty members and explores how these excuses are perceived by professors. By analysing a corpus of 200 student emails, the study categorized the most common excuses and the strategies students employed. The findings revealed that the majority of student excuses – 163 out of 200 emails (81.5%) – addressed absences from class. The second most common type of excuse was related to assignments (12.5%), where students provided reasons for failing to complete or submit coursework on time. A smaller amount of emails (6%) contained a combination of both absence- and assignment-related excuses. When analysing them provided by students, the study found that health-related issues were the most frequently cited reasons, appearing in 46% of cases. The second most common excuse was personal matters (38.5%). Professional excuses accounted for only 11% of the total, making them far less common than health or personal reasons. Additionally, a small percentage of students (2.5%) combined multiple reasons in their excuses, while four emails (2%) did not specify any concrete one. Following the classification of excuses, a group of 10 university professors was asked to evaluate 50 randomly selected emails. These faculty members rated the effectiveness of each excuse on a 1-5 Likert scale, where 1 represented *very ineffective* and 5 represented *very effective*. The results of this evaluation offered an explanation for the factors that influenced faculty perceptions of student excuses. The highest-rated excuse involved a student undergoing surgery, which received an average effectiveness score of 4.9. The second most effective excuse was related to the student's uncle passing, which received an average rating of 3.9. Conversely, professors found trivial or unconvincing excuses to be the least effective. The lowest-rated excuse was *couldn't make it to class*, which received an average score of just 1.2. Similarly, the excuse of *going home for Thanksgiving* was also rated poorly, receiving an average score of 1.3. Professors took several factors into consideration when evaluating the effectiveness of student excuses. The results clearly indicate that the best-rated excuses were those where students took responsibility and showed proactivity. Based on this, it can be concluded that students who acknowledge their responsibility and communicate respectfully receive a more positive perception from faculty. The conclusion of the findings suggested that universities should teach email etiquette and proper communication strategies, as these skills can benefit

students not only during their academic careers but also beyond their studies. Although the research focused on excuses rather than salutations, it is still relevant to the present study. It also examined faculty perceptions, an underresearched aspect of email communication, and employs a Likert scale methodology. Finally, respect was identified as an important factor in professors' evaluations, a dimension that plays a significant role in the present study as well.

Economidou-Kogetsidis et al. (2020) conducted a comprehensive study that aimed to investigate the characteristics of email requests written by NNS teachers of English to faculty members, specifically examining how requests were perceived and evaluated by both NNS and NS teachers. Additionally, the study aimed to identify the pragmatic features that both groups considered essential when composing an email to ensure that it was perceived as appropriately polite within an academic context. A total of 35 NNS teachers participated in the study, with 24 of them being Greek, while the remaining participants came from diverse linguistic backgrounds, including Chinese, Russian, Romanian, Spanish, Turkish, and German. In comparison, the native speaker group consisted of 24 participants who were from 12 different universities in the United Kingdom. The questionnaire was divided into four main parts. The first part aimed to gather demographic data from the participants. The second part was designed only for the NNS teachers and included a DCT. The participants were required to compose two email requests addressed to faculty members, which were representative of typical student requests in academic settings. Both email tasks were classified as high-imposition requests. Furthermore, after completing the email, participants were given the opportunity to reflect on and describe any challenges or difficulties they faced while formulating these email requests. The third part of the questionnaire was designed again for both the NS and NNS groups. In this section, participants were asked to evaluate six authentic emails by rating them on a 1–5 Likert scale, assessing various aspects of politeness and appropriateness. The rating criteria included statements such as *This email is polite*, *This email is abrupt*, and *I find this student respectful*, among others. The final part of the questionnaire provided participants with the opportunity to express their qualitative opinions about each email they had evaluated. This section was structured as an open-ended response format. The study found that the main difference between the two groups was in the criteria they used to evaluate politeness. The NSs paid more attention to the content of the emails when judging their politeness. In contrast, NNSs focused more on form, such as salutations, inclusion of signatures, etc., and evaluated the emails based on these aspects. Although the study does not focus specifically on salutations, its mixed-methods design is particularly relevant. The combination of quantitative ratings and qualitative evaluations

served as an inspiration for the present perception research. In a similar way, the present study adopts both methods to provide a more comprehensive understanding of im/politeness.

Huang and Chen (2022) conducted a study that focused on student email communication, particularly in terms of perception. However, rather than examining emails from the perspective of instructors, their research placed emphasis on understanding how students themselves perceive email communication. The study aimed to address two fundamental research questions: firstly, how Taiwanese university EFL students perceive email as a communication medium, and secondly, what social factors they consider influential when composing and sending emails to their professors. To explore these questions, the research was designed as consisting of two main parts. The first part involved questionnaires, which were completed by a total of 201 Taiwanese university EFL students (161 females and 40 males). The second part included follow-up focus-group interviews with 20 selected participants. The questionnaire itself was systematically structured into three main sections, each serving a specific function in gathering data relevant to the study's objectives. The first section of the questionnaire collected background information about the students. The second section contained a set of 12 statements that aimed to measure students' perceptions of email communication. These statements were rated using a 5-point Likert scale. Some of the statements included in this section were: *Email is a formal medium of communication.*, *Email writing is similar to writing on other social media.* and *I often use a formal style of language when talking to my university professor.* and *I know my university professor well enough to use a casual (informal) email.* These 12 statements were designed to assess students' views on four key aspects of email communication: (1) the nature of the medium itself (email as a form of communication), (2) the recipient (the professor to whom the email is addressed), (3) the broader context in which the email is written, and (4) the relationship between the student and the professor. The final statement in this section, *In general, I use a formal style of language in emails*, was included to provide a summary measure of students' overall attitudes toward email writing. The findings from this part of the study revealed that the majority of students perceived email as a formal means of communication when writing to their professors. They frequently used it and believed it requires a formal writing style, similar to face-to-face communication. Additionally, students recognized that power dynamics and social distance influence how emails should be formulated. The final part of the questionnaire required participants to evaluate four different request emails, all of which had been written by students addressing one of the researchers. These emails were selected to represent varying levels of formality, allowing the researchers to examine how students assessed different styles of email communication. For each

of the four emails, participants were asked to rate five statements using a 5-point Likert scale (1-5). Some of the key statements included: *I think the style of this email is formal.*, *I think this email reflects a close relationship between the student and the teacher.*, *I think the email is generally appropriate.* These statements were designed to assess students' perceptions of the emails based on four main dimensions: formality, appropriateness, directness, and politeness. The results from this section revealed a key finding: the more formal an email appeared, the more polite and appropriate it was perceived to be by the students. However, students rated all four emails as direct, which contradicted the study's assumption that politeness correlates with indirectness. This suggests that students may not differentiate levels of directness in request strategies, even when evaluating emails with varying degrees of formality. The semi-structured interviews aimed to determine what style is appropriate for emails, with a particular focus on interactions between students and their professors. Additionally, the goal was to establish the characteristics of a formal email style and identify the social factors that influence communication with instructors. The 20 interviews were conducted in the students' first language, Mandarin Chinese. The findings from the interviews reinforced that email is perceived as a formal communication channel with professors, requiring the use of a specific format. Although Huang and Chen's (2022) study examined email communication from the students' perspective, it is still connected to the present research. Both studies focus on perception; however, they approach it from opposite perspectives. Both studies combine quantitative ratings with qualitative insights, which highlights the importance of using both methods in email communication research. Huang and Chen (2022) showed that students link formality with politeness. A similar pattern appears in the present study. This suggests that both students and instructors see respect and formality as important elements of polite academic communication.

In summary, the studies reviewed above demonstrate that instructors' perceptions of student emails are influenced not only by the content of the emails, but also by the framing moves. These studies directly inspired the present research, both in terms of methodological choices and in shaping its focus on salutations as an important aspect through which im/politeness is negotiated.

### **3. Methodology**

This chapter presents the methodological framework of the study, outlining the overall design, research aims, hypotheses, and research questions, as well as describing the data and participants involved. The study investigates how international medical students address instructors in their CooSpace messages and how these salutations are evaluated by instructors in terms of im/politeness. The primary focus lies not only on the linguistic features themselves but also on their interpretation and assessment by Hungarian instructors in terms of how the instructors perceive their politeness in an intercultural multilingual educational context.

The research is situated at the intersection of CMC, intercultural pragmatics, and im/politeness studies. It follows a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to offer a comprehensive understanding of how salutations function as socio-pragmatic markers in academic communication (Dörnyei, 2007). The participants were divided into two main groups: (1) international medical students, who sent CooSpace messages to their Hungarian instructor, and (2) Hungarian instructors, who completed the perception questionnaire and participated in the interviews. The study uses three specific data sources: (1) a corpus of 151 authentic CooSpace messages written by students during the COVID-19 pandemic; (2) a perception questionnaire in which 22 instructors rated 36 selected salutations using Likert scales, with a varying number of written comments provided for each salutation; and (3) semi-structured interviews with 13 instructors (altogether 3 hours, 27 minutes, and 46 seconds of recordings), providing deeper insight into their interpretations and expectations.

The exclusive focus on salutations represents an intentional methodological choice. Based on existing studies (e.g., Balogh, 2024; Domonkosi & Ludányi, 2021b; Savić, 2018), the study examines the salutation as a highly visible and socially significant element in academic email communication. By focusing on this one element, the study aims to provide a detailed understanding of intercultural norms and expectations that are specifically associated with the use of salutations in academic contexts.

#### **3.1 Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were formulated based on the theoretical background, relevant empirical studies, and the researcher's experience with international student communication.

**H1:** There is significant variation in the forms of salutations used by international students in CooSpace messages, reflecting both linguistic diversity and differing levels of pragmatic competence.

**H2:** The instructors' evaluations of salutations are influenced by multiple factors, including the perceived degree of formality, linguistic correctness, and cultural appropriateness.

**H3:** Instructors assign more positive politeness ratings to salutations that conform to Hungarian institutional norms or follow standard academic English norms.

**H4:** Instructors are more tolerant of unconventional or nonstandard salutations when they connect them to the cultural or linguistic background of their students but are less tolerant when they interpret them as a lack of effort or respect.

**H5:** Instructors' attitudes suggest a need for institutional-level guidance regarding appropriate forms of salutation in student-instructor communication, particularly in intercultural educational contexts.

### **3.2 Research questions**

As the hypotheses (H1–H5) are predictions to be tested in my study, a number of research questions are formulated to guide the investigation. The quantitative research questions are related to H1 and H3, while the qualitative research questions explore H2, H3, and H5 by examining instructors' evaluations and attitudes in more depth.

The following quantitative and qualitative research questions guided the present study:

#### **I. Quantitative Research Questions**

**RQ1:** What types of salutations do international students use in CooSpace messages and how often do these forms appear?

RQ2: What politeness ratings did the different types of salutations receive?

## II. Qualitative Research Questions

RQ3: What factors do instructors consider important when evaluating student salutations in the open-ended questionnaire responses?

RQ4: What similarities and differences can be identified between instructors' written perception questionnaire responses and their reflections shared during the interviews regarding student salutations?

RQ5: To what extent do instructors consider salutations an important element of academic email communication?

RQ6: To what extent do instructors associate specific salutation forms with particular cultural or national backgrounds?

RQ7: How do instructors evaluate the use of Hungarian-language salutations by international students in otherwise English-language messages?

RQ8: What are instructors' typical strategies for handling salutations they perceive as impolite?

RQ9: What are instructors' views on the need for institutional-level guidelines regarding student email salutations?

The table below (see Table 2) provides an overview of how each research question is linked to the data sources and the methods used.

Table 2. Summary of research questions, sources of data, and method of analysis

<b>I. Quantitative research questions</b>	<b>Data source</b>	<b>Method of analysis</b>
RQ1 What types of salutations do international students use in CooSpace messages and how often do these forms appear?	Data 1 (151 authentic CooSpace messages)	Quantitative data analysis
RQ2 What politeness ratings did the different types of salutations receive?	Data 2 (perception questionnaire filled in by Hungarian instructors)	Quantitative data analysis
<b>II. Qualitative research questions</b>	<b>Data source</b>	<b>Method of analysis</b>
RQ3 What factors do instructors consider important when evaluating student salutations in the open-ended questionnaire responses?	Data 2	Qualitative data analysis
RQ4: What similarities and differences can be identified between instructors' written perception questionnaire responses and their reflections shared during the interviews regarding student salutations?	Data 2 and 3 (semi-structured interviews with instructors)	Qualitative data analysis
RQ5: To what extent do instructors consider salutations an important element of academic email communication?	Data 3	Qualitative data analysis
RQ6: To what extent do instructors associate specific salutation forms with particular cultural or national backgrounds?	Data 3	Qualitative data analysis
RQ7: How do instructors evaluate the use of Hungarian-language salutations by international students in otherwise English-language messages?	Data 3	Qualitative data analysis
RQ8: What are instructors' typical strategies for handling salutations they perceive as impolite?	Data 3	Qualitative data analysis
RQ9: What are instructors' views on the need for institutional-level guidelines regarding student email salutations?	Data 3	Qualitative data analysis

### 3.3 Data 1: the CooSpace messages

The research based its analysis on authentic data sent by students through CooSpace, the university's internal communication platform. The study specifically examined messages from students enrolled in the Albert Szent-Györgyi Medical School at the University of Szeged. These messages were addressed to the researcher, who is Hungarian as a foreign language



instructor within the Department for Medical Communication and Translation Studies. The authentic data consists of 151 Coospace messages collected between March 2020 and June 2021, a time frame that coincided with the global COVID-19 pandemic. The 151 messages were sent by 67 students, indicating that some students sent multiple emails to the instructor during this period. It is important to note, however, that the dataset only includes the first messages related to a topic. While additional exchanges may have followed, a student appears in the dataset with multiple messages only if they contact the instructor regarding a new issue or topic – not when responding to a previous message from the instructor. Only these messages were included in the dataset because in follow-up emails, students may use a different salutation than in their first message, possibly influenced by the instructor's response (Domonkosi & Ludányi, 2018; Salazar-Campillo, 2023), and such changes in the use of salutations are outside the scope of the present thesis, which focuses on the students' first choice of salutation prior to any interactional feedback from the instructor.

### **3.3.1 Elicited versus authentic data**

Before presenting the data, it is important to briefly discuss why authentic data was preferred to elicited data from a Discourse Completion Task (DCT). This decision was one of the first steps in the research planning process. In making this choice, both the advantages and disadvantages of DCT's method were considered. The DCT gained popularity following the research by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) on requests and apologies. For many years, it was regarded as one of the most effective tools for data collection in pragmatics (Wojtaszek, 2016). Numerous studies on emails and politeness collected data with the help of DCT (Codina-Espurz, 2021; Spyridoula, 2012; Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010). One frequently cited advantage is its suitability for collecting large amounts of data while controlling social variables, which makes the data comparable across different groups and contexts. Additionally, from a practical perspective, the DCT is an efficient method of data collection. It allows researchers to gather a significant number of responses in a short period, making it particularly advantageous for large-scale studies (Chen et al., 2015; Cyluk, 2013; Hodeib, 2021; Ogiermann, 2018; O'Keeffe et al., 2011; Schneider, 2018; Skadra, 2021; Wojtaszek, 2016).

However, numerous studies (Chen et al., 2015; Cyluk, 2013; Hodeib, 2021; Ogiermann, 2018; O'Keeffe et al., 2011; Schneider, 2018; Wojtaszek, 2016) also emphasize that the method has several disadvantages, which often lead to criticism of the DCT. One of the main drawbacks is that the data obtained via a DCT can never be considered entirely natural or authentic. The

scenarios presented in DCTs often lead respondents to provide responses they believe the researcher expects, rather than their real spontaneous answers. This nature of the data can lead to findings that may not accurately represent real-world language use and thus the validity of the research (Hodeib, 2021; Ogiermann, 2018). Given these considerations, the decision was made to use authentic data for this research.

The decision to use authentic messages was also enhanced by the unique context provided by the COVID-19 pandemic, during which online education became prevalent (Domonkosi & Ludányi 2022). This situation generated a large amount of authentic data in the form of email correspondence between students and instructors. However, this researcher's decision also means that social variables (gender, age, nationality, etc.) cannot be controlled, which makes the research more difficult. Despite these challenges, choosing to focus on real data was well-founded because it aligned with the main goal of the research: to study real linguistic practices in everyday situations.

### **3.3.2 Ethical issues and anonymization of the data**

There is a lack of consensus among researchers regarding the ethical use of authentic emails. Some studies do not explicitly address how the researchers obtained the emails or what ethical protocols were followed in their use. Eslami (2013) mentioned in her study only that, out of the 502 emails received, 300 were selected for the study with the help of two raters, noting that all emails were sent to her by students over the course of six semesters. However, the study did not indicate whether students were informed that their emails might be used for research purposes, nor does it address the process of anonymizing them. Similarly, Ko et al. (2015) conducted a study in which they examined 198 letters out of 300 received by the professor. In this study, two raters also selected the letters; however, the study did not provide any information on whether the letters were anonymized before or after the selection process or whether the students were informed about the use of their emails for scientific purposes.

In Danielewicz-Betz's (2013) study, a total of 1200 emails were collected over six years from Saudi, German, and Japanese students. The author mentioned that, apart from some of the Japanese emails, all other emails were received directly by her over this period. She also noted in the study that the emails were anonymized, but it remains unclear whether the Japanese emails, which she did not directly receive, were already anonymized when she obtained them or if she performed the anonymization herself. Furthermore, it is not mentioned whether the students were informed about the use of their emails in the research.

On the other hand, several studies not only anonymized emails but also informed students that their emails will be used for research purposes. Salazar-Campillo (2023), after collecting the 40 emails used in her research, contacted the senders of these emails and requested permission to use them in an anonymized form for the study. Similarly, Burgucu-Tazegül et al. (2016) notified the students about the research and requested their permission to store the emails and use them anonymously. Savić (2018) chose a different approach by informing the students that their emails would be used for research purposes, employing the passive consent approach. She informed students that she intended to use the emails sent to her in an anonymized form and asked them to respond if they did not consent. If no such response was received, she considered this as giving consent.

Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011, 2018) analyzed not only emails sent to her but 200 emails addressed to 11 faculty members. In the courses taught by these faculty members, students filled out a consent form, informing them that their emails could be used for research purposes without including personal data. Additionally, for the faculty members, an automatic email reply was set up to immediately inform students that their emails would be used for research purposes unless they objected to it. All these examples illustrate that researchers employ a variety of approaches to address ethical considerations regarding the use of emails for research purposes.

In the case of this study, to ensure that ethical issues are properly addressed, prior to the start of the research, I consulted Dr. Dóra Lajkó, the University of Szeged's data protection officer, on 3 December 2021 regarding the use of the messages for research purposes. Based on the consultation, all personal data, such as names, etc., that could have identified the students, was completely anonymized before being shown to anyone other than myself. Additionally, as a result of the consultation with the data protection officer of the university, contrary to the initial plans, only the emails written to the researcher were included in the database.

Following these ethical considerations, the anonymisation process was carried out carefully. CooSpace messages were systematically numbered to ensure the anonymity of students. Given that some students submitted multiple messages, it was important for the numbering system to clearly identify whether more than one message came from the same student during the process of anonymization. The numbering system used in data processing follows a specific format: the first part of the number represents the student's unique identifier, followed by a "0," and the following digit(s) indicate the sequence number of the messages submitted by that particular student. For instance, the numbering "101" refers to the first

message submitted by student number 1, while "1202" indicated the second message sent by student number 12. This system ensured that each message could be linked to its sender without compromising the student's identity. A total of 151 messages were submitted by 67 students, meaning the first part of the numbering system ranged from 1 to 67, corresponding to the unique student identifiers. After the "0", students who only submitted a single message were assigned the number "1," whereas those who sent multiple messages received higher sequence numbers too. This numbering approach allowed for the clear tracking of messages while ensuring that student identities remained confidential throughout the study.

### **3.3.3 Characteristics of CooSpace messages**

CooSpace is the official digital platform used at the University of Szeged. It serves as a central platform for both instructors and students, supporting a wide range of functions: administration of courses, course-level interaction, learner support, and communication with students. Since its introduction, CooSpace has become integrated into everyday academic life; however, its relevance and central role have grown significantly since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, when online teaching and communication became essential in higher education.

Originally designed to facilitate course administration and knowledge sharing, CooSpace now offers a diverse set of features to various pedagogical and organizational needs. These include interactive forums for discussion, test modules for online assessment, attendance sheets, voting mechanisms, and course materials. These features support both instructors and students in organizing communication even in the absence of in-person contact.

One frequently used feature is the private messaging system, which allows users to send direct messages to individuals. It is important to emphasize that although these messages function in a similar way to emails, they are not identical. CooSpace messages do not include a subject line, nor do they require the sender to specify a recipient's email address, as all communication takes place within the closed platform.

Importantly, for the last 7-8 years, according to the policy of the Department for Medical Communication and Translation Studies faculty members have been required to correspond with students only via university-issued e-mail addresses or the CooSpace and Neptun systems. As not all the teachers are full-time employees at the department, not everyone has an official university e-mail address; therefore, the e-communication with students has significantly shifted from traditional e-mails to CooSpace messages. Its integration at the institutional level

has changed the structure of academic communication. As a result, CooSpace now plays a central role in communication between instructors and students across the institution.

While CooSpace messages are not identical to conventional emails in terms of technical structure, they still fulfill the same communicative functions in the context of academic interaction. Students use them to contact the instructors, submit requests, ask for assistance, or provide explanations – as they would in email communication. Although the system is more limited in format than regular email (e.g., no subject line), its role as a medium of asynchronous written communication is still similar to that of email. Therefore, despite its platform-specific characteristics, CooSpace messaging can be examined using the same pragmatic framework commonly applied to emails, particularly with respect to im/politeness.

### 3.3.4 Communicative functions of the CooSpace messages

The data used in the analysis were collected from authentic communication situations and include messages written in a real university environment. In contrast to many studies that focus on a single speech act, such as a request (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011, 2018; Hendriks, 2010; Merrison et al., 2012; Pan, 2021; Savić, 2018; Winans, 2020) the present study includes a variety of communicative intentions that emerge naturally from the messages. The 151 CooSpace messages provide a comprehensive overview of the topics that characterize communication between students and instructors.

A significant part of the 151 CooSpace messages are requests (71%), followed by a much smaller number of apologies (13%) and complaints (9%). Six messages could not be categorized because they did not fit into any of the speech act categories (4%), and the smallest number were messages of thanking (3%) (see table 3). This classification clearly shows the wide range of topics that students choose to contact their teachers about.

Table 3. Types of speech acts in the data

<b>Types of speech acts</b>	<b>out of 151 messages</b>	<b>%</b>
Request	107	71%
Apology	19	13%
Complaint	14	9%
Not categorized	6	4%
Thanking	5	3%

The request messages represent the largest portion of the data and can be further divided into four different groups based on the categories used in previous studies (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011, 2018) (see table 4). Thus, out of the 107 messages that contained a request, the majority were requests for information (43 messages, 40%). These were followed by requests for feedback, explanation, or academic advice (33 messages, 31%), requests for action or technical help (22 messages, 21%), and requests for extension (9 messages, 8%) (see table 4). The name of the category of previous studies (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011, 2018) request for action was modified based on the present data, because most of these messages are asking for technical help (join zoom, send a link, add someone to a meeting etc.)

Table 4. Categories of requests

<b>Categories of requests</b>	<b>out of 107 messages</b>	<b>%</b>
requests for information	43	40
request for feedback/ explanation/academic advice	33	31
request for action/technical help	22	21
request for extension	9	8

Overall, the large number of different speech acts in the data give a comprehensive picture of the wide range of topics the students and I as their instructor typically addressed in computer-mediated academic communication during COVID-19. The salutations were selected from all messages independently of their content as they all represent authentic, real-life instances of academic online communication during the period.

### 3.3.5 Senders of the CooSpace messages

The CooSpace messages were written by 35 male and 32 female students, so representing a relatively balanced gender distribution. The age range of the university students was between 18 and 30 years old, although, by the nature of the data collection, exact ages are not available. All students were first- and second-year medical students, which implies that they had spent only a relatively short period in Hungary, approximately for one or two years. It is important to note that after the university switched to online education (March 2020), many students returned to their home countries and did not reside in Hungary during this period.

Additionally, due to COVID-19 restrictions, those who remained in Hungary did not have regular face-to-face contact with their classmates, teachers, or native Hungarian speakers.

The students who participated in the study represented a rich diversity of national backgrounds, with a total of 14 different nationalities included in the dataset. These included students from China, France, India, Iran, Iraq, Israel (Palestinian), Japan, Jordan, Norway, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Syria, Turkey, and Vietnam (see table 5). Notably, none of the participants were native English speakers and faced linguistic challenges as they navigated communication in both Hungarian and English.

Table 5. Nationalities of the students

<b>Nationalities</b>	<b>Number of students</b>
Iranian	30
Israeli (Palestine)	6
Jordan	6
South Korean	6
Chinese	4
Japanese	4
Saudi-Arabian	3
Iraqi	2
French	1
Indian	1
Norwegian	1
Turkish	1
Syrian	1
Vietnamese	1

The English language proficiency levels of the students could not be precisely defined in the study, but it is important to note that in order to apply for and gain admission to the university, students are required to take an English entrance examination, which is equivalent to a B2 level. However, in practice, students' proficiency levels vary significantly. Some may demonstrate a high level of English language competence, while others may not fully meet the university requirements concerning their English proficiency.

### **3.4 Data 2: Design of the perception questionnaire and participating instructors**

The perception of instructors regarding salutations was first examined through a questionnaire. As in Savić's study (2018), the questionnaire designed for the present study also served two main purposes: on one hand, to identify features that determine what is considered im/polite according to the instructors, and on the other hand to select specific salutations that could be used as prompts in the semi-structured interview. The questionnaire included a set of salutation examples selected from the CooSpace messages. Respondents were asked to rate them on a 5-point Likert scale in terms of perceived im/politeness, and they were also given the opportunity to provide open-ended comments to explain their ratings.

The 151 CooSpace messages show a wide variety of salutations. However, to ensure a higher response rate, it was not realistic or workable to have participants evaluate every single salutation. The lengthy time required to complete the questionnaire could have led to lower participation rates or participants leaving the survey incomplete (Dörnyei, 2007). Therefore, it was necessary to limit the number of salutations included in the questionnaire. After a detailed description of the salutations found in the 151 messages, a total of 36 salutations were selected from the 151 CooSpace messages for using in the questionnaire. Several criteria were considered when selecting the salutations, which were guided by the framework established by Savić (2018), who focused on the analysis of email requests. In her study, she utilized 5 criteria to select 20 emails from a data of 278 emails for her own questionnaire. These criteria were the following: 1) different types of requests had to be represented, such as requests for information or validation 2) the selected messages had to include all types of framing and content moves found in the data 3) the emails were expected to have a diverse range of pragmalinguistic means. 4) since not all pragmalinguistic means could be included, those occurring with higher frequency were prioritized. 5) the data must include both formal and informal language use. Following this approach, the present study focused on different categories of salutations, ensuring that both formal and informal examples were represented. Additionally, since the present data contained both English and Hungarian expressions, the questionnaire included examples from both languages.

The respondents of the questionnaire were university lecturers teaching Hungarian as a foreign language at the Department for Medical Communication and Translation Studies. The number of Hungarian as a foreign language instructor at the institute typically fluctuates between 25 and 35, depending on the academic year and other institutional factors, such as how many students the Faculty has, how many groups a lecturer has, etc. In May 2022, the



questionnaire was emailed to 33 lecturers who were actively involved in teaching Hungarian to international medical students during that year. Additionally, it was also sent to instructors at the institute who had taught Hungarian to international students over the previous 2-3 years to ensure a higher number of responses. The questionnaire was completed anonymously to encourage honest responses, giving every lecturer the opportunity to share their views openly. Participants were explicitly informed that the purpose of the questionnaire was only for research and that their answers would contribute to a sociolinguistic study. Given that the respondents were all native Hungarian speakers, the questionnaire was written in Hungarian to ensure clarity and that every lecturer can express themselves as accurately as possible.

The questionnaire was sent to the instructors in the form of a Google form and was structured in two main sections, each with a specific purpose. The first part gathered demographic data and background information such as gender, age, native language, spoken languages, and the number of years they had been teaching international groups. Additionally, it asked how many Coospace messages they typically receive each week from international students. This section provided context for understanding the respondents' teaching experiences and linguistic backgrounds. The second part of the questionnaire includes the 36 selected salutations. Respondents were required to rate each salutation on a 1–5 Likert scale, one of the most commonly used closed-ended items (Dörnyei, 2007). This scale was intended to reflect their perception of how polite or impolite the salutation was. The scale ranged from 1, indicating *very impolite*, to 5, indicating *very polite*, with both negatively and positively worded items being used (Dörnyei, 2007). Following the rating of each individual salutation, respondents were asked to comment in writing on their choices and explain why they perceived that salutation as polite or impolite. While the 1–5 rating for each salutation was mandatory, providing written feedback was optional. Respondents could add a short comment in response to the question: *Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás? (In your opinion, why is this salutation polite or impolite?)*

### **3.5 Data 3: Design of the semi-structured interview and participating instructors**

After conducting the detailed analysis of the questionnaire responses, the preparation for the semi-structured interviews was initiated (Dörnyei, 2007). The aim of these was to gain deeper insights into participants' perceptions and evaluations of various salutations. To ensure the effectiveness and clarity of the interviews, it was essential to limit the number of salutations included in the study. The selection of these specific forms of address was not subjective but

was carefully determined based on the results obtained from the questionnaire analysis. As a result of this process, a total of eight different salutations were chosen for inclusion in the interviews. The selection method followed the approach established by Savić (2018), who, in a similar study, selected seven different email for analysis. Savić's selection was based on the responses to a preliminary questionnaire and included the two most polite salutations, the three least polite ones, and two additional forms of address that had received strongly contrasting evaluations from respondents. The same methodology was applied in the present study, with one slight modification: rather than selecting seven forms of address, an additional salutation was included, making the final number eight. The decision to expand the selection was based on the results obtained in the questionnaire; three most polite salutations were identified based on the scores, because two of them received the same score, 4.6, therefore three salutations that received the highest politeness ratings, each scoring above 4.5 on the scale, were as follows:

- *Dear Dr. Skadra Margit* (4.7)
- *Jó napot kívánok* ("Good day to you") (4.6)
- *Dear Professor* (4.6)

It is important to note that *Jó napot kívánok!* is a greeting traditionally used in spoken rather than written communication (as discussed in more detail in Section 4.2.1).

Conversely, the three least polite forms of address – those that were rated below 2 – were also included in the study:

- *Hello dear* (1.3)
- No salutation at all (1.4)
- The Hungarian informal *Szia* ("Hi") (1.8)

Additionally, two salutations that received a wide range of opinions evenly distributed across the politeness spectrum, meaning that respondents disagreed on their level of im/politeness, were also included into the interviews. These forms of address had also the highest standard deviations in the data:

- *Dear Ms. Marit* (2.4)
- *Dear Skadra* (2.5)

Similar to Savić's (2018) research, the structure of the interview was divided into two major sections. The first part of the interview focused on collecting background information about the participants, including details such as their gender, age, language proficiency, and previous teaching experience. The second part was dedicated to the discussion and evaluation of the selected salutations. Rather than presenting the salutations in the order of their questionnaire rankings, they were listed in a randomized order to ensure that earlier ratings do not influence the results. All the interviewees received the salutations in the following order:

- Dear Professor
- Jó napot kívánok
- Dear Skadra
- Hello dear
- Szia
- Dear Ms Marit
- nincs megszólítás (no salutation)
- Dear Dr. Skadra Margit

Fifteen colleagues expressed their willingness to take part in the interview as well. The interviews were conducted in two formats: some took place in person at the university, while others were held online via Zoom. Regardless of the format, all interviews were audio-recorded to ensure details data collection. At the beginning the interviews, each participant provided explicit consent for their responses to be recorded. Furthermore, they were informed that the recordings would be used exclusively for research purposes and that all data would be anonymized. Following the completion of the interviews, the recordings were transcribed for analysis. In terms of duration, the length of the interviews varied between 11.08 and 22.47 minutes, with an average interview lasting approximately 15.59 minutes. The total duration of all interviews was 3 hours, 27 minutes and 46 seconds. The interviews were conducted in Hungarian and informal forms were used, as the participants were colleagues. The age range of the interviewees is from 25 to 59 years.

Following the completion of the interviews, all audio recordings were transcribed and in order to protect the privacy of the participants, all identifying information was removed during the transcription process, and the participants were fully anonymized. For the purposes of clarity and consistent referencing through the analysis, each interviewee was assigned with

a number based on the chronological order in which the interviews were conducted. Accordingly, the participants were referred to as Interviewee #1 through Interviewee #13.

The semi-structured interviews were systematically organized into two main sections, each designed to explore different aspects of the topic. At the beginning of each interview, all participants were informed about the research objectives and procedures. They explicitly agreed to have the interview recorded for research purposes, ensuring that their responses could be analyzed and utilized for research in the future. In the first part, participants were asked a set of general background questions.

Following this part, participants were presented with a list that contained the eight selected salutations. In online interview settings, the list was displayed to participants using screen-sharing to ensure that all eight salutations were visible simultaneously on their screens. In contrast, for in-person interviews, a printed version of the same list was handed to each participant. Participants were encouraged to take their time reading through the salutations and were then invited to share their thoughts, impressions, and opinions about each one. More specifically, participants were asked to reflect on the degree of politeness or impoliteness they associate with each salutation. They were encouraged to articulate the reasons for their evaluations, explaining their interpretations. This part allowed for open-ended reflections, supporting participants to express their views freely without any predetermined expectations. Once participants had completed their independent reflections on the eight salutations, additional related questions were asked. These questions were designed to guide the conversation toward more specific aspects of the topic while still allowing for flexibility in participants' responses. In many cases, their answers led to further spontaneous follow-up questions. The following questions were asked in Hungarian, with the same content but not always the exact same wording:

1. *CooSpace üzenetek esetében mennyire tartod fontosnak a megszólítást?* (How important do you consider salutations in CooSpace messages?)
2. *Észrevetted, hogy bizonyos nemzetiségű vagy régióból származó diákok hajlamosak meghatározott megszólítási formákat használni? Ha igen, milyen hasonlóságokat vagy különbségeket figyeltél meg?* (Have you noticed whether students from certain nationalities or regions tend to use specific forms of salutation? If so, what similarities or differences have you observed?)
3. *Mit gondolsz arról, ha a hallgatók magyar szavakat vagy kifejezéseket használnak az angol nyelvű CooSpace üzenet megszólításában?* (What do you think about students

using Hungarian words or expressions in the salutation of an English-language Coospace message?)

4. *Kaptál már valaha olyan megszólítást, amit rendkívül udvariatlannak találtál? Ha igen, jelezted ezt a diáknak? Ha igen, milyen formában?* (Have you ever received a salutation that you found extremely impolite? If so, did you bring this to the student's attention? If yes, in what way?)
5. *Mit gondolsz, szükség lenne-e egy átfogó intézményi vagy egyetemi szintű iránymutatásra, amely támogatná a hallgatókat abban, hogyan írjanak Coospace-üzeneteket oktatóiknak – jelen esetben különös tekintettel a megszólítás formáira?* (What do you think about the need for a comprehensive institutional or university guideline to support students in writing Coospace messages to their instructors – particularly with regard to appropriate forms of address?)
6. *Van-e bármi, amit fontosnak tartasz megemlíteni a témával kapcsolatban, de eddig az interjúban nem került szóba?* (Is there anything else you consider important to mention regarding this topic that has not been discussed in the interview so far?)

The final question provided participants the opportunity to share any additional thoughts and observations that they believed were relevant but had not yet been addressed during the interview.

## 4. Results and discussion

The chapter presents the findings of the study in the order of the three datasets on which the analysis is based. It begins with an analysis of the authentic CooSpace messages, then moves on to the findings from the perception questionnaire, and finally discusses the insights emerging from the instructor interviews. Each section highlights how the different forms of data contribute to understanding the use and evaluation of salutations in intercultural academic communication. After the presentation of these three sets of results, the chapter concludes with a summary that presents the key findings in relation to the research questions.

### 4.1 Data 1: Quantitative analysis of CooSpace messages with respect to salutations

In the study, first the main parts of the 151 CooSpace messages were identified as opening, content, and closing sequences. This was followed by a detailed analysis of the opening sequences. As a first step, the three main parts were categorized according to Codina-Espurz and Salazar-Campillo's (2019) framework, which provides the most detailed structuring of opening sequences among the previous studies.

This was followed by detailed coding and categorization of the salutation section. Within the salutation, the following subcategories and their combinations were identified: *dear*, *title*, *greeting*, *SN*, and *FN*. During the coding process, it was observed that several messages, namely 32 (21%) did not contain English exclusively in the salutation, but instead used Hungarian or a mixture of English and Hungarian for the greeting and title sections. This phenomenon will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.3.2.3, where its influence on the instructors' perceptions will be examined.

In the 151 messages analyzed, the salutation consists of various elements (see Table 6).

Table 6. Components of the 151 salutations

Salutation	out of 151 messages	100%
title	92	61%
first name	89	59%
greeting	86	57%
dear	72	48%
last name	16	11%
no salutation	4	2.6%

Of the 151 messages, 92 include a title, accounting for 61% of the total. The expressions classified under the *title* category are diverse, including terms such as Dr. (37%), Ms (18%), Miss (14%) professor (10%), teacher (8%), Mrs (7%), madam (3%) the misspelled pfor (1%), as the Hungarian form *tanárnő* (teacher) (1%). Similarly, the use of a FN (e.g., Margit) appears in 89 messages, representing 59% of the total. While the first name is most often used correctly, there are instances of variation, such as lowercase spelling (margit) and, in one case, the form *Marit* instead of *Margit*. Greetings are present in the salutations of 86 messages (57%), exhibiting a range of expressions similar to titles. Examples include *hi*, *good afternoon*, *good morning*, *good day*, and *hello*, as well as Hungarian equivalents such as *jó napot kívánok* (good day), *jó reggelt kívánok* (good morning), *jó estét kívánok* (good evening), and the informal *szia* (hi). The term *dear* is used in 72 messages (48%), though its Hungarian equivalent (*kedves*) does not appear in the data. The instructor's last name (e.g., *Skadra*) is used far less frequently, appearing in only 16 messages (11%), with three instances written in lowercase (skadra). Notably, 4 of the 151 messages (2.6%) omitted all elements of the opening sequence and started directly into the content. This is below the 14.5% reported by Economidou-Koetsidis (2011), in which a considerable number of student messages did not include a salutation, but higher than in Bou-Franch's (2013) study, where all emails contained salutations. However, it is important to emphasize that both studies examined culturally homogeneous groups: Economidou-Koetsidis (2011) focused on Cypriot students while Bou-Franch (2013) analyzed emails from Spanish speakers. In contrast, the present data come from a culturally diverse group of students.

This was followed by a detailed description of the forms of salutations, analysing the combinations of greeting expressions and address forms used in the messages. A total of 21 different combinations were identified in the data (see table 7). According to Economidou-Koetsidis (2011) this high number of combinations may reflect students' confusion which forms are considered expected in the institutional context.

Table 7. Distribution of the salutations

#	Salutation	N=151	%
1.	dear + title + FN	32	21.2 %
2.	greeting + title + FN	27	17.9 %
3.	greeting	26	17.2 %
4.	greeting + title	14	9.3 %
5.	dear + title	8	5.3 %
6.	dear + SN+ FN	8	5.3 %
7.	dear + FN	7	4.6%
8.	greeting + FN	5	3.3 %
9.	no salutation	4	2.6 %
10.	greeting + dear + FN	4	2.6 %
11.	dear + title + SN + FN	2	1.3 %
12.	greeting + dear SN+FN	2	1.3 %
13.	title	2	1.3 %
14.	greeting + dear + title	2	1.3 %
15.	greeting + dear	2	1.3 %
16.	dear + title + SN + greeting	1	0.66 %
17.	dear + title + FN + SN	1	0.66 %
18.	dear + title + greeting	1	0.66 %
19.	dear + title + SN	1	0.66 %
20.	greeting + title + SN	1	0.66 %
21.	greeting + dear + title + FN	1	0.66 %

The most frequently used combination was *dear + title + FN*, which appeared 32 times in the messages (21.2%). As previously mentioned, various forms of the *title* are observed, not only in English but also in Hungarian. Similarly, the combination *greeting + title + FN* (17.9%) was widely used, differing from the most frequent form only by replacing *dear* with a greeting. In this case, Hungarian greeting expressions also appeared alongside English ones. The third most frequent pattern is the use of a *greeting* without a form of address (17.2%), include both English and Hungarian forms. The following 18 combinations were observed far less frequently in the data.

#### 4.2 Data 2: Perception questionnaire

The section is based on a perception questionnaire (Data 2) completed by the 22 instructors participating in the study. The questionnaire aimed to explore how they evaluate different student salutations in Coospace messages in terms of im/politeness. The data were analysed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches, and the following subsections present these results.



#### 4.2.1 Quantitative analysis of the perception questionnaire

The questionnaire was sent to 33 instructors, and 22 responses were received (21 women and 1 man). This distribution reflects the gender composition of the Institute, where male colleagues represent less than 10% of the teaching staff. The respondents' ages ranged from 25 to 68 years with an average age of 43.2 years and a standard deviation of 12.2. Their teaching experience varied between 1 and 35 years. All respondents identified Hungarian as their native language, and one respondent additionally mentioned German. In total, the group indicated knowledge of nine foreign languages. English was listed by all 22 instructors, which is essential for teaching international groups at the Institute. German was reported by seven respondents, followed by Spanish, French, Latin, Italian, Russian, Polish, and Romanian.

Beyond demographic and linguistic information, the questionnaire also addressed the frequency of student messages received on the online communication platform. Since the survey was conducted shortly after a period of online education, these numbers are likely higher than before the COVID-19 pandemic. Most respondents (68%) indicated that they got 1–5 CooSpace messages per week. A smaller proportion (23%) reported 6–10 messages, and 9% received 11–15 messages. None indicated either zero or more than 15 messages.

In the second section of the questionnaire, participants evaluated salutations on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = very impolite, 5 = very polite). The order of items was randomized to avoid effects of sequence, such as prioritizing English over Hungarian forms or grouping similar types together.

After analysing the data, five salutations were identified that achieved an average rating of 4.5 or higher (see table 8). Among these, the salutation *Dear Dr. Skadra Margit* emerged as the most highly rated, with an average score of 4.7. Additionally, its standard deviation of 0.6 suggests a notable consensus among the respondents, indicating that the instructors largely agreed on its politeness. Additionally, the salutations *Jó napot kívánok!* and *Dear Professor* achieved average ratings of 4.6, while *Good morning madam* and *Dear Skadra Margit* received ratings of 4.5. The positive evaluation of the phrase *Jó napot kívánok!* suggests that this traditionally spoken greeting is becoming increasingly accepted by instructors even in formal email communication (Domonkosi & Ludányi, 2021a). Notably, with the exception of *Good morning madam*, none of these salutations received ratings lower than 3, indicating that respondents found them to be generally acceptable and positive reception among the respondents. However, the evaluation of *Good morning madam* revealed a broader range of opinions. Unlike the other highly-rated salutations, this one received more diverse scores,

including a rating as low as 1. The standard deviation for this salutation was calculated at 1.0, indicating a higher variability in how respondents perceived and evaluated it. This suggests that while some participants found it very polite, others perceived it less positively, which lead to a more divided opinions about its politeness.

Table 8. The instructors' evaluation of the salutations

Salutation	Minimum score	Maximum score	Mean	Standard Deviation	Number of responses to the open-ended question
Dear Dr. Skadra Margit	3	5	4.7	0.6	12
Jó napot kívánok!	3	5	4.6	0.6	15
Dear Professor	3	5	4.6	0.7	15
Good morning madam	1	5	4.5	1.0	13
Dear Skadra Margit	3	5	4.5	0.7	11
Dear Ms. Margit	3	5	4.4	0.8	12
Dear Ms. Skadra	2	5	4.3	0.9	10
Dear Miss Margit	2	5	4.2	1.0	10
Jó napot kívánok Dr. Margit	2	5	4.2	1.0	12
Dear Teacher	1	5	4.1	1.1	13
Good evening Miss Margit	2	5	4.0	1.0	7
Dear Margit	2	5	4.0	0.8	17
Jó napot Dr. Margit	2	5	3.9	0.9	8
Dear professor Margit	1	5	3.9	1.1	8
Good morning Margit!	1	5	3.5	1.0	9
Good Morning	1	5	3.3	1.0	9
Hello, Good afternoon professor	1	5	3.2	0.9	11
Hello, Dear Skadra Margit	2	4	3.1	0.8	11
Hello Miss Margit	2	5	3.0	0.8	9
Hello dear Margit	1	4	2.8	0.9	8
Szia! Professor Margit	1	4	2.7	0.9	14
Szia tanárnő	1	4	2.6	1.1	12
Hello	1	4	2.6	0.9	15
Hello professor	1	4	2.6	0.9	8
Hello miss	1	4	2.5	0.9	15
Good day	1	4	2.5	1.0	10
Dear Skadra	1	5	2.5	1.2	17
Szia Margit	1	5	2.5	1.1	14
Dear Ms. Marit*	1	4	2.4	1.2	15
Hello teacher	1	4	2.3	0.8	9
Hi dear Dr.	1	4	2.3	0.9	11
Hi!	1	4	2.1	0.9	18
Szia Madam	1	4	2.0	0.8	11
Szia	1	4	1.8	0.9	13
nincs megszólítás a levélben (no salutaion in the letter)	1	4	1.4	0.9	12
Hello dear	1	2	1.3	0.5	12

\* spelling used by the student

The results of the questionnaire showed that, with an average score of 1.3, the respondents considered *Hello dear* to be the most impolite salutation. This was followed closely by the version where no salutation was used at all, with an average score of 1.4. Although the difference between these two most impolite forms is relatively small, reaching only 0.1, it is important to highlight that the *Hello dear* form was rated exclusively as either a 1 or 2 by all instructors on the Likert scale, with a standard deviation of 0.5, showing a high level of consensus regarding its perceived impoliteness. In contrast, the version without any salutation showed a slightly wider variation in ratings, some respondents gave it a score of 4, resulting in a standard deviation of 0.9. Following these two, *Szia* (1.8), *Szia Madam* (2.0), and *Hi* (2.1) were the next lowest-rated salutations.

Some forms of salutation do not clearly belong to either the most polite or the most impolite categories based on their assigned scores. There is a wide range or variability in the scores as each of these forms received both lowest and highest ratings. Out of the 36 different salutation forms analyzed, six exhibit a standard deviation exceeding 1, which suggests that respondents had particularly varied opinions about these expressions. Among these, *Dear Ms. Marit* and *Dear Skadra* are the most controversial, which is indicated by the 1.2 standard deviation, demonstrating the highest level of disagreement among participants. Following closely behind, *Dear Teacher*, *Dear Professor Margit*, *Szia tanárnő*, and *Szia Margit* each have a standard deviation of 1.1. The high standard deviation in the evaluation of these forms may be partly explained by what Pap (2022) also observed: some instructors consider expressions such as *Szia Margit* or *Szia tanárnő* to be pragmatic errors according to Hungarian sociopragmatic norms, while others take into account the student's international background and interpret the use of such forms to a lack of pragmatic competence rather than impoliteness.

#### 4.2.2 Qualitative analysis of the questionnaire

In the questionnaire instructors were given the opportunity to evaluate various forms of salutations not only through a Likert scale but also by providing open-ended written responses. Since answering the open-ended questions was optional, the number of responses for different salutations varied. A total of 22 instructors filled in the questionnaire, and they provided an average of 11.8 open-ended responses each. The minimum number of written responses for a given salutation was 7, while the maximum reached 18 (see table 9).

Table 9. The number and percent of respondents to the open-ended question

<b>Item (according to the order of the questionnaire)</b>	<b>Number of responses for open question / 22 respondents</b>	<b>Percent of responses for open question</b>
Hello	15	68.2 %
Dear Margit	17	77.3 %
Hi!	18	81.8 %
Jó napot kívánok!	15	68.2 %
Good morning madam	13	59.1 %
Dear Skadra Margit	11	50.0 %
Dear Professor	15	68.2 %
Dear Teacher	13	59.1 %
Dear Ms. Margit	12	54.5 %
Dear Dr. Skadra Margit	12	54.5 %
Dear Skadra	17	77.3 %
Hello miss	15	68.2 %
Dear Miss Margit	10	45.5 %
Jó napot kívánok Dr. Margit	12	54.5 %
Szia! Professor Margit	14	63.6 %
Good day	10	45.5 %
Dear Ms. Skadra	10	45.5 %
Szia Margit	14	63.6 %
Jó napot Dr. Margit	8	36.4 %
Hello professor	8	36.4 %
Good morning Margit!	9	40.9 %
Hi dear Dr.	11	50.0 %
Szia Madam	11	50.0 %
Dear professor Margit	8	36.4 %
Hello teacher	9	40.9 %
Hello dear	12	54.5 %
Szia tanárnő	12	54.5 %
Dear Ms. Marit* (*as written by the student)	15	68.2 %
Hello dear Margit	8	36.4 %
Good Morning	9	40.9 %
Hello, Dear Skadra Margit	11	50.0 %
Hello Miss Margit	9	40.9 %
Szia	13	59.1 %
nincs megszólítás a levélben (no salutation in the letter)	12	54.5 %
Good evening Miss Margit	7	31.8 %
Hello, Good afternoon professor	11	50.0 %

The responses provided by the instructors offer valuable insight into the understanding how different salutations are perceived in an academic context. The variation in response numbers suggests that some of them caused stronger reactions, either positive or negative, while

others may have been perceived more neutrally. To better understand the instructors' evaluations, a detailed analysis was conducted on the open-ended responses given for the five highest rated and the five lowest rated salutations. The aim was to identify contextual factors and topics that the participants' responses revealed to influence the instructors' opinions, following a first-order approach to politeness that focuses on participants' own perceptions (Eelen, 2001; Kádár 2017).

The qualitative data analysis was conducted with the help of ATLAS.ti software, which is designed specifically for qualitative data analysis and provided a structured framework for organizing the data. The 66 written responses written to the open-ended question were entered into the software. Seven responses were excluded, as the respondents referred back to a previous answer without providing any new content, e.g. *Ugyanolyan, mint a Dear* (same as for Dear); *Isd. Dear Professor-os kérdés* (see the 'Dear Professor' question). Therefore, the final data for analysis included 59 responses. The analysis was carried out on two levels: the lexical level and the content level.

On the lexical level, word frequency counts were applied with the help of the software (Saldaña, 2009). This process highlighted the vocabulary most frequently used by respondents to describe what they perceived as polite in the salutations. After the elimination of tool words, such as *the, to, and*, the data became suitable for identifying the keywords (Bolden & Moscarola, 2000).

At the level of content analysis, the aim was to systematically identify and examine those themes within the data, from the instructors' (emic) perspective, that contribute to the perception of salutations. To facilitate this process, ATLAS.ti software was also used in this case as a tool for coding and organising the responses. Both descriptive coding and values coding were applied, and the software supported the calculation of code frequencies. Importantly, the software does not offer any predefined codes so short textual codes were manually assigned to the responses during the analysis. The coding was therefore inductive and data-driven (Dörnyei, 2007; Saldaña, 2016).

As a result, several relevant codes were identified, representing the main themes expressed by the participants in their responses. In addition to descriptive codes, values coding was also applied to identify the respondents' attitudes (Saldaña, 2016). Responses were often assigned to multiple codes if they contained more than one theme (Saldaña, 2016).

In the case of the five most impolite salutations, the same analysis process was conducted, both at the lexical and content level. Altogether, the five less polite salutations received a total of 66 written responses from participants. Three of them were excluded: one

that contained a single dot (.) only, and two other cases where the salutation was only compared to another one, without further explanation (e.g., *Ugyanolyan, mint a "Hello"* [Same as "Hello"]; *ugyanaz, mint a hellóval kapcsolatban* [same as what was said about "Hello"]). Hence, a total of 63 responses were entered into the ATLAS.ti software and analyzed in the same way as described above.

#### 4.2.2.1 Qualitative analysis of the comments on five highest-rated salutations

The five salutations that received the highest ratings from participants were the salutations that received an average politeness rating of 4.5 or higher:

1. Dear Dr. Skadra Margit (average rating: 4.7)
2. Dear Professor (average rating: 4.6)
3. Jó napot kívánok! (average rating: 4.6)
4. Good morning madam (average rating: 4.5)
5. Dear Skadra Margit (average rating: 4.5)

### **Lexical analysis**

On the lexical level, word frequency counts were applied with the help of the ATLAS.ti software (see table 10) .

Table 10. Descriptors for positively rated salutations

Descriptors	Frequency of occurrences
udvarias (polite)	26
tisztelet / tisztelettudó (respect/respectful)	7
megfelelő (appropriate)	7
hivatalos (official)	5
helyes (correct/proper)	4
korrekt (correct/proper)	3
formális (formal)	2
kedves (kind)	2

The most frequently occurring word used by participants when commenting on the salutations in the questionnaire was the word *udvarias* (polite). This appeared 26 times in the written responses, demonstrating that it was by far the most common evaluative term for salutations that received positive rating (see table 10). Following this, two descriptors,

*tisztelet/tisztelettség* (respectful/respect) and *megfelelő* (appropriate) were each mentioned seven times in the data. In addition, the word *hivatalos* (official) was used five times, suggesting that participants also appreciate a certain degree of institutional formality. The term *helyes* (correct/proper) appeared four times, and *korrekt* (correct/proper) was mentioned three times, indicating that some participants also emphasized linguistic correctness when evaluating salutations. Lastly, the descriptors *formális* (formal) and *kedves* (kind) each appeared twice, suggesting that while less frequently mentioned, these still played a role in positive impressions of salutation forms.

### **Content analysis**

It was assumed that some codes would overlap with the words identified through frequency analysis. For instance, descriptive words such as *polite* and *respect* were expected to correspond to the more abstract category of *Respectfulness*, *correct* could be associated with *Linguistic accuracy*, and *formal* with *Formality*. However, it was also expected that the process of in-depth, qualitative analysis would bring new, previously unrecognized themes that reflect more detailed aspects of the respondents' evaluations. This expectation was confirmed during the detailed examination of the responses. During the analysis new categories were also introduced. Among these were codes such as *Effort recognition*, which is considered not only as a descriptive code, but also a value code that may reflect the respondent's personal value system. Several responses were coded with multiple labels.

After coding 59 responses, 7 codes were manually developed, and a total of 106 codes were assigned to the responses (see table 11).

Table 11. Code frequency summary of polite salutations

<b>Code</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Respectfulness	34
Linguistic accuracy	20
Cultural adaption	14
Personalization	11
Title usage	11
Effort recognition	9
Formality	7



## Respectfulness

The *Respectfulness* code was the most frequently used in the analysis, assigned 34 times. According to Ogiermann and Suszczyńska (2011), the word *tisztelet* (respect) plays a central role in Hungarian definitions of *udvariasság* (politeness). In their study most of the participants explicitly referred to *tisztelet* (respect) when explaining what they understood by politeness. On this basis, the *Respectfulness* code was applied whenever responses expressed respect, often through words such as *udvarias* (polite) or *tisztelet/tisztelettudó* (respect/respectful). Examples 1-6 illustrate how respondents reflected this:

Example 1: *Tisztelettudó* (Respectful)

Example 2: *Udvarias, olyan köszönést használt, amit a magyarórán a kurzus oktatójánál tanult.* (Polite, used a greeting that was taught in Hungarian class by the course instructor.)

Example 3: *Próbál udvarias lenni, és tiszteletet mutatni.* (Trying to be polite and show respect.)

Example 4: *Teljesen jó, udvarias.* (Perfectly fine, polite.)

Example 5: *Megadja a tiszteletet, igaz kis betűs madammal.* (Shows respect, although using lowercase *madam*.)

Example 6: *Azért adtam rá ötöst, mert a tanult nyelvet is használja, tiszteletet adva az őt erre a nyelvre tanító oktátónak.* (I gave it a 5 because it uses the learned language, showing respect to the teacher who taught them the language.)

It is important to highlight that none of the Hungarian-language salutations used in the messages included the form *Tisztelt Tanárnő/Tanár Úr!* (Honored Professor!), which is generally considered one of the most respectful ways to address university instructors in Hungarian academic settings (Domonkos & Ludányi, 2018). One possible explanation for this is that the students in present study are international students in a highly specialized environment, where one of the main goals of classes is to prepare them for spoken doctor–patient communication in Hungarian (Keresztes et al., 2024; Skadra & Keresztes, 2023). As a result, vocabulary that appears primarily in written academic discourse – such as *tisztelt* (honored) – is likely underrepresented in their lexical knowledge. It can be assumed that they have not been taught this expression and are therefore unfamiliar with it. This assumption is supported by the fact that the expression is not included in the official curriculum and in their

course books (Balogh & Skadra, 2016; Skadra 2022). As a result, this expression is may not part of their active vocabulary, and the instructors teaching Hungarian as a foreign language do not typically address its absence either, likely because they are aware that the students have not been taught this form. In contrast, Pap (2022), in a study examining the email correspondence of international students studying Hungarian studies, found that 37.7% of the students used the *Kedves + titulus* (Tanárnő!) (Dear + title (Teacher!)), and 22.95% used the *Tisztelt + titulus* (Honored + title) form in their messages. These results suggest that differences may also exist between universities, potentially due to the varying purposes for which students are learning Hungarian, but further investigation would be needed to clarify this hypothesis.

Interestingly, respondents often positively evaluated salutations that were not completely correct, as long as they perceived an intention of politeness. This may indicate that as long as the salutation is viewed as intended to be polite, recipients tend to tolerate some linguistic or pragmatic errors (see Examples 7-9).

Example 7: *Nem helyes, de udvarias. (Not correct, but polite.)*

Example 8: *Udvarias akar lenni (szerintem a szándékot kell nézni). (S/he wants to be polite [I think we should consider the intent].)*

Example 9: *Nem szokványos, emailben használt köszönési forma, de mindenképp értékelendő, hogy magyar és ráadásul formális köszönési mód. Ez számomra teljesen elfogadható és udvariasnak találom. (Not conventional, a greeting used in emails, but definitely commendable that it's in Hungarian and, moreover, formal. For me, this is completely acceptable and I find it polite.)*

### Linguistic accuracy

The *Linguistic accuracy* code was used in cases in which the respondent referred to the grammatical, stylistic, or orthographic correctness of the salutation. This code was the second most frequently assigned category following *Respectfulness*, appearing a total of 20 times across the data. In many cases, the salutation received a generally positive evaluation although the incorrect form but not in all cases. Several participants made explicit comments indicating that, in their view, a polite salutation must be linguistically accurate, so it should follow the pragmatic and stylistic norms of the language in which it is written, whether that be English or Hungarian (see Examples 10-13). These comments may also reflect instructors' professional awareness of linguistic norms, rather than expressing negative assessments.

Example 10: *A diák jól használja a helyesírási és pragmatikai szabályokat, amelyeket a magyarórán megtanult.* (The student uses the spelling and pragmatic rules well that were taught in Hungarian class.)

Example 11: *Megfelelőnek érzem magyar nyelvi szempontból.* (I find it appropriate from a Hungarian language perspective)

Example 12: *Még helyesen is írta le, vagy vette a fáradságot, és bemásolta.* (S/he even wrote it correctly, or took the effort to copy it in.)

Example 13: *Az angol nyelvben ez kifejezetten udvariasnak számít, kivéve a kis kezdőbetűt a madam szónál.* (In English, this is considered particularly polite, except for the lowercase initial in the word *madam*.)

Interestingly, this perspective is contrast with observations made under the *Respectfulness* code, where some respondents explicitly wrote in their responses that correctness is less important than the expression of respect and politeness. In those cases, a salutation could still be considered acceptable, as long as it shows the appropriate level of respect or politeness.

### Cultural adaptation

The third most frequently used code in the data was *Cultural adaptation*, which was given a total of 14 times. This particular code was applied in every case where the respondent's evaluation of the student's message emphasized how the student adapted to the cultural context, and whether or not they followed the language and social norms of the target culture. This aspect was particularly pointed out in the feedback when the student used a Hungarian salutation however the message was written in English. According to the responses, the evaluation highlighted the fact that the student adapted to the target language culture. This perceived adaptation positively influenced their impression of the student's message. The evaluative comments clearly show this emphasis on *Cultural adaptation*, as illustrated in Examples 14-21.

Example 14: *Értékelem, hogy magyarul szólít meg.* (I appreciate that s/he addresses me in Hungarian.)

Example 15: *Mert a viszonynak megfelelő, magyar megszólítást alkalmazott.* (Because s/he used an appropriate Hungarian salutation for the relationship.)

Example 16: *Olyan köszönést használt, amit a magyarórán a kurzus oktatójánál tanult.* (S/he used a greeting s/he learned in Hungarian class from the course instructor.)

Example 17: *Próbál a tanár anyanyelvén kommunikálni, mutatni, hogy használja a bevett magyar köszönési formákat.* (S/he tries to communicate in the teacher's native language, showing that s/he uses customary Hungarian greeting forms.)

Example 18: *Nem szokványos, emailben használt köszönési forma, de mindenképp értékelendő, hogy magyar és ráadásul formális köszönési mód.* (It is not a conventional email greeting, but it is definitely appreciable that it is Hungarian and also formal.)

Example 19: *Udvarias, mert legalább magyarul kezd, de személytelen.* (Polite, because at least it starts in Hungarian, but impersonal.)

Example 20: *A magyar nyelv és kultúra iránti érdeklődést mutatja.* (Shows interest in Hungarian language and culture.)

Example 21: *Igaz, hogy magyarul így nem kezdünk levelet, de örülök, hogy használja a magyartudását.* (It is true that we do not usually start a letter like this in Hungarian, but I am glad s/he is using his/her knowledge of Hungarian.)

These examples demonstrate that there is a link between cultural aspect of the salutations and the perception by instructors. The salutations chosen by students also shows the instructor how well the students know and consider the cultural norms associated with the instructor's cultural background, even if the communication is not continued in the instructor's native language. Although the content of the message is written in English, this cultural consideration highlights the importance that a greeting in the instructor's native language can have. However, as noted by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011), in such intercultural settings, it can be difficult for students to decide whether their emails should reflect the politeness norms of English written communication or those of the academic environment they are addressing. It was often mentioned that even when the salutation was not perfect, the use of a native-language form in itself created a positive impression.

### Personalisation

The *Personalisation* code was used in 11 cases where instructors commented on the personal or impersonal nature of the salutation. In these cases, the respondent indicated that the salutation was specifically directed at the given instructor or, on contrast, found it too general

or impersonal. Based on the responses, it becomes clear that this is an important element in the instructor-student relationship, as personal forms of address have an effect on communication: instructors tend to evaluate the salutation more positively when they are personally addressed. Respondents most commonly associated personalisation with the explicit use of the instructor's name. Among the five highest-rated salutations, this code appeared 11 times. In 9 of these cases, it was applied to responses about *Dear Dr Skadra Margit* and *Dr Skadra Margit*. The instructors positively evaluated the fact that the student addressed the instructor by name and explained their high Likert scale ratings with comments, as shown in Examples 22-25. This finding contrasts with Domonkosi's (2017) earlier results, which suggest that addressing someone by name alone is viewed as problematic in Hungarian written communication, as it does not express the level of respect typically expected in this context.

Example 22: *A teljes nevet használja.* (S/he uses the full name.)

Example 23: *Udvarias, normális megszólítás és tudja a nevemet.* (Polite, normal salutation, and s/he knows my name.)

Example 24: *Mutatja, h tudja a hallgató kinek ír levelet konkrétan.* (Shows that the student knows exactly whom they are writing to.)

Example 25: *Vette a fáradságot, hogy megnézzé az oktató teljes nevét.* (S/he made the effort to look up the instructor's full name.)

In the final example above (Example 25), the *Personalisation* code is applied together with *Effort Recognition*, acknowledging that the student dedicated time to correctly writing the instructor's full name.

While the *Personalisation* code was typically applied in a positive context, in two out of the 11 cases, it was used to refer to the absence of such personalisation (see Examples 26-27). Two instructors noted the lack of personal reference with the salutation *Good morning madam*, and rated it less polite. Nevertheless, this is still among the five most polite salutations based on its average rating.

Example 26: *Ez a megszólítás szerintem udvarias, ugyanakkor kissé személytelen. Számomra kicsit furcsa, mert úgy tudom, hogy madamot inkább akkor szokás használni, ha nem tudjuk a címzett nevét.* (This salutation is polite in my opinion, but somehow impersonal. It feels a bit unusual to me because I believe *madam* is typically used when the recipient's name is unknown.)

Example 27: *Írásban udvariasabb lenne névvel megszólítani a tanárt.* (In writing, it would be more polite to address the teacher by name.)

### Title usage

The *Title usage* code was applied in cases where respondents explicitly commented on whether or not an academic title was used in the salutation. While *Title usage* often co-occurs with the *Respectfulness* code, since titles are frequently used as a linguistic marker of respect and politeness, the decision was made to treat *Title usage* as a separate code rather than as a subcategory of *Respectfulness*. This was due to the fact that a high number of respondents specifically focused on the presence or absence of titles and it shows that many instructors considered it as a central aspect of their perception.

In the data the *Title usage* category appeared 11 times and was consistently applied to open-ended responses that followed the use of the salutations *Dear Dr. Skadra Margit* and *Dear Professor* (see Examples 28-30).

Example 28: *A magas rangú cím miatt udvarias.* (Polite because of the high-ranking title.)

Example 29: *Nem feledkezett meg a doktori titulusról.* (Did not forget the doctoral title.)

Example 30: *Titulus, teljes név – tisztelettudó.* (Title, full name – respectful.)

While instructors appreciated the use of titles as respectful and polite, several respondents also pointed out that the appropriate use of academic titles may differ according to national academic norms. Moreover, even within Hungary, institutional norms regarding the use of academic titles may vary from one university to another (Domonkosi & Ludányi, 2018). Specifically, the respondents emphasized that in the Hungarian university context not all instructors are entitled to be addressed with the title of *professor* or *doctor*, as these titles refer to official academic positions and thus apply to a limited number of instructors. On the other hand, in English-speaking countries these forms are often used as a general form of address for university teachers. This suggests that even in English-language communication, local institutional and cultural norms significantly influence how the participants received and evaluated the salutations that include a title (see Examples 31-36).

Example 31: *Bár nem vagyunk professzorok, ezáltal nem helyénvaló a megszólítás, de a hallgató próbál udvarias lenni és tiszteletet mutatni.* (Although we are not professors, so the salutation is inappropriate, the student is trying to be polite and show respect.)

Example 32: *Kedves hogy professzornak szólít, de ez Magyarországon egy magasabb rangot takar, így szerintem nem helyes.* (It is kind to address me as professor, but in Hungary that denotes a higher rank, so I do not think it is correct.)

Example 33: *Mutatja, h a teljes nevedet használja titulusokkal együtt (nem is feltételezi, hogy nem vagy dr. ☺),* (Shows that s/he uses your full name with titles (s/he does not even assume you might not be a Dr. ☺).)

Example 34: *Udvarias, ugyanakkor tudomásom szerint a dr. titulus használata csak akkor szükséges, ha a címzett maga is így használja a nevét hivatalosan.* (Polite, but as far as I know, the Dr title is only necessary if the recipient officially uses it.)

Example 35: *Udvarias akar lenni (szerintem a szándékot kell nézni), kapok egy dr. titulust - amit következő órán szintén tisztáznom kell.* (S/he wants to be polite – I think the intention is what matters – I get a Dr title, which I will also have to clarify next class.)

Example 36: *Udvarias a teljes név a Dr-ral, de nem minden tanár Dr (én sem), így ezt pontosítani kell ha illetéktelenül használja.* (Full name with Dr is polite, but not all instructors are doctors (I'm not either), so it should be clarified if used inappropriately.)

The Examples 35-36, in particular, illustrate that some instructors consider it part of their instructor role to guide students in using appropriate forms of address, especially when certain expressions – though polite in intention – do not fit into the Hungarian academic hierarchy (Ludányi & Domonkosi, 2020).

Based on the responses, the findings clearly suggest that using academic titles is an important aspect of polite communication, through which students express acknowledgment of the instructor's university status.

### Effort recognition

The *Effort recognition* code was applied to those responses in which the instructors did not only evaluate the form of the salutation itself, but also explicitly acknowledged the student's

intention to be polite, or their effort to fit into the cultural or linguistic context. This recognition included noticing when students made efforts to use salutations that meet local expectations. The code was assigned in 9 cases and frequently co-occurred with other codes such as *Respectfulness* and *Cultural adaptation*. Some respondents made it clear that although the salutation may not completely match formal conventions, the student's efforts to meet cultural expectations and display cultural awareness were clearly recognizable and appreciated. Even in cases where the linguistic form was unconventional or partially incorrect, instructors often perceived the gesture itself as a positive sign from the students side (see Examples 37-41).

Example 37: *Próbálkozik. :) (They are making an effort. :))*

Example 38: *Értékelem, hogy magyarul szólít meg és önöző formát használ, a nevet hiányolom. (I appreciate that s/he addresses me in Hungarian and use the formal form, though I miss the name.)*

Example 39: *Nem szokványos, emailben használt köszönési forma, de mindenképp értékelendő, hogy magyar és ráadásul formális köszönési mód. (It is not a typical greeting used in emails, but it is definitely appreciable that it is Hungarian and formal.)*

Example 40: *Tisztelettudó, próbál a tanár anyanyelvén kommunikálni, mutatni, hogy használja a bevett magyar köszönési formákat. (Respectful, s/he is trying to communicate in the teacher's native language, showing s/he uses established Hungarian greeting forms.)*

Example 41: *Vette a fáradságot, hogy megnézzze az oktató teljes nevét. (They took the effort to look up the instructor's full name.)*

These examples demonstrate that respondents appreciated not only the final form of the salutation but also the communicative intention behind it. They recognized that the student made an effort, even if the result did not fully meet expectations.

### Formality

The *Formality* code refers to those responses in which participants specifically commented on the formal or institutional nature of the salutation used by the student in their message. This code was applied when the respondent reflected on the salutation followed the expected conventions of formal academic communication, particularly within a university



setting. The focus here is not only on linguistic correctness, but also on the appropriateness of tone in a student-instructor interaction. As Balogh (2024) also emphasized in her study, the Hungarian academic culture is characterized by a high power distance, which makes formal salutations the expected norm in student-instructor interactions. In total, this code was identified in 7 separate cases in the data. Across these examples, the use of a formal salutation was generally perceived positively (see Examples 42-45).

Example 42: *Hivatalos megszólítás miatt udvarias.* (Polite due to its formal nature.)

Example 43: *Hivatalos, tisztelettudó.* (Formal, respectful.)

Example 44: *A számára idegennyelven írt köszönést udvariasnak gondolja és szerintem is az, mivel formális köszönés.* (The greeting written in a foreign language is considered polite, and I agree, as it is a formal greeting.)

Example 45: *Hivatalos, de udvarias a teljes név miatt.* (Formal, but polite due to the use of the full name.)

In the Example 45, the respondent acknowledges that although the salutation is formal, it is perceived as polite due to the inclusion of the full name of the addressee. This suggests that while formality contributes positively to the tone of the message, it may not be sufficient on its own to indicate politeness fully. Additional features such as personalization can improve the overall impression and effectiveness of the salutation.

Overall, the *Formality* code reflects a tendency among respondents to interpret formality as a sign of politeness, especially when it fits the communicative situation. Formal expressions are frequently interpreted as appropriate and respectful in written academic context. Importantly, the findings showed no explicit signs of negative evaluations of formality. The only critical comment came from a respondent where the instructor notes that however the salutation is formal, but it feels distant. Even so, this response does not reject the formal tone (see Example 46).

Example 46: *Nagyon hivatalos, bár számomra idegen.* (Very formal, although unfamiliar to me.)

Example 47 is another notable case: a salutation that would not typically be used in written communication, namely, *Jó napot kívánok!* (Good afternoon!) was still positively received:

Example 47: *Nem szokványos emailben használt köszönési forma, de mindenképp értékelendő, hogy magyar és ráadásul formális köszönési mód.* (Not a typical salutation used in emails, but it is still appreciated as it is in Hungarian and formal.)

Example 47 illustrates that teachers tend to be tolerant in the case of formal expressions, even if the exact phrasing does not fully conform to the written context. What seems to matter most is the student's effort to be respectful, particularly when this effort is expressed through formality.

Thus, based on the *Formality* code, it can be concluded that formal language is both expected and positively valued in student-instructors interactions. Student efforts to use formal salutations, especially when adapted to the instructor's linguistic and cultural context, are typically seen as polite.

## **Conclusion**

The analysis of the comments on the five highest-rated salutations provides a understanding of how instructors perceive politeness in academic email communication. While the lexical analysis identified key words such as *udvarias* (polite), *tisztelet* (respect), and *megfelelő* (appropriate), the content analysis revealed a wider spectrum of themes that reflect the criteria used by instructors.

Among the codes, *Respectfulness* shows as the most dominant, highlighting that instructors value not only formal correctness but the perceived intention behind the student's salutation. Respondents were often willing to overlook minor linguistic errors when the greeting clearly communicated politeness and respect. The findings also emphasize the role of *Cultural adaptation*, and *Effort recognition* in influencing instructors' evaluations. This is especially evident in the high number of positive comments associated with the use of Hungarian salutations, even in emails otherwise written in English. Therefore, future research could examine Hungarian and English salutations separately to explore whether Hungarian native-speaker instructors evaluate these two sets of forms differently or perceive similarities between them. The code *Cultural adaptation* is an important factor of intercultural awareness, and together with *Effort recognition* suggests that instructors consider both the linguistic form and the communicative intent behind students' messages. Further, the analysis of *Personalization*

and *Title usage* highlights that instructors also find it important to be addressed individually and with an appropriate title.

Overall, the findings of this analysis demonstrate that instructors evaluate student salutations from multiple perspectives, where linguistic, cultural and relational elements all influence their final evaluation. Successful academic communication, therefore, is not just a matter of linguistic correctness, but, from the instructors' perspective, it is also about whether students show their awareness of what is expected culturally, show respect and good intentions.

#### **4.2.2.2 Qualitative analysis of the comments on five lowest-rated salutations**

The analysis of the five lowest-rated salutations was also carried out using the ATLAS.ti software and included both a lexical-level and a content-level investigation. A total of 66 responses were received to the five lowest rated salutations, but 3 responses were not included (see Chapter 4.2.2). The five salutations identified as the most impolite and selected for further analysis were as follows:

1. Hello dear (average rating: 1.3)
2. No salutation in the email (average rating: 1.4)
3. Szia (average rating: 1.8)
4. Szia Madam (average rating: 2.0)
5. Hi (average rating: 2.1)

#### **Lexical analysis**

The lexical analysis focused on identifying all words in the 63 responses that carried negative connotations. Unlike in the case of the most positively rated salutations, this part of the analysis did not show any attributes which were used frequently. Although several of the participants' comments contained judgmental and negative expressions, no single word appeared particularly common, however the overall tone of the responses was clearly critical. Words such as *furcsa* (strange), *udvariatlan* (impolite), *komolytalan* (unserious), and *elfogadhatatlan* (unacceptable) appeared in several responses. These terms strongly suggest that the respondents considered these salutations impolite in the context of student-instructor email communication.

As also shown in Table 12 no single word dominated the responses, in contrast to the case of the five most polite salutations, where the word *udvarias* (polite) appeared 26 times in the data.

Table 12. Descriptors of negatively rated salutations

Descriptors	Frequency of occurrences
túl (too)	7
udvariatlan (impolite)	6
személytelen (impersonal)	5
informális (informal)	4
furcsa (strange/weird)	3
fura (strange/weird)	2
vicces (funny)	2
komolytalan (not serious)	2
elfogadhatatlan (unacceptable)	2

It is important to highlight that the word *túl* (too) occurs most frequently in this data, appearing seven times. It appears as an adverb placed before adjectives or as part of compounds, and it is used to create negatively valenced descriptors of students' salutations. These indicate that students chose forms which violated the norms of appropriateness, for instance: *túl közvetlen* (too direct), *túl bizalmas* (too personal), *túlságosan informális* (overly informal), *kicsit túlzás* (a bit too much). This suggests that although it is important for the salutation to show some degree of personal connection between a student and an instructor, it is also necessary to avoid becoming too informal or too familiar. The second most frequently used word in the text is *udvariatlan* (impolite), which appears six times.

The importance of building a personal connection between instructors and students is also reflected in the fact that the third most frequent word in the data is *személytelen* (impersonal), which occurs five times in the data. The lack of a personal salutation can give the impression to the instructor that the student does not know who s/he is writing to, or s/he does not care. This cannot automatically be classified as impolite, but rather it may be interpreted as a lack of effort to build a personal connection with the instructor.

In addition to the previously mentioned words, the term *informális* (informal) also appears four times in the data. While this word alone would not necessarily explain why a salutation is considered impolite, it becomes relevant within the formal frame of the student-instructor relationship. One respondent explicitly emphasizes this point, writing that they find the salutation informal because *nagyon informális, a barátaimmal csetelek így...* (very

informal, this is how I chat with my friends...), indicating that, in their view, the salutation does not fit the student-instructor context.

The data also includes some less frequent words which, although they appear only a few times, offer valuable insight into how instructors evaluate salutations. Among them are the terms *furcsa* (strange/weird) and *fura* (strange/weird), which appear three and two times. These words do not necessarily carry a strongly negative connotation on their own; rather, they indicate that the salutation seems contextually inappropriate from the instructor's point of view. The respondents may not explicitly categorize the salutation as impolite, but they do see discrepancy between the linguistic form and the expected norms of academic communication. This ambiguity can be seen in comments such as *ez egy fura keverék* (this is a strange mix), *nagyon furcsa hatást kelt ez a kombináció* (this combination creates a very strange effect), and *egy kicsit furcsa oktató megszólítására* (a little strange as a salutation for an instructor). These expressions reflect some criticism, however, they do not explicitly call the salutation impolite.

The data also includes words that more clearly reflect the respondents' emotional reactions to particular salutations. These word choices show personal impressions and feelings rather than an objective view of formality. Examples include *vicces* (funny) and *komolytalan* (not serious). These lexical elements suggest that some salutations are not taken seriously by the instructors. However, this does not necessarily mean that they are perceived as rude; rather, they are interpreted as inappropriate for the context.

The word *elfogadhatatlan* (unacceptable) also appears only twice in the data. Its use indicates a complete rejection of the salutation by the respondents. It suggests that in these cases, the salutation is not only unusual, but also violating the norms of formal academic communication.

### **Content analysis**

Following the lexical analysis, a content analysis was also carried out on the responses of the five most impolite salutations. To conduct this part of the analysis, the same technique was used as in the previous phase (see Chapter 4.2.2). The responses were assigned codes labels that categorized the main themes of the answers. The codes that had been applied in the case of the five most polite salutations were reused. However, it became evident that many responses could not be properly labelled using the already developed codes. As a result, it became necessary to extend the previously used codes by introducing new ones to address topics that

were characteristic only of the evaluations of the impolite salutations. As in the previous case, some responses here also received more than one label, as they referred to more than one theme.

Within the 63 responses analyzed in this section, a total of eight codes were applied (see table 13). Of these eight codes, five had already been introduced during the analysis of the five most polite salutations. In addition to these, three new themes and codes – *Over-familiarity*, *Disrespectfulness* and *Emotional reaction* – were introduced specifically for this part of the analysis. However, two codes that had been used in the earlier phase of the analysis – namely, *Title usage* and *Respectfulness* – did not appear in this set of data at all. The *Respectfulness* code was not used here because the responses clearly reflected not only the absence of respect, but the presence of disrespect, therefore the new code *Disrespectfulness* was introduced instead of *Respectfulness* to better express the theme of the responses. Overall, the application of these eight codes resulted in a total of 82 coded segments in the data.

Table 13. Code frequency summary of impolite salutations

Code	Frequency
Over-familiarity	19
Disrespectfulness	14
Formality	14
Emotional reaction	13
Effort recognition	8
Personalization	7
Linguistic accuracy	4
Cultural adaption	3

### *Over-familiarity*

The most frequently used label within this data was *Over-familiarity*, which appeared 19 times, making it the dominant category of this analysis. The code was applied in every case where instructors perceived the salutation used by the student as too informal, overly personal, or too intimate (see Examples 48-50). Such salutations were seen as not suitable for the expected norms of academic communication. Domonkosi and Ludányi (2018) emphasize that, in the university context, it is common for Hungarian students to use formal written address forms when communicating with instructors even when they use informal spoken forms due to the instructor's explicit permission. This practice highlights the hierarchical nature of the student-instructor relationship. According to the instructors, these overly informal forms did

not respect the professional distance, which should be typical in student-instructor relationship, regardless of whether the communication takes place in Hungarian or English.

Example 48: *Túl bizalmas.* (Too intimate.)

Example 49: *Nagyon személyes.* (Very personal.)

Example 50: *Hát, ez egy kicsit túlzás, túl közvetlen.* (Well, this is a bit too much, too informal.)

Some instructors offered alternative contexts in which such salutations might be appropriate (see Examples 51-56).

Example 51: *Ilyen megszólítást a kedvesének ír az ember, nem a tanárának.* (This kind of salutation is something one writes to his/her partner, not to his/her teacher.)

Example 52: *Így az utcán köszönjön a magyar barátjának szerintem.* (S/he should greet his/her Hungarian friend on the street like this, in my opinion.)

Example 53: *Inkább barátok közöttinek gondolnám, mint tanár-diák viszonyban alkalmazandónak.* (I would consider it more suitable between friends than in a teacher-student relationship.)

Example 54: *Inkább baráti viszonyban találnám helyesnek...* (I would find this appropriate in a friendly relationship...)

Example 55: *Ezt a barátaival legyen szíves használni a hallgató.* (The student should please use this kind of address with his/her friends.)

Example 56: *Öreg néni a fiatal eladónak.* (An old lady greeting a young shop assistant.)

One respondent's use of the expression *megtanulta már* (should have learned by now) indicates that this knowledge is already expected in academic life (see Example 57).

Example 57: *Megtanulta már, hogy szia csak haverokkal, alá-felé rendeltség esetében nem lehet használni.* (S/he should have learned by now that *szia* is only used among friends; it cannot be used in a hierarchical relationship.)

Example 58 emphasizes that *Over-familiarity* is not always intentional. This response shows a degree of understanding or empathy toward the student's effort.

Example 58: *Udvarias próbál lenni (madam), de nem tudja, hogy a szia-t mi csak tegeződéskor használjuk.* (S/he is trying to be polite [*madam*], but s/he does not know that *szia* is only used in informal situations in Hungarian.)

The fact that *Over-familiarity* appeared 19 times, indicates that it is a particularly sensitive issue for instructors when evaluating salutations.

### Disrespectfulness

The code *Disrespectfulness* was used 14 times in the data, making it the second most frequently applied category, together with *Formality*. This indicates that instructors are sensitive to any salutations in which respect and politeness are not explicitly shown. In the previous data the *Respectfulness* code was associated with positive perceptions. In contrast, in the present data the comments highlight the absence of communicative norms regarding respect and politeness (see Examples 59-62).

Example 59: *A legudvariatlanabb.* (The most impolite one.)

Example 60: *Tiszteletlenség vagy nem volt gyerekszobája.* (It is disrespectful, or s/he was not raised properly.)

Example 61: *Nagyon udvariatlan.* (Very impolite.)

Example 62: *Ez az a megszólítás, ami számomra teljesen elfogadhatatlan egy tanár-diák kommunikációban, főleg írásban.* (This is a salutation that I find completely unacceptable in teacher-student communication, especially in writing.)

The frequent use of this code shows that a respectful salutation is important for the instructors, and they notice when it is missing.

### Formality

The other label appearing 14 times alongside *Disrespectfulness* is *Formality*. This code was applied when respondents explicitly reflected on the formality level of student salutations. The high frequency shows that instructors expect the communication style to match the norms



of the academic context. Furthermore, the *Formality* code often overlaps with other coding categories, for instance with *Over-familiarity* (see Examples 63-66).

Example 63: *Túlságosan informális, illene az academic English alapvető formuláit követni.* (Too informal; should follow basic academic English formulas.)

Example 64: *Nagyon informális, a barátaimmal csetelek így...* (Very informal, this is how I chat with my friends...)

Example 65: *E-mail/chat nyelvezet.* (E-mail/chat style language.)

Example 66: *Ebben az esetben feltételezem, hogy a hallgató elfelejtette, hogy a szia informális köszönési mód.* (In this case, I assume the student forgot that *szia* is an informal greeting.)

These examples suggest that instructors often associated informality with casual, everyday communication which is contrasted with their expectations of academic interaction.

### Emotional reaction

The *Emotional reaction* category was applied 13 times, each representing a situation in which instructors gave a clearly emotional response to the salutations used by students in their emails. The reactions varied from humour to anger, suggesting that salutations can have an emotional influence on instructors. While codes such as *Formality* or *Linguistic accuracy* focus on assessing whether a salutation conforms to expected academic norms, *Emotional reaction* shows the instructor's impressions (see Examples 67-71).

Example 67: *Haha. Magyarul viccesen hat.* (Haha. Sounds funny in Hungarian.)

Example 68: *Vicces.* (Funny.)

Example 69: *Nem örülök, ha egy diák ezzel a megszólítással kezdi a levelét* (I am not happy when a student starts his/her email with this salutation.)

Example 70: *Ha nincs megszólítás, akkor lehet válaszra sem kellene számítania a diáknak.)* (If there is no salutation, the student maybe should not expect a reply at all.:))

Example 71: *Bukjál föl.* (Just fail.)

These examples show how emotional responses can differ from one instructor to another. While some instructors interpret the salutation in a humorous way (Examples 67-68) others react more negatively (Examples 69-71). Example 70 also illustrates that the salutation could influence the willingness to respond and example 71 is an emotional reaction that suggests anger.

Interestingly, in the case of the five most polite salutations, the *Emotional reaction* code did not emerge at all in the process of analysis. In contrast, when evaluating impolite salutations, it was used 13 times. This discrepancy suggests that impolite greetings may lead to stronger emotional reactions from instructors.

### Effort recognition

The *Effort recognition* code appears eight times in the data, and in terms of its frequency it is consistent with the analysis the positive evaluations. However, in the case of negative evaluations, the effort was not seen as a positive gesture, but rather as a minimal attempt which helped reduce the negative perception of the salutation (see Examples 72-75).

Example 72: *Legalább van megszólítás.* (At least there is a salutation.)

Example 73: *Informális köszönés, szerintem ez kevésbé udvarias (de legalább köszön...).*  
(Informal greeting, I think it is less polite – but at least s/he is greeting...)

Example 74: *Legalább (magyarul) köszön.* (At least s/he is greeteing (in Hungarian).)

Example 75: *Csak azért nem nagyon udvariatlan, mert legalább próbálkozik magyarul.* (It is not extremely impolite only because at least s/he is trying in Hungarian.)

Examples 74-75 show that the moderately positive reaction of an otherwise negatively rated salutation was motivated by the fact that the student at least made an effort to greet the instructor in Hungarian. This overlaps with the *Cultural adaptation* code, as the effort to use the language of the instructor was often seen positively, even if the salutation itself was not correct.

### Personalization

The *Personalization* code was applied seven times in the data. It refers to whether the instructor reflects on the fact that the student addressed him/her by name and/or academic title. The majority of these responses consist of one word or a short phrase (see Examples 76-79).

Example 76: *Személytelen.* (Impersonal)

Example 77: *Személytelen, komolytalan.* (Impersonal, unserious.)

Example 78: *Személytelen és személyeskedő.* (Impersonal and inappropriately familiar.)

Example 79: *Személytelen és túl közvetlen.* (Impersonal and too personal.)

However, in Examples 80–81 instructors provide a more detailed explanation regarding the impression that the student does not even know who s/he is addressing. These examples indicate that being personally addressed is an important expectation in student–instructor communication.

Example 80: *Azt sem tudja, hogy kinek ír, nem szánja rá az időt hogy szépen megírja az üzenetet.* (S/he does not even know who s/he is writing to, s/he does not take the time to write the message properly.)

Example 81: *Helyzet uaz mint a hello esetében: azt sugallja, hogy még a nevemet sem tudja.* (Same situation as with *hello*: it suggests s/he does not know my name.)

### Linguistic accuracy

The *Linguistic accuracy* code was used only four times in the present data. As observed in previous analysis, this code is applied when instructors make specific comments about whether the salutation used by the student is appropriate in term of language use within the context of an academic email (see Examples 84-86).

Example 84: *Minden alakot kever, azt mutatja, hogy az illető angolul sincs tisztában a helyes megszólítással.* (Mixes up all the forms, it shows that the person does not even know the correct salutation in English.)

Example 85: *Ennyire azért kellene tudni angolul, legalább a filmekből, hogy nem szólítunk így meg.* (One should at least know this much English, even from movies, to know that you do not address someone like this.)

### Cultural adaptation

The *Cultural adaptation* code was used when instructors noticed and valued students' efforts when they try to use Hungarian in culturally appropriate greetings. Importantly, this theme emerged even when the overall perception of the salutation was negative, suggesting that the effort to adapt to the local culture may serve as a mitigating factor, making the salutation seem less impolite (see Examples 82-83).

Example 82: *A diák nincs tisztában a 'Szia' helyes használatával, de legalább magyar...* (The student is not familiar with the correct use of *Szia*, but at least it is in Hungarian...)

Example 83: *Jó, hogy magyarul próbálkozik, de szerencsétlen a végeredmény. Órán megbeszelnénk.* (It is good that s/he is trying in Hungarian, but the result is unfortunate. We would discuss it in class.)

In the study by Hallajian and David (2013) a similar tendency can be observed, where Iranian students made an effort to use Malaysian address forms. This behavior shows that the students often are aware of local expectations.

Example 83 also illustrates how the instructor may see his/her role: s/he is not only evaluative but also suggesting that the issue would be addressed in a future class. This shows that mistakes are perceived by instructors as an opportunity to address these problems in class and help students learn appropriate forms. Árvay (2009) also highlights that in such cases, it would be important for the language teacher to raise awareness of the cultural differences that influence communication – such as the use of informal versus formal address forms – in order to make clear that an informal salutations is not appropriate in the context.

### Conclusion

To conclude, the detailed lexical and content analysis on the responses of the five less polite salutations offers an understanding of how instructors evaluate them within an academic context. Compared to the analysis of the comments to five most positively evaluated salutations,

this data shows a more critical, and at times emotional tone – both in terms of word choice and the overall content of instructors’ responses. Instructors’ perceptions seem to be influenced by several factors such as language use, culture, and perceived effort.

In the analysis the dominant role played the code *Over-familiarity*. This result suggests that instructors often consider it impolite when students transgress the expected student-instructor distance. A new code was also added to the present analysis, *Disrespectfulness*, which replaces the earlier used code *Respectfulness*. The presence of this new code reflects an important qualitative shift in the data.

Importantly, while negative evaluations dominate, there is also evidence of *Effort recognition* and *Cultural adaptation*, particularly where students attempted to use Hungarian salutations. These mitigating factors suggest that instructors can recognize positive intent even when formal conventions are not followed perfectly. However, these factors were not strong enough to change negative evaluations, but they often softened the overall tone of the response.

#### **4.3 Data 3: Semi-structured interviews with instructors**

A total of 13 instructors participated in the interviews, all of them are language teachers at the Medical Language Communication and Translation Studies and they work in intercultural environment. The semi-structured interviews were divided into two main parts: 1) background information was gathered about the participants; 2) the salutations were analyzed with the instructors, which allowed us to compare the results obtained during the interviews with those from the perception questionnaire and additional open-ended questions related to the topic were asked (see Chapter 3.5).

After the interviews were conducted, they were transcribed with the help of TurboScribe ([turboscribe.ai](https://turboscribe.ai)), an automated transcription tool that uses artificial intelligence to produce accurate written versions of recorded speech. The transcripts were reviewed and manually checked to confirm that the written version matched the original recordings. During this process, all personal data and identifying information were removed to ensure anonymity. The respondents’ gender, age, teaching experience, language knowledge, and how many Coospace messages they receive on average per week were identified and summarized for easier comparison and analysis (see table 14).

Table 14. Background information of the Hungarian interviewees

<b>Interviewee #</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Teaching Experience (years)</b>	<b>Languages</b>	<b>Avg. Coospace Messages</b>
Interviewee #1	59	35	English, German (basic), Latin (reading)	2 per day
Interviewee #2	59	30	English, Russian	1 per week
Interviewee #3	25	2.5	English	5-6 per week
Interviewee #4	29	7	English, Italian (basic)	2-6 per week
Interviewee #5	52	20	English, German (basic), Russian (basic)	1 per week
Interviewee #6	33	5	English, French, Japanese (passiv), German (basic)	1-2 per week
Interviewee #7	39	13	English, French	1-2 per day
Interviewee #8	52	29	English	1-2 per week
Interviewee #9	43	1	English, German (basic)	3 per week
Interviewee #10	38	3.5	English, German, French (basic)	1-2 per month
Interviewee #11	28	4	English, French (basic), Japanese, German	1 per day
Interviewee #12	31	4	English	1-2 per month
Interviewee #13	44	14	English, Spanish, French	2-3 every 2-3 week

The gender of the respondents was not indicated, as all interviewees were women. As it was mentioned earlier, the majority of instructors teaching at Hungarian as a foreign language at the Institute are females, there is only one male instructor participating in the international program and he did not participate in the interview. The ages of the respondents range from 25 to 59 years. The average age of the interviewees is 40.9 years, with a standard deviation of 11.7 years, so the participants' ages differ to some extent around the middle value. It shows that the instructors come from a wide age range and, as a result, their teaching experience in an intercultural environment also varies significantly. The average teaching experience among the interviewees is 12.9 years, with a standard deviation of 11.9 years, indicating a variation in professional backgrounds, from relatively new instructors to those with decades of experience.

All of the respondents speak English, which they use as a lingua franca in the international medical program. Additionally, nearly half of the respondents (6) speak German, 5 of them speak French, 2 speak Japanese, and there are individual instructors who also speak Italian and Spanish. One instructor also mentioned Latin, which she does not speak but can read. This suggests that the instructors' linguistic backgrounds – and so it can be assumed that their cultural knowledge – are highly diverse.

The instructors reported very different numbers regarding how many CooSpace messages they typically receive from international students. Some receive only 1-2 messages per month, while others receive the same number per week or even per day. However, there was no respondent who reported never receiving CooSpace messages, meaning that all of them already have some prior experience and perceptions of written communication with international students, including those with only limited teaching experience.

#### **4.3.1 Evaluation of salutations during the interviews**

The second part of the interview focused on the oral evaluation of eight selected salutations based on the questionnaire results (see Chapter 3.5). Participants were asked to assess these salutations and share their thoughts on how they would perceive such salutations if used by an international student writing a message in English via CooSpace. There were no strict guidelines regarding the order in which the salutations had to be evaluated, although most interviewees followed the order in which the salutations were presented. Some, however, chose to proceed based on perceived im/politeness, starting either with what they perceived as the most polite or most impolite.

Although participants did not rate the salutations on a numerical scale during interviews, the impressions shared in the interviews reflected the same patterns as those found in the questionnaire. During the data analysis, the evaluations provided by the interviewees were grouped according to individual salutations. This approach made possible the systematic comparison and interpretation of the perceptions associated with each salutation. The results demonstrate that the two data – the questionnaire ratings and the interview responses – support each other. The qualitative comments from the interviews reflect the same tendencies observed in the questionnaire responses, and thus provide deeper insights into the reasons for instructors' evaluations.

The same salutations were consistently identified as polite (e.g., *Dear Dr. Skadra Margit*, *Jó napot kívánok!*, *Dear Professor*) or impolite (*Hello dear*, no salutation, *Szia*). Furthermore, the two salutations that received mixed reactions (*Dear Ms Margit* and *Dear Skadra*) received contrasting opinions during the interviews, consistent with the diversity of opinions expressed in the perception questionnaire.

#### 4.3.1.1 Interview-based evaluation of the three highest-rated salutations

The three salutations that received the highest politeness ratings in the questionnaire – *Dear Dr. Skadra Margit, Jó napot kívánok!*, and *Dear Professor* – were also consistently evaluated positively by the interview participants and the interviewers provided more detailed explanations why they considered them to be polite.

##### *Dear Professor*

General evaluation: positive and respectful

Sample comments:

Interviewee #1: *Szerintem én egy ilyen megszólításnak örülök, vagy örülnék, de ritkán kapok.* (I think I would appreciate a salutation like that, although I rarely receive one.)

Interviewee #5: *Ha ilyet ír nekem valaki, akkor én megtisztelve érzem magam, mert akkor én úgy érzem, hogy vette a fáradságot és egy olyan megszólítást használta, ami tiszteletteljes, és szóval én ezt teljesen rendben levőnek gondolom.* (If someone writes something like this to me, I feel honored – because I feel that s/he made the effort and used a form of address that is respectful. So, I consider this completely appropriate.)

Interviewee #8: *A Dear Professor szerintem az tökéletesen elmegy...* (Dear Professor is perfectly acceptable.)

Interviewee #10: *A legjobb, és én ezt tartom mindig a legkellemesebbnek is.* (It is the best one, and I always find it the most pleasant as well.)

Interviewee #13: *A Dear Professor szerintem az teljesen megfelelő, tehát hogy ezzel tudnék élni. Tehát úgy gondolom, hogy megadta a kellő tiszteletet azzal, hogy megszólított, és hogy ugye egy titulussal hivatkozott rád, tehát azt mondom, hogy ez teljesen helyénvalónak gondolom.* (Well, I think *Dear Professor* is completely appropriate – it is something I would be perfectly fine with. I feel that the necessary respect was shown by including a salutation and by referring to you with a proper title. So yes, I would say it is entirely suitable.)

*Dear Professor*, which had a mean rating of 4.6 in the questionnaire, was described by several instructors as not only polite but also emotionally pleasant. As discussed earlier in the questionnaire analysis section (see Chapter 4.2.2.1), this salutation was consistently evaluated among the highest-rated salutations, reflecting instructors' preference for respectful and formal salutations. One instructor noted that she would appreciate a salutation like that, even if she do not receive it frequently (Interviewee #1). Others emphasized that the use of a formal academic



title reflects both effort and respect (Interviewee #5), while another characterized it as not only acceptable, but as their personal favourite (Interviewee #10). Another instructor highlighted that including a title such as *Professor* shows that the student acknowledges the institutional hierarchy, which made the salutation appropriate (Interviewee #13). These responses not only support the quantitative results obtained in the questionnaire, but also reflect the high value placed on titles that shows that the interviewers value the recognition of academic hierarchy and distance – an aspect repeatedly emphasized in the literature on politeness in institutional setting as well (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011).

### Jó napot kívánok!

General evaluation: positive, effort in using the Hungarian language is appreciated

Sample comments:

Interviewee #2: *Az mindenféleképpen pozitív szerintem, tehát, hogy mondjuk az én saját anyanyelvemen szólít meg a hallgató, tehát az mindenképpen egy jó dolog.* (I definitely see that as a positive – when a student addresses me in my own native language, I consider that a good thing)

Interviewee #5: *Én számomra ez is teljesen elfogadható. Nyilván nem ismeri, hogy magyarul melyek az e-mail írási konvenciók.* (For me, this is perfectly acceptable as well. Naturally, the student is not familiar with the conventions of writing emails in Hungarian.)

Interviewee #9: *Szóval, ugye magyarul ez nem egy megfelelő levélbevezetés, viszont nagyon értékelném, hogy magyarul ír, amikor ő magyart, mint idegen nyelvet tanul, és veszi a fáradságot, és egy magyar köszöntéssel próbálkozik. És nem is teljesen rosszal, tehát nem azt írja mondjuk, hogy jó éjszakát kívánok, mint bevezetés. Úgyhogy én ezt udvariasnak ítélném meg, pontosan ezért, mert ő próbálkozik, hogy az én anyanyelvemen szólítson meg, vagy üdvözljön.* (So, in Hungarian, this would not be considered an appropriate way to open a formal email. However, I would really appreciate the fact that the student is writing in Hungarian while learning it as a foreign language, and that s/he makes the effort to include a Hungarian greeting. And it is not even completely off – it is not like s/he opened with something like *Good night*, for instance. So I would actually consider this polite, precisely because s/he is making an effort to greet me in my native language.)

Interviewee #11: *Nagyon udvariasnak tartom (...) illetve hogy azt kifejezetten magyarul is, és helyesen írta le magyarul is, ez is értékelendő.* (I find it very polite [...] and the fact that s/he wrote it specifically in Hungarian, and correctly as well, is also something I appreciate.)

Interviewee #13: *Udvariasnak gondolom, pláne úgy, hogy ugye próbálta a magyar köszönési módot alkalmazni külföldi révén, és ugye nem szíával és nem tegezve, hanem ezt az udvarias köszönési formát használta. Tehát azt gondolom, hogy ez is egy jó kiindulási pont lehet, mondjuk abból a szempontból nem szerencsés, hogy nem egy megszólítás, hanem egy köszönést alkalmaz.* (I consider it polite –

especially given that, as a foreigner, the student made an effort to use a Hungarian greeting form. And it was not *Szia* or something informal, but rather a polite version. So I think this can be a good starting point. Although from another perspective, it is less ideal, since it is more of a general greeting than an actual salutation.)

*Jó napot kívánok!* – which also received a mean rating of 4.6 – was perceived as polite and respectful by all interview participants, although it is not a conventional salutation in written Hungarian. According to Domonkos and Ludányi (2018), the instructors teaching Hungarian students, thus communicating with them in an intracultural environment, often considered the use of *Jó napot kívánok!* in emails as inappropriate. Some of these instructors even stated on their personal university webpages that such greetings are particularly unsuitable or irritating. This highlights the important role of context in which the interpretation of salutations in written communication takes place. In contrast, in present research instructors teaching Hungarian as a foreign language participated in intercultural communication and were inclined to evaluate the same greeting more positively – even if they acknowledged that it is not typical in written communication – due to the student’s visible effort to use Hungarian language. However, the study by Domonkos and Ludányi (2019b) notes the increasing tendency to use salutations characteristic of spoken interaction in Hungarian email communication. It seems that these spoken forms are slowly replacing more traditional opening forms in email messages.

The results of the present study also differ from another tendency in the case of Hungarian students. According to Domonkosi and Ludányi (2018, 2019b), the use of such greetings – *Jó napot kívánok!*, *Jó reggelt kívánok!* (Good afternoon! Good morning!) – may be perceived as indicating that the instructor is constantly present in the online space – suggesting, for instance, that the message is likely to be read in the same part of the day in which it was sent. In the present study this assessment did not appear in the case of the international students, none of the instructors expressed this view. In their case, they explained their positive evaluations as motivated by the perceived effort the students made to address their instructors in Hungarian, particularly in the context of foreign language learning. The instructors frequently emphasized that although the expression does not strictly follow the Hungarian norms, the effort to use the instructor’s native language was seen as a polite gesture (Interviewee #2, #5, #9). Some participants highlighted that while the greeting is not formally appropriate for written messages, it demonstrates both cultural awareness and a willingness to adapt to local norms (Interviewee #9, #13). The correct spelling of the Hungarian salutation, even in its

unconventional context, was also noted and appreciated (Interviewee #11). Interviewee #13 stressed that the greeting's formality made it a far better choice than more informal alternatives, such as *Szia*, which would have been inappropriate in an academic context. She also highlighted that this form is a general greeting, not typically used at the beginning of an email. However, she still evaluated it as polite, especially as coming from a non-native speaker. These comments support previous findings (see Chapter 4.2.2.1), where *Cultural adaptation* was identified as one of the most positively evaluated dimensions in the analysis. Overall, the *Jó napot kívánok!* salutation was seen not just as linguistically acceptable, but as a sign of respect and intercultural effort, even if it was not fully consistent with the conventions and norms of written correspondence in Hungarian.

#### Dear Dr. Skadra Margit

General evaluation: positive, highly respectful even if overly formal

Sample comments:

Interviewee #3: *Minden itt van, aminek itt kell lennie. Formális szempontból odaírja a teljes nevét az oktátónak, titulust ad neki, dear, ugye az elég gyakran használt megszólítás, én ezt elfogadhatónak tartom. Az egy más kérdés, hogy az oktató, hogy érzi, hogy érzékeli, hogy ez mennyire sok, vagy nem sok.* (Everything that needs to be there is there. From a formal perspective, s/he includes the instructor's full name, adds a title, and uses *Dear*, which is a commonly used salutation. I find this acceptable. It is a different question how the instructor feels about it – whether s/he perceives it as too much or not.)

Interviewee #6: *Ez nagyon rendben van, teljes nevedet, jól írta, és ügyelte a részletekre. Úgyhogy szerintem ez is egy korrekt megszólítás teljesen.* (I think this one is absolutely fine – s/he wrote your full name correctly, and s/he paid attention to the details. So I would say this is also a completely appropriate salutation.)

Interviewee #8: *A Dear Dr. Skadra Margit a non plus ultra, tehát ott aztán minden tisztelet látszólag, meg minden udvariasság, ami létezik, az meg van adva.* (Dear Dr. Skadra Margit is the non plus ultra, so in that case, every possible form of respect and politeness seems to be fully given.)

Interviewee #10 : *Ő nem tudta, hogy mondjuk nincs egy ilyen címe az ő oktatójának, de fölé lőtte, tehát ez egy kellemesebb hiba, azt mondom, inkább fölé löni títled, mint alá.* (S/he did not know, that the instructor does not actually have a doctoral title, but addressed him/her as such anyway. I would say that is a more pleasant kind of mistake – it is better to over-title than under-title someone.)

Interviewee #13: *Ez nagyon jó, én nekem tetszik.* (This is very good, I really like it.)

The most highly rated salutation, *Dear Dr. Skadra Margit* (mean rating in questionnaire: 4.7), was appreciated for its maximal formality. Several interviewees described it as a model

example of how a salutation can signal respect and attention to detail. Interviewee #3 emphasized that the salutation included every important element – title, full name, and *dear* – making it fully acceptable from a formal perspective, even if a bit too formal. According to Domonkos and Ludányi (2018), overly formal salutations – such as *Tisztelt [Vezetéknév] [Keresztnév] Tanár Úr!* (Honor Professor [Last Name] [First Name]”) – are often perceived as overly polite (*túldvariaskodás*) in some contexts. A similar attitude was observed in the case of Interviewee #3. Another participant appreciated the correctness of the formulation, noting that the name was correctly spelled and respectfully structured, which reflected a high level of effort to be polite (Interviewee #6). At the same time, some instructors acknowledged that the salutation might include a title not actually held by the recipient, yet they interpreted this as a *pleasant* or *preferable* kind of mistake – suggesting that over-titling is more acceptable than under-titling in academic contexts (Interviewee #10). One interviewee went so far as to describe the form as *the non plus ultra* of politeness, indicating that it represents all possible expressions of respect (Interviewee #8). These reactions support the view that the instructors tend to interpret formality, effort, and respectful tone very positively. The preference for such highly formal salutations reflects the institutional norms and expectations within academic settings, where titles, correctness, and distance play an important interpersonal role.

Overall, the interview data confirmed the earlier findings on the study, that *Formality*, *Personalization*, and *Cultural effort* are valued elements in student salutations and support previous statistics and code frequency results from the questionnaire (see Chapter 4.2.2.1). The instructors evaluated those forms positively, both as objectively adhering to the institutional norms and as, on a more personal level, pleasing and honoring them and in their institutional identity as teachers of Hungarian as a foreign language.

#### **4.3.1.2 Interview-based evaluation of the three lowest-rated salutations**

The salutations analyzed in this section (*Szia*, no salutation and *Hello Dear*) match the five lowest-rated salutations in the questionnaire phase of the study. These were previously examined both lexically and thematically (see Chapter 4.2.2.2). They were consistently associated with negative codes such as *Over-familiarity* and *Disrespectfulness*. The interview data not only confirm these categorizations but also provide further insight into the reasons behind instructors’ negative evaluations of these salutations.

## Szia

General evaluation: informal for student-teacher interaction

Sample comments:

Interviewee #3: *Használja a magyart, viszont szerintem vagy nem tudja, vagy nincs tekintettel arra, hogy van egy formális meg informális része is a magyarnak.* (S/he does use Hungarian, but I think s/he either does not know – or does not take into account – that Hungarian also has both a formal and an informal register)

Interviewee #6: *Mert itt meg látszik a törekvés, hogy ő szeretne ezek szerint magyarul diskurálni, meg megnyilvánulni, viszont másrésztől nincs tisztában azzal, hogy a szia az milyen körülmények között használható. Úgyhogy az megint csak egy eléggé jó próbálkozás, csak nagyon félresikerült.* (Because here you can clearly see the effort – the student wants to communicate and express themselves in Hungarian. But on the other hand, s/he is not aware of the contexts in which *Szia* is appropriate. So, it is actually quite a good attempt, just one that went quite wrong.)

Interviewee #7: *Ha tényleg a külföldiek által küldött üzenetről beszélünk, de akik ismerik a magyar kultúrát valamilyen szinten már szerintem udvariatlan, mert nem szólítasz meg így egy tanárt, nem köszönsz így neki.* (If we are really talking about messages sent by foreign students, then I would say that for those who already have some familiarity with Hungarian culture, it does come across as impolite – because you simply do not address or greet a teacher like that.)

Interviewee #8: *Semmi esetre sem udvarias, de meg én azt tudom mondani, hogy legalább próbálkozott valamilyen szinten, és egy magyar kultúrában használatos, rendes, magyar helyesírással elkövetett megszólításról van szó, ami nem föltétlenül helyén való Magyarországon.* (It is not polite at all, but I can at least say that the student made some kind of effort. It is a salutation used in Hungarian culture, written with correct Hungarian spelling, even if it is not necessarily appropriate in a formal Hungarian context.)

Interviewee #9: *Ezt nagyon udvariatlannak tartottam korábban, aztán most azt tapasztaltam, hogy nagyon lassan értik meg, sok diák nagyon lassan érti meg, hogy ez nálunk nem megfelelő köszönés, mert nálunk van formális megszólítás, magázás, és ehhez más köszönést tartozna.* (I used to find this very impolite, but then I realized that many students take a long time to understand that this kind of greeting is not appropriate in our context. In our culture, we have formal address forms and the use of the formal you, and that would require a different type of greeting.)

*Szia* (mean rating in questionnaire: 1.8) was rated higher than *Hello Dear* and messages where no salutation was used at all, but still perceived as impolite. It is consistent with the comments in the interview data. In the interviews *Szia* was also often linked to cultural effort, but also to inappropriate use of the form. Interviewees regularly positively commented the effort to use Hungarian (Interviewees #6 and #8), which reflects the *Effort recognition* and *Cultural*

*adaptation* codes in the thematic analysis of the questionnaire comments. At the same time, they stressed that effort to use Hungarian does not excuse the choice of an inappropriate salutation. Interviewee #3 criticized the lack of register awareness, while #7 emphasized that students familiar with Hungarian norms should know better – therefore providing evidence for *Cultural adaptation*, reflected in the thematic code frequencies. Interviewee #9 first saw *Szia* as very impolite, but then admitted that many students need more time to fully understand what the appropriate usage is in a culture where both informal and formal salutation forms are employed.

### Nincs megszólítás (no salutation)

General evaluation: highly negative, seen as disrespectful or lazy

Sample comments:

Interviewee #1: *Nagyon udvariatlan, de ez nagyon gyakori, hogy ilyen leveleket kapok.* (It is very impolite, but unfortunately I receive messages like this quite often.)

Interviewee #6: *Szerintem az udvariatlanság felsőfokon, mert az kb. az, mintha nem köszön, csak fogja magát és elkezdik mondani, amikor meglát az utcán, hogy mit akar, szóval az nagyon udvariatlan.* (I think this is impoliteness at its highest level – it is like when someone sees you on the street and does not even say hello, just starts telling you what s/he wants. So yes, I find that very impolite.)

Interviewee #11: *Ha nincs megszólítás, ezt igazából nem tudom mire vélni, mert mégiscsak egyetemen vagyunk, tehát úgy gondolom, hogy azért egy minimális akadémiai stílust ismerjünk.* (If there is no salutation, I honestly do not know what to make of it – we are at a university, after all, so I believe there should be at least a minimal awareness of academic style.)

Interviewee #12: *Csak gyorsan, ami eszébe jutott, azt leírta, és nem vette a fáradságot a megszólításra.* (S/he just quickly wrote down whatever came to mind and did not make the effort to include a salutation.)

Interviewee #13: *Ez a legeslegrosszabb, [...] egy levelet ír egy tanárának, akkor minimum az az alap, hogy akkor tessék megszólítani valahogy. Tegye ezt angolul, tegye ezt magyarul, de akkor is valamilyen megszólításnak kell lennie...* (This is by far the worst. [...] if s/he is writing a letter to a teacher, the absolute minimum is to include some kind of salutation. Whether s/he does it in English or Hungarian – there still has to be a salutation.)

The case of *no salutation* (mean rating in questionnaire: 1.4) was rejected by almost all interviewees. It should be noted that the analysis focuses exclusively on the initial student messages, excluding follow-up emails. Domonkosi and Ludányi (2018) and Salazar-Campillo (2023) emphasize that in follow-up exchanges, the tone of communication often becomes more

conversational and dialogic, and instructors themselves may encourage this shift by responding in a less formal manner – sometimes leading to the omission of salutations altogether. However, here instructors associated the omission of a salutation with a general lack of impoliteness. Several instructors used words and expressions such as *udvariatlan* (impolite), *udvariatlan felsőfokon* (impoliteness at its highest level), and *minimális akadémiai stílus* (minimal awareness of academic style) (Interviewees #1, #6, #11). This illustrates a violation of the expectation coded as *Effort recognition* as a message without salutation shows no visible effort on the part of the student to address their instructor. Interviewee #13 stressed that using some salutation – regardless of the language used – is the minimum in messages to instructors.

### Hello Dear

General evaluation: negative and too familiar

Sample comments:

Interviewee #2: *A legrosszabb szerintem, legalábbis a mi kultúránkban.* (In my view, it would be considered the worst – at least in our culture.)

Interviewee #7: *Hát, a Hello Dear az udvariasságtól nagyon-nagyon messze van, az ilyen kicsit ilyen hey baby című nálam, amikor így azt mondják, hogy Hello Dear, hát nem vagyok a dear-ed. Tehát az szerintem kifejezetten udvariatlan.* (Well, *Hello Dear* is very, very far from polite in my view. It feels a bit like a *hey baby* kind of thing to me. When someone says *Hello Dear* – well, I am not your dear. So I think it is explicitly impolite.)

Interviewee #9: *Ez szerintem csakis kortárs levelezésbe férne bele, azt gondolom. Tehát egymás közt írhatnak így maguknak. Bár egy fiútól egy lány felé ott is úgy érezném, hogy azért ehhez egy meglehetősen intim viszony kell, de tanár felé abszolút udvariatlan.* (I think this would only be acceptable in informal communication between peers. They can use it among themselves. Even then – if a boy wrote this to a girl – I would feel it implies quite an intimate relationship. But towards a teacher, it is absolutely impolite.)

Interviewee #10: *Egy kicsit olyan kellemetlen, mert az olyan, mintha én a macája lennék, az az, ami már egy picit sértene, de mivel ők egy másik kultúrában vannak, azért én alapvetően nem sértődnék meg ezeken.* (*Hello Dear* is, in my opinion, the worst – at least in our culture, it is definitely not appropriate. It feels a bit uncomfortable, as if I were their girlfriend or something. That is something I would actually find a bit offensive – but since they are from a different culture, I would not take offense.)

Interviewee #11: *Egy kicsit már túl informális egyetemi, akár Coospace üzenet, akár emailben egy professzor felé, illetve fordítva is, tehát én úgy gondolom, hogy a diák vagy a hallgató felé sem írunk így kezdve üzenetet.* (It is already a bit too informal for university-level communication – whether it is a Coospace message or an email to a professor. And vice versa as well; I do not think it would be appropriate for a professor to begin a message to a student this way either.)

Matching its lowest average rating (1.3) in the questionnaires, the salutation, *Hello Dear* elicited the strongest negative reactions in the interviews. Instructors found it inappropriate, offensive and emotionally uncomfortable. Interviewee #2 called it *a legrosszabb* (the worst), while #7 interpreted it as suggestive of flirtation (*hey baby*), clearly activating the *Over-familiarity* and *Disrespectfulness* codes used in the questionnaire analysis. Interviewee #9 highlighted that this salutation could only be considered acceptable in close relationships. Interviewee #10 explicitly stated that while she found this form offensive, she would not take it personally, as she understood it could be a cultural misunderstanding. This demonstrates that instructors familiar with intercultural environments show an awareness of the presence and influence of different cultural backgrounds of the students, and that they are aware of the fact that their students' communicative competence may be insufficient. These interview comments also underscore that formality and distance are not viewed as optional but as emotionally significant markers of respect in academic setting.

#### **4.3.1.3 Interview-based evaluation of two ambiguous salutations**

While the primary focus of the interview-based analysis was on salutations that received either consistently high or low ratings in the questionnaire phase, two highly divisive examples – *Dear Skadra* and *Dear Miss Marit* – were also included in the interviews. These forms received mixed evaluations in participants' written feedback. The decision to include them was to ensure that the interviews reflect not only on clearly polite or impolite salutations, but also on those forms that received unclear or mixed evaluations in the questionnaire and this way to arrive at a deeper understanding of how instructors think about politeness. While these cases are not the main focus of the study they are as important as the other forms as they demonstrate that small details – like the order of salutation elements and spelling – can strongly influence how polite a message appears to the recipients.

##### *Dear Skadra*

General evaluation: problematic due to incorrect use of family name

Sample comments:

Interviewee #4: *Kicsit nekem olyan személytelen talál a vezetéknév miatt, meg én nem is tudom, hogy ezt szoktuk így használni, hogy csak a vezetéknemet írjuk, nekem az nagyon furá, nekem az nem udvarias, az nekem nagyon ilyen, mint valami*



*katonaság, ott szokták a vezetéknévükön hívni, vagy rendőrség, nekem az ugrik be róla erre asszociálva.* (Well, to me that feels a bit impersonal – probably because of the use of only the surname. I do not even know if it is common practice to address someone like that here, just by his/her last name. It strikes me as very odd and definitely not polite. It actually reminds me of the military or the police – that is the kind of association I have with it.)

Interviewee #7: *Dear Skadra, ott szerintem nem tudják a külföldiek, hogy mi a keresztnév, mi a vezetéknév. Nekem nagyon furá és kicsit udvariatlan a mi kultúránkból kiindulva, mert csak a családnevet nem használod így, tehát, hogy Skadra tanárnő, vagy középiskolában is, amikor mondjuk, hogy szólítjuk a vezetéknévén, de titulus nélkül nem.* (With *Dear Skadra*, I think foreign students often do not know which the first name and the surname is. To me, it sounds quite strange and even a bit impolite from the perspective of our culture, because you simply do not use just the family name like that. You would say something like *Teacher Skadra* or, even in secondary school, if we addressed someone by his/her surname, it would still be accompanied by a title – never on its own.)

Interviewee #9: *Dear Skadra nem, nem igazán megfelelő. Azt hiszem, hogy valószínűleg őket sokszor megzavarja, hogy a Coospace, amin az üzeneteket kapjuk, a magyar sorrendben jeleníti meg szerintem a neveket.* (Dear *Skadra* no, does not really feel appropriate. I think what probably confuses many students is that Coospace, the platform we use to receive messages, displays names in the Hungarian order – with the surname first.)

Interviewee #12: *Kellett volna még valami titulus elé esetleg.* (There probably should have been a title in front of it.)

Interviewee #13: *Semmiképpen sem gondolnám, hogy ez így ebben a formában jó lenne, mert ugye azt tudjuk, hogy ugye a Skadra a vezetéknéved, tehát akkor mit tudom én, egy Miss Skadra vagy valami kellett volna elé, tehát hogy úgy esetleg elment volna.* (I definitely would not say that this is acceptable as it is, because we know that *Skadra* is the surname – so, I do not know, something like *Miss Skadra* or something similar should have been added in front of it. That way, maybe it could have worked.)

The salutation *Dear Skadra* was not perceived as clearly impolite by interviewees, yet it was several times described as not appropriate. A regularly mentioned problem was the use of the surname alone, without a title. Interviewee #4 described it as impersonal, even associating it with military or police language. Similarly, Interviewee #7 noted that in the Hungarian culture it is not common to use only the family name without a title, and emphasized that international students may not understand Hungarian name order conventions. Interviewees #9 and #12 both assumed that the Coospace design – which shows the surname before the first name – is confusing for international students and probably contributes to this type of error. According to

interviewee #13 without the addition of a title such as *Miss*, the greeting cannot be considered acceptable.

### Dear Miss Marit

General evaluation: problematic due to name misspelling

Sample comments:

Interviewee #2: *Hogyha helyesen írja a nevedet, akkor az rendben van. Hogyha nem tudja leírni a nevedet, az azért kifogásolható, hogy mondjuk nem nézi meg.* (If s/he spells your name correctly, then that is fine. But if s/he can not write your name properly, that is problematic – it suggests that s/he did not even bother to check.)

Interviewee #4: *Jó, hát ez lehet, hogy typo, vagy nem tudom. Valószínű, hogy az volt. Igen. Hát udvariás, mert szerintem követi ezt a formát, amit amúgy az angol szerintem elvár, hogy dear, meg miss, meg keresztnév, de a typo miatt kicsit fura. Nekem az kicsit, hát kicsit udvariatlan, de egyébként végülis én udvariasnak gondolom, mert most bárki elérhet bármit.* (Well, it might have been a typo, I am not sure. It probably was. Yes – I would say it is polite, because s/he follows the expected format, which English generally requires: *Dear*, *Miss*, and the first name. But because of the typo, it feels a bit odd. To me, it comes across as slightly impolite – but overall, I would still consider it polite, since anyone can make a mistake.)

Interviewee #9: *Hát az nekem személy szerint nagyon udvariatlan dolog, hogyha valakinek a nevét elírják. Amúgy ha helyesen írta volna le a Margitot, akkor teljesen megfelelné.* (To me personally, it is very impolite when someone misspells a name. If s/he had spelled *Margit* correctly, then it would have been completely acceptable.)

Interviewee #12: *Itt legalább titulus van, de ugye a nevedet meg elírta, ami szerintem egy, tehát nem azt mondom, hogy sértő, hanem hogy leginkább nekem az jön le belőle, ez az ilyen nemtörődömség, figyelmetlenség, összecsapja, nem gondolja át, nem ellenőrzi le.* (At least there is a title, but s/he misspelled my name – which, I would not say is offensive, but to me it comes across as careless, inattentive, rushed. Like s/he did not really think it through or check it before sending.)

Interviewee #13: *Miss részével még oksi a dolog, a Margit az meg mellé ment (....) pláne félre másolva, félreírva, tehát ugye ez azt mutatja, hogy egyrészt nem lehet tudni, hogy kapkodott-e, vagy csak ennyire nem vette a fáradságot, hogy normálisan megnézzé a nevedet.* (The *Miss* part is fine, but the *Margit* was completely off [...] especially because it was clearly copied or written incorrectly. It shows that either s/he was in a rush, or simply did not make the effort to check the name properly.)

The second ambiguous salutation, *Dear Miss Marit*, was initially seen by some as structurally polite due to the presence of a title and first name. However, its problem is the misspelling of the name, which several interviewees interpreted as careless. Interviewee #2 emphasized that proper spelling would have made the greeting fully acceptable. Others (e.g.,

Interviewees #4, #9, #12, and #13) acknowledged the general politeness of the form, but explained that spelling errors suggest a lack of effort or rushed writing. Interviewee #12 summarized that while the *Miss* was to be appreciated, the incorrect spelling of the name made the message seem careless and not focused.

Overall, the evaluations of *Dear Skadra* and *Dear Miss Marit* illustrate the complexity of instructors' perceptions. Although neither form was perceived as completely impolite by most interviewees, both triggered hesitation or criticism due to specific features – the omission of a title in the first case, and the misspelling of the instructors name in the second. Importantly, interviewees acknowledged the presence of polite intent in both cases: *Dear Skadra* followed a recognizable formal English pattern, while *Dear Miss Marit* included an appropriate title. Still, small deviations – such as using a surname without a title or not checking the correct spelling of the instructors' name – were interpreted as signals of lack of attention to detail, lack of cultural awareness, and lack of effort.

#### **4.3.2 Instructors' perspectives on CooSpace salutations**

The previous chapters of the study primarily focused on how instructors evaluate specific salutation forms used by international students in CooSpace messages. With the help of questionnaire-based assessments and detailed lexical and content-level analysis of authentic student messages, specific tendencies could be identified regarding which expressions were perceived as polite or impolite. These analyses, however, were focused on individual salutations and their direct evaluations.

This section shifts the perspective from the evaluations of specific forms of salutation to a wider understanding of instructor attitudes, expectations, and interpretation strategies. It presents findings from open-ended interviews in which instructors were asked to reflect on their personal views regarding their own, personal experience with student salutations. Since all participants teach Hungarian as a foreign language to international students at the Faculty of Medicine, their reflections are particularly valuable. They regularly interact with students from a wide range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds, often dealing with intercultural misunderstandings and with different expectations concerning politeness and respect. This qualitative approach helps us to better understand not only *what* instructors consider polite or impolite, but *why*. It also highlights how these perceptions are influenced by their intercultural awareness and teaching experience. This section is guided by five key interview questions.

These were developed by the researcher as part of the interview design, based on thematic concerns identified during the earlier stages of analysis:

1. *How important do instructors consider it to include a salutation in a CooSpace message?*

This question aims to investigate how instructors perceive the communicative importance of the salutation: whether they see it as only a formal requirement or an important way of expressing respect and politeness.

2. *Do instructors draw conclusions about the student's cultural background based on the salutation used in the CooSpace message?*

This question examines whether instructors view salutations as indicators of cultural background.

3. *What do instructors think about students using Hungarian words or expressions in the salutation of an English-language CooSpace message?*

This question investigates how instructors interpret the code-switching in a salutation – whether they see it as a sign of integration or as an inappropriate form.

4. *How do instructors typically respond to salutations they find inappropriate or impolite?*

This question investigates instructors' response strategies to impolite salutations – whether they choose to ignore this issue or address it indirectly or directly.

5. *Do instructors believe that institutional or faculty level guidance on email salutations should be provided to students?*

This question investigates whether instructors believe faculties or departments should take a role offering guidance on email etiquette. It examines their views on institutional responsibility, the potential benefits of explicit rules, and the balance between individual tolerance and systemic regulation.

In addition to the earlier quantitative and qualitative analyses, the findings based on the five interview questions provide further insight into how politeness, cultural background, and interpersonal roles interact in student-instructor communication.

#### **4.3.2.1 Instructor attitudes regarding salutations in CooSpace messages**

As a first step in the qualitative interview analysis, the responses given in the interviews related to this topic were selected and thematically categorized. The investigation focused on how important instructors consider the salutations of CooSpace messages and how it influences their responses. Based on the interviews, three main types of attitudes were observed:

1. Instructors who consider the salutation important
2. Those who relativize its importance
3. Those who consider it relatively unimportant

The first group – those who emphasized the importance of the salutation – represents more than half of the participants (7 out of 13 interviewees). According to their responses, the salutation is a normal expectation. These instructors explicitly highlighted how important it is to use the right salutation and see it as an essential part of how people communicate at the university level. For them, the salutation typically represents politeness and sets the instructor-student relationship within appropriate university norms. Interviewee #7 expressed this as follows: *Szerintem a megszólítás ezekben az írásbeli formákban is ugyanaz, mint egy köszönés szóban, tehát hogy anélkül elkezdni, nagyon udvariatlan* (In my opinion, a salutation in written forms is the same as a greeting in spoken interaction, so starting without one is very impolite). Another commented: *Fontos kifejezetten azért, mert... mégiscsak egy hallgató-oktató viszony van köztünk. Ez egy professzionális kapcsolat* (It is important precisely because... after all, there is a student–instructor relationship between us. It is a professional relationship.) (Interviewee #11). Also falling into this group was an instructor who considered the salutation an important indicator of student behavior: *Ahogy megszólítja a tanárt, meg ahogy elküld egy üzenetet, az egy ilyen önmagáról egy névjegy, hogy ő milyen, hogy ő mennyire alapos, figyelmes, igényes* (The way a student addresses a teacher and sends a message is like a business card – it shows who s/he is, how thorough, considerate, and meticulous s/he is) (Interviewee #12). The instructor also added: *Önmagukról adnak egy képet [...] ezért próbáljanak utána nézni, mondjuk a titulushoz, helyesen írják le a nevét, a megszólítás* (They present an image of themselves [...] that is why they should always try to look up the proper title and write the name and the salutation correctly).

Interviewee #7 not only emphasized the salutation's role as a marker of im/politeness, but also reflected on the existing power dynamic between the participants: *A tanár és a hallgató között azért van egy fölé alá rendeltség [...] hogyha csak olyannal kezdi, hogy nem tudom, szia, meg hello, dear, hát így már fenntartásokkal kezdem elolvasni az üzenetet magát is, hogy így ez aha, hello, dear, de mit akarsz, meg hol van itt a tisztelet* (There is a hierarchical relationship between the teacher and the student [...] if they start with something like *I don't know*, *hi*, or *hello, dear*, then I already begin to read the message itself with some reservations, like, okay, hello dear – but what do you actually want, and where is the respect?) (Interviewee #7).

Interviewee #3 – who, at the age of 25, belongs to a younger generation – also indicated the importance of salutations: *Én fontosnak tartom egyébként [...]. Ami nagyon gáz, mondjuk ez a hello dear, azt úgy megjegyzem magamnak, hogy ő azért így kommunikál írásban* (I do consider it important [...] what is really bad – well, this *hello dear* kind of thing – I make a note of how s/he communicates in writing). However, the same interviewee also demonstrated openness to informality: *Én szoktam nekik mondani, hogy nyugodtan egy kicsit informálisabban is kommunikálhatunk, valaki erre vevő szokott lenni, valaki nem* (I usually tell them that it is okay to be a bit more informal in communication – some are open to that, some are not.). According to Domonkosi and Ludányi (2021b), the tendency can also be observed among Hungarian students, where, despite the relatively small age gap between instructors and students and the offer by some instructors to use informal address, some students still continue to use the formal form in emails. This indicates that the expectation of formal address is not absolute but rather context-dependent.

Another instructor expressed clearly that omitting the salutation shows a lack of respect: *Én inkább gondolnám a Coospace üzenetet is, mint egy emailnek, tehát, hogy igényelném azt, hogy normálisan megszólítson. Tehát, hogy nekem egy megszólítás nélküli Coospace üzenet azt mutatja, hogy az illető nem vette a fáradságot arra, hogy megadja a kellő tiszteletet* (I tend to think of Coospace messages like emails, so I expect to be properly addressed. A message without a salutation tells me that the person did not take the effort to show proper respect) (Interviewee #13). Finally, another instructor stated: *Én nagyon fontosnak tartom. Nyilván nem fogja a jegyüket befolyásolni, nem fogja szerintem még a segítőkészségemet sem befolyásolni, amikor válaszolok nekik, de számomra nagyon fontos, hogy tudjanak udvariasan egy üzenetet elkezdeni meg befejezni* (I consider it very important. It will not affect their grade, and I do not think it influences my helpfulness when replying either, but to me it is very important that they know how to start and end a message politely.) (Interviewee #9).

This group also includes Interviewee #6, who at first downplayed the formal value of salutations: *Mondhatnánk, hogy ezek ilyen protokolláris dolgok, hogy ez így illik, mert ezt így szoktuk csinálni. Úgyhogy mondhatnánk, hogy ez nem annyira fontos, mert most tök mindegy, hogy ott van, hogy hello, meg dear, meg jó napot kívánok, mert nem ez a lényege az üzenetnek* (One could say these are just protocol things – it is just the done thing, and in that sense, it is not so important whether it says *hello*, *dear*, or *good morning*, because that is not the point of the message.). However, she went on to admit that from the perspective of traditions and conventions, these elements do serve a purpose: *Ugyanakkor, hogyha már egy hagyomány, meg mindenféle szokás szempontjából, meg azért nem árt, hogyha itt vannak ezek* (Still, from the

point of view of tradition and various customs, it does not hurt if these things are there). This suggests that while she does not view salutations as strictly necessary, she still accepts them as part of academic communicative expectations.

These quotes demonstrate that for this group of respondents, the salutation is not only a formal element, but also a signal that reflects respect and acknowledges hierarchical roles. These views are consistent with previous findings in this study, which suggest that politeness strategies are markers of social relationships.

The second group includes perspectives that relativize the importance of salutations. They represent a context-dependent approach, which was characteristic of two interviewees (Interviewee #4 and #8). In this category, instructors acknowledge the role of the salutation in professional communication, but do not see its importance as absolute. These participants evaluate the value of the salutation based on context. It is depending on the communicative situation, the content of the message, and the existing instructor–student relationship. These aspects determine how necessary a salutation is.

Interviewee #4, for example, emphasized the importance in the initial message, but does not require formality on follow-up message: *Az elsőben fontosnak gondolom azért, igen. mégiscsak a tanárnak írnak [...] utána már mondjuk nem, hogyha már mondjuk így váltjuk az üzeneteket* (I think it is important in the first one, yes. After all, they are writing to a teacher [...] but later on, maybe not, if we are already exchanging messages like that). This suggests that previous communication situations shape expectations and that the formal salutation is interpreted as an initial gesture that may later give way to a more informal style of communication.

Interviewee #8 highlighted a different aspect, namely the topic of the message, taking into account the urgency and tone of the message: *Attól is függ, hogy miről van szó [...] ha valaki beteg, akkor érdemes neki nagyobb feneket keríteni* (It also depends on what it is about [...] if someone is sick, then it is worth making a bigger deal out of it.). She continued: *de hogyha most azt akarja megtudni, hogy 10 perc múlva hol lesz az óránk, mert valahogy elsiklott-e fölött az információ fölött, akkor lehet, hogy nem kell neki olyan nagy feneket keríteni* (but if s/he just wants to know where our class is in 10 minutes because s/he somehow missed the information, then maybe it is not necessary to make a big deal out of it). This example illustrates that the use of formal structures is not expected in every case, especially if the message is for quick clarification or logistical coordination.

This view corresponds with the perspective that emphasizes the importance of context in evaluating im/politeness (see: 2.2 Intercultural Pragmatics). These instructors do not interpret

the role of salutation as a universal norm but rather as a context-sensitive communicative form. For them, previous communication and the function of the message together determine what type of salutation is considered im/polite.

The last group includes four instructors, who for different reasons do not consider the salutation in Coospace messages particularly important. Based on their responses, this interactional element does not play a key role in how they evaluate student messages. In many cases, they treat it as a non-essential element of the message. Interestingly, three of the four instructors in this group are among the oldest participants (aged 59, 59, and 52), and they reported that over time, they have become used to the lack of formal salutations. Their perspectives were shaped by long-term experience and earlier frustrations. Interviewee #1 put it this way: *Már nem tartom fontosnak, mert már annyit dühögtem, és nagyon ritkán van valami, hogy meglepődöm* (I no longer consider it important, because I have gotten angry about it so many times, and now it is very rare that anything surprises me.). Based on her experience, the formerly strict expectations have softened: *Manapság nem mérgelődök ezen, tehát már annyira elfogadtam, hogy ez más kultúrák* (These days I do not get upset about it – I have come to accept that this is just a different culture.). Interviewee #5 also described a tolerant attitude: *Én nem mondom, hogy én ezen fenn akadok, de pont azért, mert nagyon régóta tanítok külföldieket, és én már nem sok mindenben akadok fenn. [...] Én nem tartom annyira fontosnak, én lehet, hogy rettenetesen elnéző vagyok* (I am not saying that I get hung up on this, but precisely because I have been teaching foreigners for a very long time, there is not much that I get hung up on anymore. [...] I do not consider it that important – maybe I am just extremely tolerant.). Interviewee #2 also clearly stated that salutations do not influence her: *Nem befolyásol. [...] Én próbálok mindig udvariasan válaszolni* (It does not influence me. [...] I always try to respond politely.).

Interviewee #10, though younger (38 years old), similarly does not consider salutations important, partly because she herself does not usually use them: *A nincs megszólítással én nekem azért személyesen nincs problémám, még Coospace üzenetben sem, mert én tudom, hogy én egy nagyon, most hogy mondják ezt, táviratszerű levelező vagyok, és talán ez sértő is, tehát én magam vagyok egy olyan levelező, hogy nem szoktam kiírni a bevezetéseket, az elköszönéseket, hanem ilyen, mintha csak csetelnék valakivel, úgy írok sokszor e-mailt is, [...] de nem írom az elejét meg a végét. Ez egy lustaság, ez egy időspórolás* (I personally do not have a problem with not using salutations, not even in Coospace messages, because I know I am a very, what is the word, telegram-style writer – and maybe that is offensive too – so I am the



kind of person who does not usually write openings or closings; I just write emails like I am chatting. [...] I do not write the beginning or the end. It is just laziness – it saves time.).

According to her, the majority of student messages she receives are templated, AI-generated content: *Én minden alapvető üzenetet így kapok már, [...] mesterséges intelligenciával írhatják* (All the basic messages I get now – [...] they might be written by AI.). As a result, she sees the salutation not as a personal act of politeness but as an automatic element: *Nem maga írta, és maga tette bele ezt a nagy erőfeszítést, hogy bevezetés, tárgyalás, befejezés, elköszönés* (It was not s/he who wrote it, and s/he did not make the effort to include the introduction, body, conclusion, and sign-off.).

This group's behavior reflects a shift away from the expected use of salutations. For the older instructors, this perspective developed over time, through a shift toward a more tolerant or sometimes indifferent approach. For the younger instructor, on the other hand, the digital and automated AI-style of communication makes formal conventions seem unnecessary. Although it was only one instructor who mentioned AI as a factor influencing her expectations and assessments concerning salutations in written messages, the impact of AI on linguistic im/politeness definitely needs to be further investigated.

The responses show that, when asked in general terms, without specific examples, instructors have different attitudes toward salutations in Coospace messages: some consider them essential, others see them as context-dependent, and some do not find them important at all. These differences can often be explained by factors such as age, teaching experience, or personal communication style. This suggests that salutations do not carry the same meaning for every instructor – while for some they signal im/politeness, for others they are only formal elements. It highlights the diversity of expectations in student-instructor communication among the group of the participants. Much more research is needed to investigate this question in a larger population of instructors who teach international students.

#### **4.3.2.2 Perceived cultural background in students' salutations**

Instructors perceive the influence of students' nationality or cultural background on the use of salutations in Coospace messages in different ways. In this section it is examined whether instructors associate specific salutation patterns with particular national student groups and how these perceptions relate to broader issues of language competence and intercultural im/politeness. While previous studies have shown that instructors often interpret politeness primarily through the form and tone of salutations (Savić, 2018), the influence of perceived

cultural background has received limited attention. This is partly because most previous studies have compared participants from either a single culture or two clearly defined cultural groups. In contrast, the present CooSpace environment is more complex. It involves a highly diverse student population representing multiple cultural backgrounds simultaneously (Skadra et al., 2024). Since English is not the native language of any of the international students or instructors involved in the research, and because CooSpace messages often serve as an important form of student-instructor communication, instructors' interpretations of cultural variation in salutation use can shape their attitudes and responses.

The second interview question aimed to investigate whether instructors notice differences in students' salutations based on their nationality or cultural background. The responses suggest that some instructors do perceive such variation, and similar patterns were visible across their responses in the analysis. These patterns can be grouped according to the perceived cultural background of the students.

The first group concerns students from Middle Eastern and Iranian backgrounds, where instructors expressed diverse perspectives. Some participants noted that such students often use highly informal salutations: *Ez a hello teacher, dear teacher, az mondjuk egy nagyon jellegzetes megszólítás, hogy ők így írnak* (Interviewee #5) (This *hello teacher, dear teacher* is a very typical form of address that they use); *Az araboknál általában van ez a hello kategória, amikor megszólít* (Interviewee #13) (Among Arabs, there is usually this *hello* category when they address you).

In addition, two instructors commented on orthographic issues that further could contribute to negative perceptions: *Semmit nem írnak nagykezdőbetűvel, mert hogy náluk valószínűleg nincs is olyan, mint kis- és nagybetű, de ez nem zavarja őt, a saját nevét is ugyanúgy kisbetűvel írja, tehát ezen nem nagyon van mit fönnakadni* (Interviewee #8) (They do not write anything with capital letters, probably because they do not even have that in their language; and this does not bother them – even their own name is in lowercase, so there is nothing to get stuck on here.); *Az arab hallgatók, ők ugye se kisbetű, se nagy, total kisbetűvel mindent, se vessző...* (Interviewee #12) (The Arab students, right – no lowercase, no uppercase, everything is in lowercase, no commas...). This suggests that in addition to pragmatic choices, instructors notice different orthographic conventions – such as the use of lowercase letters at the beginning of names or salutations – which may be interpreted as careless or disrespectful. Some studies (Kovács, 2014; Skadra, 2017) indicate that one reason why Arab students often do not use capital and lowercase letters correctly may be their different writing system. This would need further investigation, especially because East Asian students also use non-Latin

letters, although this issue did not seem to appear in their messages in this research or at least it was not specifically mentioned by the instructors. It is important to note that both instructors acknowledged that such orthographic features are probably the result of the conventions of the students' native writing systems. This indicates an awareness that these issues may have cultural background rather than result from intentional choice. Nevertheless, such features – the absence of uppercase letters and not proper punctuation – may still be interpreted by instructors as a lack of respect or attention to academic standards.

However, this perception is not uniform. Other instructor emphasized that the formality level depends on situation or the content of the message, particularly when it is a request: *Az irániakra meg az arabokra jellemző, hogyha valami fontosat akarnak, tehát hogy ne ismételjének félét, tehát nem az, hogy nem jön órára, akkor veszi a fáradságot, és akkor megnézi a titulusomat is, meg a nevemet, de ez nagyon ritkán fordul elő* (Interviewee #1) (It is typical for Iranians and Arabs that when they want something important – like not repeating a semester, not just missing a class – then they make the effort to look up my title and name, but that rarely happens). This may indicate, that some students know how to use appropriately formal salutations, when the situation is particularly important, suggesting a form of strategic politeness that is context-sensitive. Another instructor emphasized the diversity of behavior among Middle Eastern students: *Nagyon sok arab anyanyelvű hallgatóm van, és amit szeretnék kiemelni, hogy úgy érzem, hogy ők egy nagyon nagy spektrumon mozognak* (Interviewee #11) (I have many Arabic-speaking students, and what I would like to highlight is that they seem to operate across a very broad spectrum.). This observation points to the instructors' awareness of risk of stereotyping, acknowledging that not all students from a particular region communicate the same way.

A contrasting pattern was observed in instructors' perceptions of Japanese and South Korean students, who were frequently described as very polite and formal in both the salutation and the overall tone of their messages. Previous studies (Björge 2007; Eslami 2013) have shown that students from different cultural backgrounds often apply varying norms of email etiquette, which may reflect the communicative expectations of their own cultures. For example, students from more hierarchical or authority-oriented cultures – such as Japan – tend to use more formal forms of salutation. The majority of instructors also identified them as highly polite, formal, and respectful in the salutation:

Interviewee #1: *A japánok, [...], akik valamiféle dear-rel és valami megszólítanak, tehát ők tisztelettudóbbak szerintem megszólításban is.* (The Japanese [...] use some

form of *dear* and some kind of address – they are more respectful in how they address, I think.)

Interviewee #4: *Főleg a távol-keletiekre igaz, hogy kedves XY, tanárnő, jó napot kívánok.* (It is especially true of East Asians that they say things like Dear XY, Ms. Professor, good afternoon.)

Interviewee #5: *A japán hallgatók, ők nagyon udvariasak. [...] rettenetesen tisztelettudóak.* (The Japanese students are very polite [...] extremely respectful.)

Interviewee #7: *A koreai katonaságot megjárt csoportvezetőim, mert több ilyen is volt, tehát, hogy ők mindig professzornak szólítanak, [...], jó napot professzor, dear professzor, tehát ők használják.* (My Korean group leaders who had served in the military – there were several – they always addressed me as *professor*; *good afternoon, professor*; *dear professor* – they use these.)

Interviewee #12: *A japán fiúk, lányok olyan szép üzeneteket írnak, még be is mutatkozik, kiírja a teljes nevem, hogy [családnév] [keresztnév] [keresztnév].* (The Japanese boys and girls write such nice messages, even introduce themselves, write out my full name: [last name] [first name] [first name]).

Interviewee #13: *Általában a japán hallgatók azért elég rendesen, ugye tisztelettudóan megszólítanak. Tehát ők kényszerűen ügyelnek arra, hogy például a nevemet jól betűzze.* (Japanese students generally address me properly, respectfully – they pay painfully close attention to spelling my name correctly.)

As Hwang (1991) explains, Korean culture places a strong emphasis on the use of titles and family names. This cultural norm may be transferred pragmatically into academic email communication, possibly explaining a commonly noted tendency in Korean students' emails as observed by some Hungarian instructors.

In addition to the cultural tendencies discussed above, some instructors also highlighted one particular address form – *Mam'* – as unusual or unfamiliar: *Ami nagyon gyakori, a Mam' [...] India is használta már nálam, meg Dél-Afrika is* (Interviewee #3) (What is very common is *Mam'* – I have had it used by students from India and South Africa.); *Ami úgy be szokott akadni nekem, az a Mam', és hogy milyen típusú hallgató írja? Nyilván külföldi, de nem távol-keleti, tőlük még nem kaptam ilyent, hogy Mam'. Nincs érzésem felé, nincs negatívabb, csak egy picit meglepő* (Interviewee #10) (What tends to stick with me is *Mam'*, and what kind of student writes it? Obviously a foreigner, but not East Asian – I have never received *Mam'* from them. I have no particular feeling about it, nothing negative, just a little surprising.). This form appears to be a non-standard strategy at addressing a female authority figure, possibly influenced by regional varieties (e.g. Indian English or African English). Its use may reflect

pragmatic transfer. Instructors had mixed feelings about it – they did not see it as clearly acceptable or unacceptable.

In response to the interview question about nationality-based variation, several participants emphasized that language proficiency often plays a more important role than cultural background. In their view, problematic or unconventional salutations may not reflect cultural norms but rather limited linguistic competence how to write academic emails in English: *Szerintem ez egyénfüggő [...] legalábbis nekem ez a meglátásom van, hogy az angoltudással is összefügg* (Interviewee #2) (I think it depends on the individual [...] at least that is my view, that it is connected to their English knowledge.); *Nem-nem, inkább azt mondom, hogy az tűnik fel, hogy mit tudom én, hogy X nemzet baromira nem tud angolul, még írni sem* (Interviewee #8) (No, no, I would rather say what stands out is that, say, nationality X really does not know English – not even how to write it.). These examples show that students may fail to express politeness not due to lack of intent, but because of limited proficiency in English or unfamiliarity with institutional communication norms.

One 43-year-old instructor, who had only been working with international students for a year, reported that she had not observed any variation in salutations based on nationality: *Nem tudom még ez alapján kategorizálni őket. [...] lehet, hogy vannak tipikus fordulatok, és ezért lehet, hogy később igen, de én nem tapasztaltam* (Interviewee #9) (I can not categorise them yet based on this [...] maybe there are typical phrases, and maybe later I will, but I have not experienced that.). This response may reflect her limited experience of diverse linguistic behaviors and it may suggest that such patterns become noticeable only after longer-term experience with a larger group of international students.

The interview data demonstrate a complex and sometimes mixed set of views. While many instructors perceive clear national or regional trends in how students address them – especially with regard to Middle Eastern and East Asian students – others emphasize the individual nature of language use, or reject national stereotyping altogether. The findings shows that instructors are aware that students' language use is influenced by their first language and/or limited English proficiency. These views support the argument that in multilingual and multicultural contexts like CooSpace communication with international students, instructors' perceptions of politeness are shaped by a mix of cultural assumptions and linguistic awareness. As suggested by Kecskes (2016), intercultural communication is always co-constructed, and meaning is shaped by the interaction of diverse cultural norms and expectations.

#### 4.3.2.3 The use of Hungarian in salutations: instructor perceptions

Instructors generally view the use of Hungarian-language salutations by international students at the beginning of their otherwise English-language Coospace messages as a positive and respectful gesture. The findings show that the use of Hungarian in salutations was the only phenomenon that all respondents – with minor differences – clearly evaluated positively. While there were differences in the assessment of specific forms (such as *szia* or *jó napot kívánok*), there was agreement that using Hungarian itself is an appreciated gesture. The interviewees responded positively to the use of Hungarian expressions in salutations by international students. Most of them interpret this language choice as a sign of the student's effort and respect, even if the form is not always absolutely correct. Numerous positive evaluations were given: *mindenképpen pozitív* (definitely positive) (Interviewee #2); *Nekem nagyon tetszik. Én ezt nagyon tudom értékelni* (I really like it. I truly appreciate it.) (Interviewee #3); *nagyon becsülendő* (highly commendable) (Interviewee #6); *személy szerint én ezt nagyon szeretem* (personally, I really like it) (Interviewee #7); *szerintem egy kedves gesztus* (I think it's a kind gesture) (Interviewee #8); *Szerintem ez nagyon értékelendő* (I believe this is something very worthy of appreciation) (Interviewee #11). Several instructors emphasized their appreciation of the effort itself:

Interviewee # 5: *Én örülök neki, ha próbálkozik a magyarját használni [...], és hogy ő benne van egy ilyenfajta igyekezet.* (I am glad when s/he tries to use their Hungarian [...] and show this kind of effort.)

Interviewee #9: *Mindig fölül írja nálam a helyesírási hibákat mondjuk, vagy a nem megfelelő magyar kifejezés kiválasztását az, hogy próbálkozott a hallgató a magyar nyelvet használni.* (For me, the attempt to use Hungarian always outweighs spelling mistakes or the choice of an incorrect expression.)

Interviewee #12: *Én ezt úgy veszem, mint egy ilyen extra effort, hogy megpróbálta.* (I interpret it as an extra effort, that they gave it a try.)

Some instructors also highlighted the pedagogical value of such language use:

Interviewee #6: *Igyekszik a mindennapjaiban is alkalmazni azt, amit még a legelső órán megtanult magyarból.* (They try to use in everyday situations what they learned in the very first lesson.)

Interviewee #7: *Én szeretem, amikor azt írják, vagy úgy kezdődik a Coospace üzenet, hogy kedves tanárnő, és akkor utána megírja angolul, hogy mit akar, mert azzal szerintem kicsit tiszteletet is mutat, tehát, hogy irántam, meg az iránt, amit mi együtt csinálunk.* (I like it when a Coospace message starts with *kedves tanárnő*

and then continues in English, because it shows a bit of respect for me and what we do together.)

Interviewee #10: *Azt használják, amit mi tanulunk, amit az órákon hallanak.* (They use what we learn, what they hear in class.)

Interviewee #13: *Legalább mutatja, hogy próbálkozik használni, azt az információt, amit ő az órán tanult.* (At least it shows s/he is trying to use what s/he learned in class.)

At the same time, several instructors indicated that while they primarily appreciated the use of Hungarian salutations, the form of these salutations also mattered. Expressions like *jó napot kívánok* (good afternoon) or *kedves tanárnő* (dear teacher) were clearly seen as positive, while *szia* (hello) was more problematic due to its informal tone:

Interviewee #4: *A szíát, azt igen, túl informálisnak gondolom [...] nyilván a formálisnak jobban örülök.* (Yes, I find *szia* too informal [...] I obviously prefer the formal.)

Interviewee #6: *Akkor inkább legyen a hello, mert abban a nyelvi környezetben az elfogadottabb, mint ugye a szia hallgató és tanár között.* (In that language environment, *hello* is more acceptable than *szia* between student and teacher.)

Interviewee #13: *A szia semmiképpen nem.* (*Szia* is absolutely not acceptable.)

In sum, the use of Hungarian is highly appreciated, especially when students apply formal expressions learned in class. Informal forms receive more varied evaluations, particularly when they differ from the classroom-based norms.

#### **4.3.2.4 Instructors' reactions to perceived impoliteness in the salutations**

While several studies on email communication in academic contexts focus on politeness and appropriateness (Codina-Espurz, 2021; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Eslami, 2013; Savić, 2018), relatively little attention has been paid to how instructors respond when they perceive a salutation inappropriate or impolite (Ludányi & Domonkosi, 2018; 2020). Some instructors may choose to address the issue directly and correct the student, while others may decide to ignore it altogether. In certain cases, such perceived impoliteness may influence the instructor's attitude or affect the tone and content of future communication. In this section the instructors' reactions – both explicit and implicit – to salutations perceived as impolite are

investigated. Based on the 13 interviews, four general patterns were identified regarding how instructors react to what they perceive as an impolite salutation:

1. Indirect correction via appropriate salutation in reply
2. No reaction and/or tolerance
3. Face-to-face correction
4. Explicit or classroom-based correction

Three instructors reported that although they may not directly point out the impoliteness, they still tried to show the appropriate form by using it in their own response:

Interviewee #1: *Mindig visszaírom, és olyankor úgy írom, hogy Dear Mr. Abdul, nem tudom én kicsoda, bemásolom az egész nevét, hogy érezze, de van, aki nem veszi a lapot.* (I always write back, and I write it like *Dear Mr. Abdul*, I do not even know who he is, I paste the whole name so they feel it, but some do not take the hint.)

Interviewee #4: *Annyit írok, hogy kedves valaki, amit mondtam, és mindenkinek azt írom, és akkor reménykedem benne, hogy ha így kapcsol.* (I just write *dear someone*, like I said, and I write that to everyone, and then I hope they will realise this way.)

Interviewee #13: *Akkor kényszerítettem arra, hogy én az összes udvariassági formulát megadom neki.* (Then I take special care to include all the appropriate politeness formulas.)

This strategy can be seen as a polite way of guiding students, where instructors try to show an example by using a more appropriate salutation in their response. Instead of directly correcting the student, they suggest what the expected form would be. This can also be understood as an indirect teaching method of developing pragmatic competence during the process of learning a new language (Maróti, 2019). As also Interviewee #1 explicitly stated, this is done to make the student realize what the polite form should be. This strategy can also be observed in some studies on email communication with Hungarian students. Ludányi and Domonkosi (2020) provide an example: after a student addressed the instructor by her first name, the instructor responded using a notably more polite and formal style than usual. In this particular case, this response appeared to be effective, as the student used the salutation *Tisztelt Tanárnő!* (Honored Professor!) in their next email. Since the present data includes only the



students' first messages, it does not allow for an examination of whether a positive change occurred in follow-up emails.

A second group of instructors (6 of 13) explained that they usually do not respond to perceived impoliteness because, in their experience, no message has been impolite enough to make a reaction necessary:

Interviewee #3: *Nem történt ilyen, és szerintem, ha történne sem tenném szóvá.* (This has not happened, and I do not think I would bring it up even if it did).

Interviewee #5: *Nem emlékszem, hogy lett volna ilyen, hogy ha volt is, már elfelejtettem, nem hagyott bennem mély nyomot.* (I do not remember anything like that, and if it happened, I have already forgotten – it did not leave a deep impression on me).

Interviewee #6: *Nem rémlik, hogy lett volna valamilyen különösen kiemelkedő, vagy ilyen probléma.* (I do not recall any case that stood out or seemed problematic.)

Interviewee #7: *Szerintem nincs emlékem, hogy annyira olyan üzenetet kaptam volna.* (I do not think I have ever received a message that was really that bad.)

These fragments illustrate a common tendency among these instructors: rather than overlooking impoliteness, they simply do not interpret any of the messages they receive as problematic, which suggests a relatively high tolerance for inappropriate forms. Moreover, one response suggests that tolerance may increase with experience: what may have once been perceived as a problem is no longer seen as such: *Szerintem mostanában már nem teszek szóvá semmit. Lehet, hogy régen [...], szóvá tettem, de mostanában biztos, hogy nem* (I think nowadays I do not mention these things. Maybe I used to [...] but now I definitely do not) (Interviewee #8).

While these instructors tend to tolerate impolite salutations without feeling the need to react, a few prefer to address the issue directly (3 instructors out of 13). However, in all such cases, the correction takes place in spoken form rather than as written feedback, even though the inappropriate salutation appeared in a written message. In contrast, Ludányi and Domonkosi (2020), in their study of email correspondence between instructors and Hungarian students, found that in some cases instructors provided written feedback when they considered a student's message to be inappropriate. However, the student in their study did not respond in writing; instead, they responded to the instructor's feedback in person in the next class. In the present data, this aspect could not be examined, as no data are available on how international students reacted to verbal feedback from instructors. According to present data, the feedback itself – and thus the correction – is shifted to a spoken context: *Személyesen ezt megbeszélem vele, hogy ez*

*azért nem stílus, de nem sokszor fordult elő, de azért volt pár ilyen* (I prefer to discuss this in person, to point out that it is not the right tone; it has not happened often, but it has happened) (Interviewee #12); *Szerintem volt olyan, hogy szóvá tettem neki, és szerintem az óra előtt, vagy az óra után* (I think I did mention it, probably before or after class) (Interviewee #13). This approach appears to reflect some instructors' intention to offer feedback they consider important, while avoiding the risk of embarrassing the student in written form. Addressing the issue face-to-face may allow them to highlight the importance of respectful communication in a more interactive situation.

In contrast to the rest of the instructors, one participant chose to address such issues directly in a classroom setting, explaining that these were the kinds of cases other students could also learn from: *Ha hibát ejtett a megszólításban, és mondjuk elsőéves volt, akkor azt bevitettem az órára, pont ezért, hogy a többiek is tanulhassanak belőle* (If someone made a mistake in the salutation and was a first-year student, I brought it to class so others could also learn from it) (Interviewee #10). This strategy shows that the instructor made a decision to use the situation as a teaching opportunity. The goal was not only to help the student who made the mistake, but also to raise awareness among all students about how to use appropriate forms of address in academic communication.

These different reactions and responses to perceived impoliteness in salutations reflect a complex relationship between pedagogical intent, interpersonal sensitivity, and institutional expectations. While some instructors prefer not to react unless the message seems impolite, they often do not find it offensive or problematic enough to actually address it. Others address the issue – either indirectly demonstrating the proper way of salutation, or addressing the issue in person, or even turning it into a classroom example. This variation suggests that instructors' reactions address not only formality and institutional norms, but also focus on their individual beliefs regarding effective communication.

#### **4.3.2.5 Instructor perspectives on the need for faculty-level guidance**

While the previous chapters have focused on how instructors perceive the impoliteness of student salutations, this section shifts the focus to the question of institutional responsibility. It explores whether the faculty is assumed to play an active role in defining expectations and offering guidance. Several previous studies (Balogh, 2024; Caldero & Sun, 2021; Domonkosi & Ludányi, 2018; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011) have highlighted that providing either individual instructor-level or institutional-level guidance could be beneficial, as it would help

reduce misunderstandings and support more effective communication. According to Domonkosi and Ludányi (2018) such guidelines are not common at Hungarian universities, although some departments or institutes do provide them for Hungarian students. The tone and content of these documents can be very different: some adopt a prescriptive approach, others are less rigorous and offer recommendations rather than strict rules. The question of whether institutional-level guidance – particularly regarding salutations – should be provided to international students indicated three types of instructor attitudes among the interviewees:

1. Support for institutional-level guidance
2. Opposition against institutional-level guidance
3. Ambivalent attitudes

The majority of instructors (Interviewees #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #9, and #11) explicitly supported the idea that students – especially international ones – would benefit from guidance on how to address instructors in written communication. Their reasons, however, were not always limited to salutations and often reflected general issues about intercultural misunderstandings and students' lack of pragmatic competence. Interviewee #1 described a concrete situation: *Írásban, lehet, hogy nem ártana, mert szerintem sokan nagyon dühöngenek, és olyant is tudok, aki nem válaszol az ilyen levelekre, amikor nem tisztelt, teljes megszólítást kap* (In writing, it might actually help, because I know many get really angry, and I even know someone who simply does not respond to such emails if there is no proper, respectful salutation.). This quote not only underscores the potential consequences of inappropriate address, but also highlights that a guidance may help avoid miscommunication.

Other instructors emphasized the cultural dimension of address norms. As Interviewee #2 put it, such guidance would fit into the wider category of *kulturális ismeretek* (cultural knowledge), particularly because the student-doctor relationship is still viewed as formal in Hungary: *Mindenképpen jó lenne egy ilyesmi, az ilyen kulturális ismeretek részeként [...] az orvos és betegközti kapcsolat is szerintem formálisnak kellene, hogy legyen [...], ezért is jó lenne, ha legalább már így hallgatóként kapnának ebből egy kis ízelítőt az elvárásokból* (It would definitely be useful as part of such cultural knowledge [...] the doctor–patient relationship should be formal, I think, so it would be good if students already got a sense of these expectations during their studies). Interviewee #4 also highlighted the importance of cultural knowledge. She suggested a *kódex* (codex), of which salutation norms would be one component: *Már csak azért is, nem csak ebből kiindulva, hanem az egész kulturális bármiből*

*kiindulva, hogy ne menjenek be rágóval a vizsgára* (Not only because of this, but more broadly, because of the cultural background in general – for instance, so they do not walk into exams chewing gum.). Interviewee #3 also considered such guidance to be highly important. However, she specifically emphasized that it should not be limited to international students, as in her experience, Hungarian students often lack the skills to write appropriate messages as well. Interviewee #5 not only supported the idea but also offered concrete ideas for applying such guidance: *Szerintem nagyon jó lenne, ha lenne ilyen, és nagyon hasznos lenne. Lehet, hogy ők is örülnének neki [...] hogyha lennének ilyen akár templatek, vagy kész megírt levelek, hogyha ilyen problémán van, akkor így írhatok, akár angolul, akár magyarul* (I think it would be really good to have something like this, and it would be useful. They might even appreciate it [...] if there were templates or sample letters that show how to write in such situations, in either English or Hungarian). According to Domonkosi and Ludányi (2018) a similar practice can already be observed among instructors teaching Hungarian students: in some cases, the instructor not only provides advice on their university webpage, but also includes a sample email as a model.

A smaller group of instructors (#6, #8, and #10) were not sure if such guidance is needed or helpful. Two main reasons were given to support the perspective. According to Interviewees #6 and #10, students would not read or follow such guidance: *Ha volna is ilyen, az mindegy, nem olvasná valószínűleg, nem tartaná be, úgyhogy feleslegesen befektetett munka volna, én úgy gondolom* (Even if there were such a thing, they probably would not read it or follow it, so it would be a waste of effort, I think.) (Interviewees #6). Interviewee #8 believed that there are more serious issues to address than matters of politeness: *Hát szerintem sokkal komolyabb problémák vannak. [...] Szervezett formában ezen nem kellene törni magunkat. Vannak tényleg olyan dolgok, amiken sokkal inkább kellene* (I think there are much more serious problems [...] We should not waste our efforts on this in an organized form. There are really other things that deserve more attention.). From this perspective, student email etiquette is a relatively minor issue compared to others.

Three instructors (Interviewees #7, #12, and #13) expressed ambivalent views. Interviewees #12 and #13 shared both supportive and critical opinions. On the one hand, they felt that there should be no need for such guidance, as university students are adults who are expected to be familiar with basic expectations. On the other hand, they noted – based on their experience – that some form of guidance may in fact be necessary: *Azt gondolom, hogy 18-19 évesen, amikor ide kerülnek, azért már tudja, hogyan kellene megszólítani egy embert, egy tanárt hivatalosan, de ugyanakkor meg azt mutatják a tapasztalatok, hogy abszolút halvány*

*gőzüik nincs róla [...] úgyhogy azt mondom, hogy igen, szégyen szemre szükség van rá* (I think that by the time they arrive here, at 18 or 19, they should know how to address a person, a teacher, formally – but experience shows they have absolutely no idea [...] so I have to admit, shamefully, that this is indeed necessary) (Interviewee #13). Interviewee #7 suggested an alternative approach. In her view, a general guide for all students may not be necessary; instead, relevant expectations could be communicated during meetings with student group leaders, who are responsible for representing their study groups. Since these leaders are typically the ones who correspond with instructors, providing guidance specifically for them would be the most practical and impactful solution: *Nem feltétlenül, mert szerintem olyan szinten nagyon ők egyesével nem feltétlenül kommunikálnak a tanárral. [...] általában szerintem a csoportvezetők kommunikálnak a tanárral, vagy az intézettel, hogyha olyan problémájuk van. [...] ha jól tudom, akkor nekik szoktak lenni ilyen meetingenk, ott le tudom képzelni* (Not necessarily, because I think at this level, most students do not personally communicate with the teachers [...] it is usually the group leaders who do, and I know they have meetings – so I can imagine addressing this there.) (Interviewee #7).

In summary, while the majority of instructors interviewed were open to the idea of some form of institutional guidance on student Coospace message etiquette, their reasons varied, as did their expectations for how effective such guidance would be. Even those who disagreed with formal instruction admitted that communication issues exist, but questioned whether institutional action would actually help.

At the end of the interview, participants were given the opportunity to share any additional thoughts or personal experiences related to the topic. While most respondents used this opportunity to tell informal anecdotes, Interviewee #1 raised a particularly critical observation: the inconsistency in instructors' own use of salutations. She pointed out that while students are often expected to follow institutional politeness standards, instructors themselves may not always use these expectations consistently: *Lehet, hogy időnként az oktatókat is oktatni kéne [...] az oktatóknak is kicsit lehetne mondani, hogy, mert így most elvárjuk tőlük, de hát amikor a másik fél sem tartja be, akkor ez így kicsit nem is tudom, visszás. Igen, visszás, és olyan furcsa, hogy miért várjuk el egy külfölditől, ha még a magyar anyanyelvűekben sem tisztázódott, hogy ő hogyan szólít hallgatókat, vagy kollégákat* (Maybe instructors themselves should also be given some training from time to time [...] they could also be reminded that, while we expect certain things from students, it is a bit contradictory when the other side does not follow the same standards. Yes, it is contradictory – and strange, really – how we expect this from international students when even native Hungarian speakers have not fully figured

out how to address students or colleagues properly) (Interviewee #1). Her comment shows that there may be a gap between what is expected and what happens in practice. It also suggests that good communication in academic settings needs effort from both sides; including making instructors more aware of their own role and competence in keeping things professional.

#### **4.4 Summary of the findings**

In summary, the findings from the three data sources provide a comprehensive answer to the research questions. The study focused on a single element of student-instructor communication: the salutation. It is a short part of a Coospace message, but the findings confirmed that it plays an important role in the written communication. It shapes the communication, influencing instructors' perceptions of politeness, respect, and student effort.

##### **4.4.1 Findings from authentic Coospace messages (RQ1)**

The analysis of authentic data addressed the first RQ: what types of salutations do international students use in Coospace messages and how often do these forms appear? (RQ1)

The data of 151 messages showed great variation in salutation forms, 21 different combinations were identified. The most frequent structure (21%) was *Dear + title + FN*. Other relatively common used forms included *greeting + title + FN* (17,9%) and *greeting* (17,2%). Several unexpected forms also appeared in the data, such as *Hello dear* or *Hi teacher* and in 2,6% of the messages the salutation was omitted. In addition to English salutations, Hungarian forms have also appeared, in both the use of titles (*tanárnő*) and greetings (*jó napot kívánok, jó reggelt kívánok, jó estét kívánok, szia*). This findings support the hypothesis (H1) that there is significant variation in the forms of salutations used by international students in Coospace messages, reflecting both linguistic diversity and differing levels of pragmatic competence.

##### **4.4.2 Findings from the perception questionnaire (RQ2-RQ3)**

The perception questionnaire addressed the next two RQs; the quantitative question: What politeness ratings did the different types of salutations receive? (RQ2) and the qualitative one: What factors do instructors consider important when evaluating student salutations in the open-ended questionnaire responses? (RQ3).

The questionnaire data, in which 22 instructors rated 36 selected salutations on a 1–5 Likert scale, showed preferences for some salutation forms, with some receiving consistently higher ratings than others did. The highest ratings were assigned to *Dear Dr. Skadra Margit* (4.7), *Jó napot kívánok!* (4.6), and *Dear Professor* (4.6). In contrast, highly informal forms, *Hello dear* (1.3), *Szia* (1.8) and the absence of a salutation (1.4) received the lowest ratings. Already at this stage of the research, these findings suggested that formality is correlated with higher politeness ratings, while omission or over-familiarity reduces positive evaluations.

Qualitative coding of the questionnaire comments identified several important factors that influence instructors in their assessment of salutations. In the case of positively rated salutations, the results show that one of the most important factors is *Respectfulness*, followed by factors such as *Linguistic accuracy*, *Cultural adaptation*, *Title usage*, *Personalization*, *Effort recognition*, and *Formality*. A salutation such as *Jó napot kívánok* was positively rated not only for its formality but also for the student's attempt to use Hungarian, even though this is not a typical written form of salutation in Hungarian. In contrast, other aspects appeared in the case of negatively rated salutations, such as *Over-familiarity*, *Disrespectfulness* and *Emotional reaction*.

These results also confirm the hypotheses that instructors are influenced by several factors when evaluating salutations (H2), and they evaluate more positively those salutations that conform to Hungarian institutional norms or follow standard academic English norms (H3). The results also suggest that instructors are more tolerant when they believe that the salutation is related to the student's cultural or linguistic background and less tolerant when they feel that the student was disrespectful or did not make an effort in the salutation (H3). These hypotheses were further confirmed during the interviews.

#### **4.4.3 Findings from the semi-structured interviews (RQ4–RQ9)**

The qualitative RQs (RQ4–RQ9) were formulated to extend the quantitative findings. RQ4 was designed in connection with the perception questionnaire. It compares the instructors' ratings with the reflections they gave in the interviews. The last five RQs (RQ5–RQ9) focus on interview data and provide deeper insight into instructors' general perceptions and evaluations of salutations.

RQ4 aimed to find answer to the question: what similarities and differences can be identified between instructors' questionnaire responses and their reflections in interviews? The results show several similarities between the two sources of data. The quantitative evaluation

of the questionnaires on a scale of 1-5 was supported by the qualitative analysis of the interviews with the instructors. The same salutations were evaluated positively or negatively in both cases. However, the interviews provided a much more detailed picture of perceived im/politeness. The comments in the questionnaires were often very short, describing the salutations with one or two words, e.g., *respectful* or *informal*. During the interviews the instructors gave more detailed opinions about the salutations. Individual differences often appeared during the interviews. There were instructors who evaluated forms negatively, but they emphasized factors such as the use of Hungarian salutations and consideration of cultural background of the student. Because of these, in many cases they did not evaluate each form completely negatively. This indicates the fact that although the quantitative results based on the questionnaires are highly homogeneous, there are still individual differences in many cases, which were highlighted during the interviews with the instructors.

RQ5 examined the extent to which instructors consider salutations an important element of academic email communication. The results show that more than half of the instructors considered salutations important. For them, this element is a sign of respect and politeness, and shows the hierarchy between student and instructor. However, there were instructors who relativized its importance. They made their assessment dependent on the content and importance of the message. In addition, four instructors said that salutations do not play an important role in how they evaluate a Coospace message. The finding indicates that this may be related to the instructors' teaching experience. Those who have been teaching for a longer time have become more tolerant of unusual salutations. These results show that although salutations are part of academic politeness, their perceived importance varies and they do not have a uniform interpretation. This finding is also consistent with H2 that instructors' evaluations were shaped by several factors.

The investigation of RQ6 found that instructors often associated students' salutations with their cultural background, although the interview responses did not provide a homogenous picture. Some teachers described Middle Eastern and Iranian students as using informal salutations such as *hello teacher* or *dear teacher*. Instructors also noticed orthographic features, such as the lack of capital letters or punctuation marks. Japanese and Korean students were described as very formal and respectful in their salutations. It was emphasized that they pay attention to titles and correct spelling. The form *Mam* was also mentioned as being used by some Indian and South African students. This form was considered unusual, but not necessarily impolite. However, not all instructors noticed the cultural differences. Some emphasized that the salutation is an individual choice. These findings relate to H4. It suggested that instructors



are more tolerant of unconventional or non-standard salutations when they connect them to the cultural or linguistic background of their students. The interview data support this hypothesis. Several instructors pointed out that unusual forms can be understood as pragmatic transfer or as a result of limited language proficiency, and were therefore tolerated. By contrast, when a salutation was perceived as disrespectful, it tended to receive negative evaluations regardless of the student's cultural background. It is also important to note that all participating instructors were teachers of Hungarian as a Foreign Language, and therefore familiar with the linguistic challenges international students face. This background may contribute to their more tolerant evaluations, especially when they interpreted unconventional forms as results of pragmatic transfer or limited language proficiency. Instructors from other fields might focus on different aspects or be less tolerant.

RQ7 examined instructors' evaluations of salutations in Hungarian used in their messages. The interview data indicated that instructors perceive it as a positive and respectful gesture. All respondents agreed that this is a signal of effort and respect. Instructors appreciated the use of Hungarian salutations, even when the expressions were not fully correct. They pointed out that the effort mattered more than the form itself and saw it as a sign of trying to connect with the Hungarian cultural and what they learned in Hungarian class. At the same time, the evaluation of some forms varied. The Hungarian informal *szia* were often perceived as too informal in the student-instructor relationship.

RQ8 examined instructors' strategies for handling salutations they perceive as impolite. The findings identified four main patterns. Some instructors preferred indirect correction, demonstrating the appropriate form in their answer without explicit comment. The largest group of instructors did not react to impolite salutations. A smaller group provided face-to-face correction. They preferred to address the issue in person rather than in writing. One instructor explained that she addresses such cases in the classroom so that all students can benefit from the example. In general, instructors tended to show tolerance and guide students indirectly rather than confronting them.

RQ9 explored instructors' views on whether institutional-level guidelines regarding student salutations should be introduced. The interview data revealed three main perspectives. The majority of instructors supported the idea. They argued that explicit guidance would reduce intercultural misunderstandings. Some emphasized that such guidance would also give students useful cultural knowledge. Others suggested practical solutions such as email templates. A smaller group expressed opposition. They argued that students would not read or follow such guidelines or that issues of im/politeness are less important than other challenges in

international education. A third group showed a more ambivalent perspective. They noted that clear expectations might be useful and that university students should already have such skills. Interestingly, one participant highlighted that while students are expected to meet politeness standards, faculty members themselves do not always follow them. This observation indicates that successful communication requires effort from both sides. The finding provides direct evidence for H5, as they confirm that many instructors see a need for institutional-level guidance on salutations. It suggests that such guidelines could help reduce intercultural misunderstandings; however their effectiveness would depend on students actually using them.

In conclusion, the findings provided comprehensive answers to all nine research questions (RQ1–RQ9), showing how salutations are used, evaluated, and interpreted in intercultural academic communication and they confirmed the main hypotheses (H1–H5) of the study.

## 5. Conclusion

Previous chapters examined student-instructor salutations from multiple perspectives; this chapter presents final reflections on the dissertation, including limitations, implications, and future research.

The dissertation is a contribution to intercultural pragmatics by providing new insights into the nature and importance of im/politeness assessments in intercultural contexts and into how im/politeness is constructed in CMC in academic settings. The analysis of salutations is linked to the concept of first-order im/politeness, which should inform the second-order distinctions such as *polite* and *appropriate*. The results support the view that im/politeness cannot be evaluated only on the basis of linguistic forms but must be interpreted in relation to participants' intentions, expectations, and cultural backgrounds.

The empirical findings have shown that salutations in intercultural academic communication are not routine openings but important elements where im/politeness is negotiated. The analysis demonstrated that students used a wide variety of forms. Importantly, instructors' evaluations were not only about the correctness of the form but about the intention behind it. Most often, they used positive words such as *udvarias* (polite), while negative comments were fewer and usually less strong. This suggests that in intercultural contexts instructors often highlight respectful intentions, even when the form itself is not perfect. This attitude differs from what we would expect between Hungarian students and instructors, where unusual or incorrect salutations are noticed and corrected more directly (Ludányi & Domonkosi, 2020). In intercultural situations, instructors tended to be more tolerant: they often valued even imperfect Hungarian salutations as signs of effort and respect. Their approach is similar to Firth's (1996) *let it pass* strategy, which frequently occurs in lingua franca talk, where the focus is on continuing the conversation rather than on correcting language mistakes. Research on English as a lingua franca often highlights this strategy, showing that speakers frequently ignore small problems in order to keep communication cooperative (Myintzu, 2021). Similarly, Hungarian instructors in present study often overlooked mistakes in students' salutations in written communication.

In summary, the dissertation contributed to research in intercultural pragmatics by providing empirical evidence that the assessment of im/politeness is not absolute but depends on context. This helps us understand intercultural im/politeness as a process where respect and effort are recognized even when it is expressed imperfectly.

The following subsections of the chapter discuss the limitations of the study, highlight its implications for research and pedagogy, and propose directions for future research that may help further clarify the role of salutations in academic CMC.

### **5.1. Limitations of the study**

While the present study provides valuable insights into the production, perception and evaluation of salutations in student-instructor communication, several limitations must be acknowledged that may influence the interpretation and the wider relevance of the findings.

First, the study focused only on salutations as isolated elements of CooSpace messages, without analyzing the content of the message or the closing forms. Although this narrow scope allowed for detailed analysis of salutations, it did not take into account other message elements that might have influenced instructors' interpretations, such as the overall tone, the content present in the full message, the length of the message and the choice of the closing forms. Moreover, the present study examines only one aspect of email communication; however, it is important to note that im/politeness is a two-way process, and students may also experience the instructors' side, such as delayed responses or perceived unavailability of instructors, as potentially face-threatening. As a result, some evaluations may have been shaped by factors that were not included in the analysis.

Second, all the salutation data were taken from CooSpace, digital platform especially for universities. CooSpace serves a functionally equivalent role to email, but its structure, for example having no subject lines, may influence student behavior in ways that differ from traditional emails. Therefore, consideration is needed before extending the implications of this study to other institutional environments or platforms.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, the scope of the study was limited by the size and structure of the academic environment in which it was conducted. The research was carried out within a single institute of the faculty where the total number of relevant instructors is small. It represents a specific institutional context in which Hungarian is taught as a foreign language to international students, and English is the first language of academic communication. As a result, a data of 151 authentic CooSpace messages, 22 complete responses were collected through the perception questionnaire, and 13 instructors agreed to participate in interviews. The limitation is not only a reflection of voluntary participation, but also of the total available instructors. Consequently, the sample, while sufficient for qualitative research and for identifying typical patterns and tendencies, is not suitable for complex statistical testing.

Given these limitations, the study should be regarded primarily as a context-sensitive case study in a specific institutional setting. It is not intended as an empirical investigation with wider educational relevance. The strength of the study lies in its qualitative depth and in the use of authentic and diverse data sources. It also provides a detailed examination of salutations and the ways these were perceived by instructors. This means that generalizing the findings to different contexts is problematic unless institutional, cultural, and technological differences are considered.

In addition, due to the authentic nature of the data, some background information was not available about the senders of the analyzed CooSpace messages. As a result, it was not possible to examine how students' backgrounds, such as age or language skills, might affect the way they use salutation.

Finally, the research was conducted in a Hungarian higher education context, which is influenced by specific academic traditions, communication expectations, and institutional hierarchies. The research examines intercultural aspects of im/politeness. Still, its conclusions are mainly limited to the context in which the study was carried out. Comparative studies in different university contexts are needed to examine the wider relevance of the results.

Despite these limitations, the study offers a detailed analysis of how instructors perceive salutations in a multilingual and multicultural academic setting. The number of evaluations from the questionnaire and interviews was limited, and the CooSpace messages were addressed to only one instructor. Still, the research provides valuable insights. The set of salutation forms analyzed may not represent every possible choices, but they show tendencies and patterns in student–instructor communication. These findings contribute to our understanding of pragmatic interpretation in CMC and they can also serve as a starting point for further research with wider intercultural perspectives, and larger, demographically diverse samples.

## **5.2 Implications of the study**

The findings of this study have several important implications for both pedagogical practice and further research on intercultural CMC. The study examines how international students formulate salutations in CooSpace messages and how instructors evaluate them. This provides a detailed view of the relationship between language use, pragmatic norms, and intercultural understanding in academic CMC.

First, the findings suggest that writing academic messages is a skill that should be included in English language learning. The wide variation in student salutations shows that

many students communicate without knowing the usual academic expectations. This is especially the case for international students, whose cultural norms of politeness and forms of address may differ from local academic expectations. Instructors often see salutations as signals of politeness, effort, and respect. The differences between students' intentions and instructors' interpretations may lead to negative impressions in their relationship. Teaching students how to write respectful messages to faculty can support better communication and help avoid perceived impoliteness.

In contexts where Hungarian is taught to international students and English is the *lingua franca* for communication, it is especially important to include pragmatics in language teaching. The instructors in this study appreciated effortful and appropriate salutations, even when these deviated slightly from native norms. This result suggests that pragmatic appropriateness does not necessarily require native-like accuracy, but awareness to context, effort, and culture. Therefore, universities could offer lessons on pragmatics and intercultural communication in international students' courses.

Additionally, the findings point to the need for increased institutional support and guidelines regarding academic communication. Some instructors questioned whether students would actually use or follow such guidelines. At the same time, the overall support for these shows a growing recognition of the challenges international students experience.

Practical, student-friendly resources, like sample messages or short notes, can help students communicate more respectfully and effectively across languages and cultures. These materials could be helpful tools for understanding what is expected in the local academic environment.

The findings of the study are important not only for student language teaching but also for institutional communication and the development of a more supportive academic environment. The different attitudes of instructors in the interviews suggests that there is no unified framework of expectations regarding student–instructor written communication. This may lead to inconsistent feedback, and leaving students unsure about what counts as proper communication. It may help if institutions support discussions to create shared expectations for message etiquette.

From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to the field of intercultural pragmatics. It shows how small linguistic elements, such as salutations, can influence message interpretations. It supports the view that im/politeness are shaped by situational factors, co-constructed in communication, and often perceived differently.

### 5.3 Suggestions for future research

While the present study focused exclusively on the analysis of salutations in Coospace messages, highlighting their pragmatic and intercultural significance in instructor perception, it also indicated several directions for future research.

Although this study focused on the salutation, future research could examine the content part and closing sections of messages. This would be particularly relevant for analyzing face-threatening acts (e.g., requests, complaints), mitigation strategies, and closing formulas, and whether there is a connection between them and the level of im/politeness implied by the salutation.

This study looked only at messages written by students and how instructors evaluated them. A useful next step would be to examine how instructors reply – whether they reflect or react to the level of politeness in the student's salutation.

Another important direction would be to investigate student perspectives on intercultural communication and Coospace message norms. Although the study considered students' cultural backgrounds, it did not explore their own views. Future research could address this gap by involving international students more actively, for example, through interviews or questionnaires focusing on their expectations, previous experiences, and the difficulties they face when writing academic emails. It would also be valuable to examine how students themselves perceive different forms of salutation. Asking students to evaluate a set of salutations, similarly to how instructors did, could highlight important differences in perception and offer could highlight important differences in perception and provide an explanation for potential sources of misunderstanding in student-instructor communication. Taken together, these aspects highlight the need to explore how instructor and student perspectives together shape intercultural email communication.

The study used a relatively small-scale quantitative questionnaire and qualitative methods, including interviews with a limited number of instructors. This limitation was primarily due to the specific institutional setting in which the study was conducted. A future study with a larger sample could look at how instructors' attitudes relate to factors such as age, sex, and teaching experience. To reach a larger number of participants, as this would also be beneficial to include instructors from similar departments at other medical universities in Hungary, and this would allow comparisons across different institutions.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: The perception questionnaire

The questionnaire was administered online via *Google Forms*. Below, a screenshot of the original format is provided for documentation purposes, followed by the full text of the questionnaire, first in the original Hungarian version and then in its English translation, presented in a uniform format that corresponds to the dissertation's style.

#### Screenshot of the original format:

**Oktatói észrevételek a nemzetközi hallgatók kommunikációjáról a Coospace üzenetek tükrében**

**B I U ↻ ✕**

Kedves Kolléga!

Ennek a kérdőívnek a célja az adatgyűjtés a nyelvészeti kutatásomhoz, amelynek középpontjában a nemzetközi hallgatók kommunikációja áll a Coospace üzenetek tükrében. A kérdőív kitöltése 15-20 percet vesz igénybe. A kérdőív anonim és csak kutatási célokat szolgál.

A kérdőív első része demográfiai adatokra kérdez rá, majd a második fele a nemzetközi hallgatók kommunikációjára koncentrál, azon belül is a Coospace üzenetek megszólítására. A kérdőívben szerepelnek nyitott kérdések is, ahol a véleményét szeretném kérni. Ez esetben a válasz hosszúsága Önre van bízva, nincs maximum szószám szabva.

Köszönöm szépen, ha kitölti a kérdőívet és így támogatja a PhD kutatásomat!

Skadra Margit

([skadra.margit@med.u-szeged.hu](mailto:skadra.margit@med.u-szeged.hu))

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**Nem \***

☐ férfi

☐ nő

**Életkor: \***

Rövid szöveges válasz

.....

**Full text of the questionnaire (Hungarian original):**

**Oktatói észrevételek a nemzetközi hallgatók kommunikációjáról a Coospace üzenetek tükrében**

Kedves Kolléga!

Ennek a kérdőívnek a célja az adatgyűjtés a nyelvészeti kutatásomhoz, amelynek középpontjában a nemzetközi hallgatók kommunikációja áll a Coospace üzenetek tükrében. A kérdőív kitöltése 15-20 percet vesz igénybe. A kérdőív anonim és csak kutatási célokat szolgál.

A kérdőív első része demográfiai adatokra kérdez rá, majd a második fele a nemzetközi hallgatók kommunikációjára koncentrál, azon belül is a Coospace üzenetek megszólítására. A kérdőívben szerepelnek nyitott kérdések is, ahol a véleményét szeretném kérni. Ez esetben a válasz hosszúsága Önre van bízva, nincs maximum szószám szabva. Köszönöm szépen, ha kitölti a kérdőívet és így támogatja a PhD kutatásomat! Skadra Margit

([skadra.margit@med.u-szeged.hu](mailto:skadra.margit@med.u-szeged.hu))

**Nem**

☐ férfi

☐ nő

**Életkor:**

[Rövid szöveges válasz]

**Mi az anyanyelve? / Mik az anyanyelvei?**

[Rövid szöveges válasz]

**Milyen nyelven/nyelveken beszél az anyanyelvén/anyanyelvein kívül?**

[Rövid szöveges válasz]

**Hány éve tanít nyelvet/nyelveket nemzetközi csoportoknak?**

[Rövid szöveges válasz]

**Átlagosan hány Coospace üzenetet kap nemzetközi hallgatóktól egy héten? (Ha jelenleg nem oktat az egyetemen: korábban hány üzenetet kapott egy héten?)**

☐ 0

☐ 1–5 üzenet/hét

☐ 6–10 üzenet/hét

☐ 11–15 üzenet/hét

☐ több mint 15 üzenet/hét

Jelölje be 1-5-ig a skálán, hogy mennyire találja udvariatlannak/udvariasnak az alábbi Coospace üzenetek megszólítását, amelyeket nemzetközi hallgatók küldtek az oktatójuknak. (1: nagyon udvariatlan, 2: udvariatlan 3: se nem udvarias, se nem udvariatlan, 4: udvarias 5: nagyon udvarias ). A skála alatt indokolhatja is, hogy miért találja a megszólítást udvariatlannak vagy udvariasnak.

**Hello**

nagyon udvariatlan    1    2    3    4    5    nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Dear Margit**

nagyon udvariatlan    1    2    3    4    5    nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Hi!**

nagyon udvariatlan    1    2    3    4    5    nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Jó napot kívánok!**

nagyon udvariatlan    1    2    3    4    5    nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Good morning madam**

nagyon udvariatlan    1    2    3    4    5    nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Dear Skadra Margit**

nagyon udvariatlan    1    2    3    4    5    nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Dear Professor**

nagyon udvariatlan    1    2    3    4    5    nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Dear Teacher**

nagyon udvariatlan    1    2    3    4    5    nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?  
[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Dear Ms. Margit**

nagyon udvariatlan 1 2 3 4 5 nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?  
[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Dear Dr. Skadra Margit**

nagyon udvariatlan 1 2 3 4 5 nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?  
[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Dear Skadra**

nagyon udvariatlan 1 2 3 4 5 nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?  
[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Hello miss**

nagyon udvariatlan 1 2 3 4 5 nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?  
[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Dear Miss Margit**

nagyon udvariatlan 1 2 3 4 5 nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?  
[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Jó napot kívánok Dr. Margit**

nagyon udvariatlan 1 2 3 4 5 nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?  
[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Szia! Professor Margit**

nagyon udvariatlan 1 2 3 4 5 nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?  
[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Good day**

nagyon udvariatlan 1 2 3 4 5 nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Dear Ms. Skadra**

nagyon udvariatlan 1 2 3 4 5 nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Szia Margit**

nagyon udvariatlan 1 2 3 4 5 nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Jó napot Dr. Margit**

nagyon udvariatlan 1 2 3 4 5 nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Hello professor**

nagyon udvariatlan 1 2 3 4 5 nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Good morning Margit!**

nagyon udvariatlan 1 2 3 4 5 nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Hi dear Dr.**

nagyon udvariatlan 1 2 3 4 5 nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Szia Madam**

nagyon udvariatlan 1 2 3 4 5 nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Dear professor Margit**

nagyon udvariatlan 1 2 3 4 5 nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Hello teacher**

nagyon udvariatlan 1 2 3 4 5 nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Hello dear**

nagyon udvariatlan 1 2 3 4 5 nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Szia tanárnő**

nagyon udvariatlan 1 2 3 4 5 nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Dear Ms. Marit\*** (\*a hallgató általi írásmód)

nagyon udvariatlan 1 2 3 4 5 nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Hello dear Margit**

nagyon udvariatlan 1 2 3 4 5 nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Good Morning**

nagyon udvariatlan 1 2 3 4 5 nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Hello, Dear Skadra Margit**

nagyon udvariatlan 1 2 3 4 5 nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Hello Miss Margit**

nagyon udvariatlan 1 2 3 4 5 nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Szia**

nagyon udvariatlan 1 2 3 4 5 nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**nincs megszólítás a levélben**

nagyon udvariatlan 1 2 3 4 5 nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Good evening Miss Margit**

nagyon udvariatlan 1 2 3 4 5 nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

**Hello, Good afternoon professor**

nagyon udvariatlan 1 2 3 4 5 nagyon udvarias

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

[Hosszú szöveges válasz]

Nagyon szépen köszönöm, hogy a kérdőív kitöltésével támogatta a kutatásom!

**Full text of the questionnaire (English translation):**

**Instructors' comments on international students' communication based on Coospace messages**

Dear Colleague,

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect data for my linguistic research, which focuses on the communication of international students as reflected in Coospace messages. The questionnaire takes 15-20 minutes to complete. The questionnaire is anonymous and is for research purposes only.

The first part of the questionnaire asks for demographic data, while the second part focuses on the communication of international students, specifically on Coospace messages. The questionnaire also includes open-ended questions where I would like to ask for your opinion. In this case, the length of your answer is up to you, there is no maximum word count.

Thank you very much for completing the questionnaire and supporting my PhD research!

Margit Skadra

([skadra.margit@med.u-szeged.hu](mailto:skadra.margit@med.u-szeged.hu))



**No**

☐ Male

☐ female

**Age**

[Short text answer]

**What is your native language? / What are your native languages?**

[Short text answer]

**What language(s) do you speak besides your native language(s)?**

[Short text answer]

**How many years have you been teaching languages to international groups?**

[Short text answer]

**On average, how many Coospace messages do you receive from international students per week? (If you are not currently teaching at a university: how many messages did you receive per week previously?)**

☐ 0

☐ 1–5 messages/week

☐ 6–10 messages/week

☐ 11–15 messages/week

☐ more than 15 messages/week

Please indicate on a scale from 1 to 5 how impolite or polite you find the salutations of the following Coospace messages sent by international students to their instructors. (1: very impolite, 2: impolite, 3: neither polite nor impolite, 4: polite, 5: very polite). Below the scale, you can also explain why you find the salutation impolite or polite.

**Hello**

very impolite   1   2   3   4   5   very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?

[Long text answer]

**Dear Margit**

very impolite   1   2   3   4   5   very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?

[Long text answer]

**Hi!**

very impolite   1   2   3   4   5   very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?

[Long text answer]

**Good day!**

very impolite   1   2   3   4   5   very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?

[Long text answer]

**Good morning madam**

very impolite   1   2   3   4   5   very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?

[Long text answer]

**Dear Skadra Margit**

very impolite   1   2   3   4   5   very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?

[Long text answer]

**Dear Professor**

very impolite   1   2   3   4   5   very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?

[Long text answer]

**Dear Teacher**

very impolite   1   2   3   4   5   very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?

[Long text answer]

**Dear Ms. Margit**

very impolite   1   2   3   4   5   very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?

[Long text answer]

**Dear Dr. Skadra Margit**

very impolite   1   2   3   4   5   very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?

[Long text answer]

**Dear Skadra**

very impolite   1   2   3   4   5   very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?

[Long text response]

**Hello miss**

very impolite   1   2   3   4   5   very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?  
[Long text answer]

**Dear Miss Margit**

very impolite 1 2 3 4 5 very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?  
[Long text answer]

**Good afternoon, Dr. Margit**

very impolite 1 2 3 4 5 very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?  
[Long text answer]

**Hi! Professor Margit**

very impolite 1 2 3 4 5 very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?  
[Long text answer]

**Good day**

very impolite 1 2 3 4 5 very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?  
[Long text answer]

**Dear Ms. Skadra**

very impolite 1 2 3 4 5 very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?  
[Long text answer]

**Hi Margit**

very impolite 1 2 3 4 5 very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?  
[Long text answer]

**Good afternoon, Dr. Margit**

very impolite 1 2 3 4 5 very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?  
[Long text answer]

**Hello professor**

very impolite 1 2 3 4 5 very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?  
[Long text answer]

**Good morning Margit!**

very impolite   1   2   3   4   5   very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?

[Long text answer]

**Hi dear Dr.**

very impolite   1   2   3   4   5   very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?

[Long text answer]

**Hi Madam**

very impolite   1   2   3   4   5   very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?

[Long text answer]

**Dear Professor Margit**

very impolite   1   2   3   4   5   very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?

[Long text answer]

**Hello teacher**

very impolite   1   2   3   4   5   very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?

[Long text answer]

**Hello dear**

very impolite   1   2   3   4   5   very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?

[Long text answer]

**Hi teacher**

very impolite   1   2   3   4   5   very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?

[Long text answer]

**Dear Ms. Marit\*** (\*as written by the student)

very impolite   1   2   3   4   5   very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?

[Long text answer]

**Hello dear Margit**

very impolite   1   2   3   4   5   very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?

[Long text answer]

**Good Morning**

very impolite   1   2   3   4   5   very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?

[Long text answer]

**Hello, Dear Skadra Margit**

very impolite   1   2   3   4   5   very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?

[Long text answer]

**Hello Miss Margit**

very impolite   1   2   3   4   5   very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?

[Long text answer]

**Hi**

very impolite   1   2   3   4   5   very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?

[Long text answer]

**There is no salutation in the letter.**

very impolite   1   2   3   4   5   very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?

[Long text answer]

**Good evening Miss Margit**

very impolite   1   2   3   4   5   very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?

[Long text answer]

**Hello, Good afternoon professor**

very impolite   1   2   3   4   5   very polite

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?

[Long text answer]

Thank you very much for supporting my research by completing the questionnaire!

## Appendix B: Sample open-ended responses from the perception questionnaire

Below, screenshots of the original questionnaire format are provided for documentation purposes, followed by the answers to the open-ended questions, presented in the original Hungarian version and then in its English translation. The samples include responses to the highest-rated salutation (*Dear Dr. Skadra Margit*) and to the lowest-rated one (*Hello dear*).

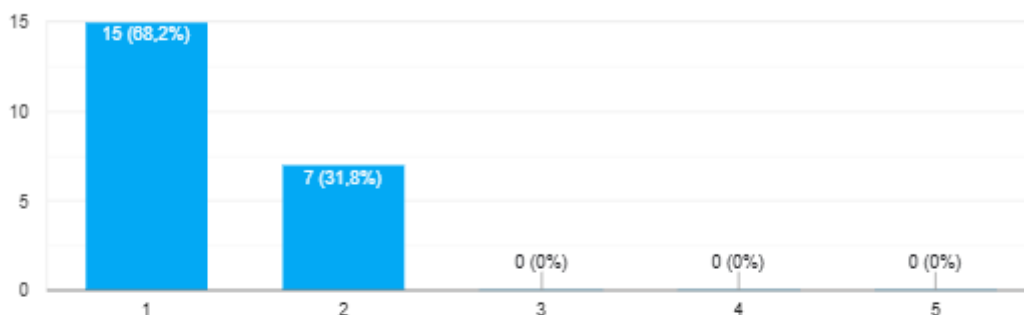
### Screenshots of the original format:



Hello dear

 Grafikon másolása

22 válasz



Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

12 válasz

Ez az a megszólítás, ami számomra teljesen elfogadhatatlan egy tanár-diák kommunikációban, főleg írásban.

Túl bizalmas.

-

a dear egy kicsit furcsa oktató megszólítására

személytelen és személyeskedő

Nagyon személyes

Nos, ezt egy egészen más élethelyzetben tudom elképzelni. Teljesen udvariatlan, de valószínűleg nem szándékosan.

Ennyire azért kellene tudni angolul, legalább a filmekből, hogy nem szólítunk így meg tanárt. Ez a "hello miss" mellett olyan, amelyet kifejezetten udvariatlannak tartok.

### Sample open-ended responses from the perception questionnaire:

**Dear Dr. Skadra Margit (Hungarian original):**

12 válasz

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

Mutatja, h a teljes nevedet használja titulusokkal együtt (nem is feltételezi, h mēg nem vagy dr ☺)

Lsd. Dear Professor-os kérdés.

Ugyanolyan, mint a "Dear".

titulus, teljes név – tisztelettudó

udvarias a teljes név a Dr-ral, de nem minden tanár Dr (én sem), így ezt pontosítani kell ha illetéktelenül használja

Teljes név+rang, udvarias

Udvarias, ugyanakkor tudomásom szerint a dr. titulus használata csak akkor szükséges, ha a címzett maga is így használja a nevét hivatalosan.

Udvarias akar lenni (szerintem a szándékot kell nézni), kapok egy dr. titulust - amit következő órán szintén tisztáznom kell.

Mindent belevesz (és mivel Mo-n vagyunk, így a nyelvi sorrendet lokalizálta)

Nem feledkezett meg a doktori titulusról.

teljesen korrekt

Teljesen rendben érzem. Őszintén szólva annyi érzésem van csak, hogy egy picit túl hivatalos, egy tanár-diák viszonyt nem ennyire hivatalosnak vagy távolságtartónak képzelek el. De teljesen rendben.

### **Dear Dr. Skadra Margit (English translation):**

12 answers

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?

Shows that s/he uses your full name with titles (s/he does not even assume you might not be a Dr. ☺)

See the 'Dear Professor' question.

same as for Dear

Title, full name – respectful

Full name with Dr is polite, but not all instructors are doctors (I'm not either), so it should be clarified if used inappropriately.

Full name + title, polite.

Polite, but as far as I know, the Dr title is only necessary if the recipient officially uses it.

S/he wants to be polite – I think the intention is what matters – I get a Dr title, which I will also have to clarify next class.



S/he includes everything (and since we are in Hungary, s/he adapted the word order to local conventions).

Did not forget the doctoral title.

Perfectly correct.

I find it completely fine. To be honest, my only feeling is that it is a bit too formal; I do not imagine a teacher–student relationship to be this formal or distant. But it is absolutely fine.

**Hello dear (Hungarian original):**

12 válasz

Miért udvarias/udvariatlan Ön szerint a megszólítás?

Ez az a megszólítás, ami számomra teljesen elfogadhatatlan egy tanár-diák kommunikációban, főleg írásban.

Túl bizalmas.

.

a dear egy kicsit furcsa oktató megszólítására

személytelen és személyeskedő

Nagyon személyes

Nos, ezt egy egészen más élethelyzetben tudom elképzelni. Teljesen udvariatlan, de valószínűleg nem szándékosan.

Ennyire azért kellene tudni angolul, legalább a filmekből, hogy nem szólítunk így meg tanárt. Ez a "hello miss" mellett olyan, amelyet kifejezetten udvariatlannak tartok.

öreg néni a fiatal eladónak

Hát, ez egy kicsit túlzás, túl közvetlen.

Ilyen megszólítást a kedvesének ír az ember, nem a tanárának

bizalmas

**Hello Dear (English translation):**

12 answers

Why do you consider the salutation polite/impolite?

This is a salutation that I find completely unacceptable in teacher-student communication, especially in writing.

Too personal.

.

dear is a little strange as a salutation for an instructor

Impersonal and inappropriately familiar

Very personal

Well, I can imagine this only in a completely different context. It is entirely impolite, though probably not intentionally.

One should at least know this much English, even from movies, to know that you do not address someone like this. Along with *hello miss*, this is one that I consider particularly impolite.

an old lady greeting a young shop assistant

Well, this is a bit too much, too informal.

This kind of salutation is something one writes to his/her partner, not to their teacher

personal

## Appendix C: Selected quotes from interviews with the instructors

The following quotations are from three semi-structured interviews with the instructors, conducted in Hungarian. The transcripts were generated using Turboscribe (turboscribe.ai), and were subsequently proofread and anonymised. Each Hungarian quotation is followed by its English translation.

Note: The researcher and the interviewees are colleagues and knew each other prior to the interviews; therefore, the communication has an informal tone.

R = researcher

I #1 = Interviewee #1

I #4 = Interviewee #4

I #8 = Interviewee #8

### Interview #1 (Hungarian original):

[...]

R: Milyen gyakran szoktál kapni a hallgatóktól üzeneteket Coospacen keresztül?

I #1: Naponta.

R: És naponta így...?

I #1: Hát azért, hál' Istennek nem sokat, mondjuk naponta kettőt.

R: Jó. És akkor a következő az lenne, hogy odaadnám neked ezt a lapot, és ezek a megszólítások ugye hozzám érkeztek. Az lenne a kérésem, hogy ezeket véleményezd nekem, hogy miért tartod esetleg udvariasnak, udvariatlannak, mit gondolsz róluk.

I #1: Az első a *Dear Professor*, annak örülnék, ha bárki így szólítana, de ez a legritkább, amikor valaki így címen nevez bárkit is. Én szerintem ez udvarias, ha nem tudja a nevedet, és sokszor, nálam nem tudják, nagyon sokszor azt sem tudja, hogy kinek ír. És azt sem írja oda, hogy melyik csoportból és kicsoda, úgyhogy nagyon nehéz beazonosítani. Tehát szerintem én egy ilyen megszólításnak örülök, vagy örülnék, de ritkán. *Jó napot kívánok*, így nem szoktak szólítani. Ez nem megszólítás, szerintem ez egy köszönés. *Dear Skadra*, hát ugye ez borzasztó udvariatlan, de most nem tudom, hogy ilyenkor azt gondolja, hogy az a keresztneved, akkor egy picit, hát udvariatlan, mert miért szólít a keresztneveden. De így, hogy *Skadra*, hát ez így szerintem nem. *Hello dear* így soha nem szoktak szólítani. *Hello*, simán, az igen, az nincs itt a listán, de olyan szerepel, hogy hello, vesző, vagy semmi, és aztán írja, hogy mit akar. *Hello dearnek* még soha nem szólítottak, szerintem abszolút udvariatlan ebben a kontextusban. *Szia*, megint csak. Tudom, hogy nem tudják, hogy ez nagyon bizalmas megszólítás, nagyon informális, de akkor is udvariatlan. De legalább valahogy köszönt, mert a legjobb, amikor csak in medias res belevág, és semmi köszönés nincs. *Dear Miss Marit*, ez csak azért, hogy el van gépelve, de *dear Miss Margit*, hát ha jól ismered, ugye így szoktak szólítani, engem is *doktor [FN]* szólítanak, és én ezt teljesen elfogadom, de ha objektíven nézem, nem udvarias, csak örülök, hogy tudja akkor legalább a nevemet valamilyen formában, vagy a *[SN]*, szóval ez mondjuk egy ilyen átmeneti dolog. Nincs megszólítás, igen, ez megint nagyon udvariatlan, de ez nagyon gyakori, hogy ilyen leveleket kapok a *Hello* mellett, és *Dear Dr. Skadra Margit*, hát ez meg nyilván nagyon formális, és ez lenne az elvárt, hát ilyen helyzetben, amikor az oktatójának, vagy mint tanulmányi csoportvezető ír neked, de szerintem ez a legritkább. Én legalábbis illet, hogy teljes néven, nagyon ritkán írni diákok szokták, néha veszik a

fáradtságot, és megnézik, hogy mi a teljes nevem, de csak akkor valami komoly dolgot akarnak kérni, mert egyébként a *Hello* szokott a leggyakoribb meg a semmi lenni. Úgyhogy szerintem ez az utóbbi, ez lenne az elfogadott hivatalos egyetemi megszólítás, de a legritkábban lehet szerintem ezzel találkozni.

R: És te ezt mennyire tartod fontosnak, ha üzenetet kapsz, hogy szólítanak meg?

I #1: Már nem tartom fontosnak, mert már annyit dühögtem, és nagyon ritkán van valami, hogy meglepődöm. Én mindig vissza szoktam írni, hogy *Dear XY*, és feltételezem, hogy ebből okul, hogy akkor meg kéne, és van egyébként, akit lehet is így tanítani, mint a gépet, hogy tudod, ha egyszer betáplálsz, akkor attól kezdve ő is valahogy szólít. Manapság nem mérgeled ezen, tehát már annyira elfogadtam, hogy ez más kultúrák, azért magyar diákok nem szoktak így, hogy *Hello*, meg *Szia*, úgyhogy nyilván akinek az anyanyelve azért az valamilyen szinten betartja ezeket a formalitási szinteket. Az is érdekes, hogy ki szólít *Dear [FN]*, vagy *Hello [FN]*, és ki az, aki a *Dear* után valami mást használ. Szóval ezek szerintem nagyon nemzetiségfüggő is, meg hogy milyen viszonyban vagy, ha saját csoportod, de ugye én nagyon sokszor kapok nem saját csoportomtól, tehát akinek én vadidegen vagyok, már elfogadtam. Ez így a korral, régebben jobban dühögtem, amikor ilyet kaptam.

R: És félig erre válaszoltál is, de van-e olyan, hogy bizonyos nemzetiségű hallgatók szerinted egy tipikus formát használnak, vagy felismered-e már akár megszólítás, köszöntés alapján, hogy ki írhat?

I #1: Amit mondtam, hogy az irániakról, meg egyébként az arabokról is jellemző, hogyha valami nagyon fontosat akarnak, tehát hogy ne ismétljen fél évet, tehát nem az, hogy nem jön órára, hanem valami igaz, akkor veszi a fáradtságot, és akkor megnézi a titulusomat is, meg a nevemet, de ez nagyon ritkán fordul elő, ez tényleg valóban komoly kérsnél. Egyébként, meg talán a japánok, csak valahogy ők ritkában írnak nekem, tehát arról kevesebb emlékem van, de talán ők még azok, akik valamiféle *dear*-rel és valami megszólítanak, tehát ők tisztelettudóbbak szerintem megszólításban is, bár ők sem érzik, hogy egy e-mailben mi lenne a megfelelő, vagy egy Coospace üzenetben. És egyébként meg, hát ezek a közel-keletiek, és akkor, most csúnya hangzik, szóval az arabok meg ezek szokták, meg hát az irániak, és egyébként, amikor nem fontosat kér, akkor az a semmi, meg a *hello*, meg ilyenek.

R: Jó, és amikor írnak, mennyire tartod jónak-rossznak, hogyha magyarul ír például egy megszólítást, egy köszönést, tehát, hogyha valami magyarral indítja a levelet?

I #1: Örülne neki, de nagyon ritkán szoktak magyarul megszólítani, úgyhogy még a saját csoportomból is általában angolul írnak.

R: Még köszönés szinten se, hogy ír egy magyar köszönést, hogy *jó napot*, például, vagy *szia*, vagy bármit?

I #1: *Szia*-t nem szoktak írni, mert azt tudja, hogy engem ne szíázzanak le, és a beteget főleg ne. Tehát a saját csoportjaim, nem tudom, valahogy így alakult, angolul írnak nekem.

R: És erre már félig volt egy válasz, de hogy volt-e már olyan, hogy egy megszólítást, amikor annyira udvariatlannak találtál, hogy szóvá tetted, vagy ugye ezt mondtad, hogy akkor te mindig igyekszel visszaírni...?

I #1: Mindig visszaírok, és olyankor úgy írom, hogy *Dear Mr. Abdul*, nem tudom én kicsoda, bemásolom az egész nevét, hogy érezze, de van, aki nem veszi a lapot. Tehát ez régebben, hát nem emlékszem, hogy valakinek ezzel visszaírtam volna, hogy nem vagyok *hello*, nem tudom. Az olyan kicsit megalázónak érzem, hogy nem tudom. Tehát így főleg az, ha ismeretlen. Tehát ha valaki a saját diákom írna így, akkor lehet, hogy annak visszaírnám, hogy egyébként nem vagyok *hello*, vagy nem vagyok *szia*. De ugye annyi ismeretlen ír, hogy nem tudom. Tehát azt meg én érzem udvariatlannak, hogy én most itt okítgassam. Úgyhogy nem szoktam visszaírni. Inkább csak ez az indirekt nevelési módszer.

[...]

## Interview #1 (English translation)

[...]

R: How often do you usually receive messages from students via CooSpace?

I #1: Daily.

R: And daily, like...?

I #1: Well, thank God, not too many, maybe two per day.

R: Good. And the next thing would be that I would give you this sheet, and these salutations were addressed to me. My request is that that you evaluate them for me why you consider them polite or impolite, and what you think about them.

I #1: The first one is *Dear Professor*, I would be happy if anyone addressed me like that, but it's the rarest to be addressed by such a title. I think it's polite if they don't know your name—and often they don't know mine; very often they don't even know whom they are writing to. And they also don't write which group they are from, or who they are, so it's very hard to identify them. So I think I would be pleased with such a salutation, but it's rare. *Jó napot kívánok*—they don't usually address me like that. I don't think this is a salutation; it's a greeting. *Dear Skadra*—well, this is terribly impolite. I don't know whether they think that's my first name, but it's a bit impolite: why would they call me by my first name? But like this—with “*Skadra*”—no, I don't think so. Hello dear—they never address me like this. *Hello*, just that, yes—that's not on the list, but sometimes there is *hello*, with a comma or without, and then they write what they want. But *hello dear*—no one has ever addressed me this way; I think it's absolutely impolite in this context. *Szia*—again. I know that they don't know that this is a very intimate salutation, very informal, but still, it's impolite. But at least they greet me somehow, because the worst is when they start in medias res and there's no greeting at all. *Dear Miss Marit*—this is just a typo, but *Dear Miss Margit*—well, if you know the person well, that's how they address you. They also call me doctor [FN], and I fully accept that, but if I look at it objectively, it's not polite; I only appreciate that at least they know my name in some form, or my first name—so this is like an in-between category. No salutation—yes, this is very impolite again, but very common. I often receive such messages, along with the *Hello*. And *Dear Dr. Skadra Margit*—well, this is of course very formal, and this would be the expected form in such a situation when you write to your instructor or study coordinator; but I think this is the rarest. At least, I very rarely receive messages with my full name—usually Iranian students do that; sometimes they take the trouble to look up my full name, but only when they want something serious. Otherwise, hello or nothing is the most common. So I think the last one would be the accepted official university salutation, but you encounter it the least often.

R: And how important do you consider it, when you receive a message, how they address you?

I #1: I don't consider it important anymore, because I've been angry about it so much, and only very rarely am I surprised by something. I always write back *Dear XY*, and I assume they will learn from it—that they should also use something similar. And there are students who can actually be trained like a machine: once you “program” them, they will always address you somehow. These days I don't get angry about it anymore; I have accepted that different cultures behave differently. Hungarian students don't normally write *Hello* or *Szia* like this, so someone whose mother tongue is Hungarian tends to follow these levels of formality. It's also interesting who uses *Dear [FN]* or *Hello [FN]* and who uses something else after *Dear*. These are very nationality-dependent, I think, and also depend on what relationship you have with them. If they are not from my group—and most of the time they are not—they are

complete strangers to me. I've accepted this with age; earlier I used to be much more upset when I received something like that.

R: And partly you've answered this already, but is it the case that certain nationalities tend to use typical forms, or can you sometimes recognise from the salutation who might be writing?

I #1: As I said: Iranians—and Arabs as well—tend to use a very formal salutation when they want something very important, like not repeating a semester. When it's about something serious, they take the time to look up my title and name, but this is very rare. Maybe the Japanese students—although they rarely write to me—tend to use some form of dear plus something else; they seem more respectful in their salutations, although they also don't feel what would be appropriate in an email or in a Coospace message. But otherwise, well, these Middle Eastern students—they are the ones who do this. And when it's not important, then it's nothing or hello or something like that.

R: And how do you feel when they write in Hungarian—if the salutation or greeting is in Hungarian?

I #1: I would be happy, but they very rarely greet me in Hungarian. Even my own groups usually write in English.

R: Not even a greeting like *jó napot* or *szia*, nothing?

I #1: They don't write *szia* because they know they shouldn't *szia* me, and especially not the patient. So my own groups—somehow it turned out like this—they write to me in English.

R: And you already mentioned this partly, but has it ever happened that you found a salutation so impolite that you commented on it? You said you always try to respond...

I #1: I always write back, and then I write *Dear Mr. Abdul*—I copy their full name so they feel it. But some don't get the message. I don't remember ever writing directly that I'm not your *hello*. That feels a bit humiliating; especially if the person is a stranger. If one of my own students wrote like that, then maybe I would reply, I'm not *hello* or *szia*. But so many strangers write to me that I would feel impolite correcting them. So I don't usually write that. Instead, I use this indirect educational method.

[...]

#### Interview #4 (Hungarian original):

[...]

R: Akkor a következő az az lenne, hogy mutatok neked 8 megszólítást, ami majd mindjárt megjelenik a képernyőn, remélhetőleg. Megvan? Jó, tehát ugye ezek Coospace üzenetekből az, hogy hogyan indították a levelet, tehát ez a megszólítás, köszönés rész, ugye ezek nekem íródtak, ezek a megszólítások Coospace üzenetek, amikben ezek voltak. Tudnál-e nekem arról mondani véleményt, hogy mit gondolsz, mennyire udvariasak, udvariatlanok és miért?

I #4: Ez a 8, ami itt van. Jó, oké. Akkor kezdem az elsővel. Ez a *Dear Professor* szerintem elég udvarias, mert van benne az a kedves, nem is tudom ezt minek jelöli így a pragmatika vagy a nyelvészetben. A *Professor*, szóval mint a title, szerintem az nagyon udvarias, mert mind egyetemi közegben minden, szóval szerintem az talán a legudvariasabbnak gondolom. A *jó napot kívánok*, az is szerintem udvarias, főleg, hogy magyarul írja, már mint hogy magyar, mint idegen nyelvet tanítunk, szerintem az tök oké. Igaz, hogy nyilván egy ilyen levélformában lehet, hogy furán hangzik, már mint hogy inkább, hogy ezt köszönésként használjuk szóban, és írott formában kicsit furcsa, de egyébként szerintem udvarias, főleg, hogy így kiírta szépen. A *Dear Skadra*, hát az kicsit nekem olyan személytelen talál a vezetéknép miatt, meg én nem is tudom, hogy ezt szoktuk így használni, hogy csak a vezetéknémet írjuk, nekem az nagyon fura, nekem az nem udvarias, az nekem nagyon ilyen, mint valami katonaság, azt szokták a vezetéknéven hívni, vagy rendőrség, nekem az ugrik be róla erre asszociálva. *Hello Dear*, hát erről nem egy ilyen közeg jut eszembe, mert ez inkább

kicsit ilyen, ez udvariatlan azért, mert too much, túl kedves, vagy túl nem is tudom, ilyen túl személyes, annak érzem, szóval családtagoknak, vagy nem tudom, a páromnak írok ki ezt szerintem, vagy nekem úgy jön le. Hát a *Szia* értékelendő, hogy magyarul írja számomra, de nyilván tudjuk, hogy a beosztás, vagy a social rankból kifolyólag kicsit udvariatlannak gondolom, mert ugye nem használjuk. Pont egyébként, pont ma jöttek be az első órára a kedves másodéveseim, hogy *Szia*, és így oké, hogy jobban vagyunk, vagy nem tudom, de így mondtam, hogy *jó napot kívánok*, pedig mindig rászoktattam őket, meg mondtam nekik, de ezt a *Szia*-t kicsit nehéz kiverni a fejükből, úgy látszik, mert ugye mindenhol ezt használják. Szóval ezt kicsit udvariatlannak gondolom emiatt, de értékelem legalább magyarul ír. *Dear Miss Marit*. Jó, hát ez lehet, hogy typo, vagy nem tudom. Valószínű, hogy az volt. Igen. Hát udvarias, mert szerintem követi ezt a formát, amit amúgy az angol szerintem elvár, hogy dear, meg miss, meg keresztnév, de a typo miatt kicsit fura bármit. Nekem az kicsit, hát kicsit udvariatlan, de egyébként végülis én udvariasnak gondolom, mert most bárki elérhet bármit. Nincs megszólítás? Na, ez kicsit straightforward, úgyhogy nem tudom, hogy így egyből bele a lecsóba. Nem tudom, hát hogy mondjuk nem tudom, mondjuk egy Coospace üzenetnél, nem tudom, de akkor is kicsit udvariatlannak gondolom. Szóval azért legyen már valami. És mégis szerintem az utolsó az is, hát mondjuk a *Dear Professort* mondtam a legudvariasabbnak, de azért szerintem az utolsó is eléggé udvarias, hogy ott tényleg mindenre figyelt és kiírt, még akkor is, ha még nincs is ott ez a két betű, de hogy szerintem az is elég udvarias, hogy a biztosra ment, hogy a nevet is odaírta, meg a titulust is.

#### Interview #4 (English translation):

[...]

R: The next thing is that I will show you eight salutations that will appear on the screen shortly. Do you have them? Good. These are from Coospace messages—this is how the students started their messages, the salutation or greeting part. These were written to me in Coospace messages. Could you tell me your opinion—how polite or impolite they are, and why?

I #4: These eight here? Okay. I'll start with the first one. *Dear Professor*—I think this is quite polite, because it has that nice... I don't know what pragmatics or linguistics calls it. And *Professor*—as a title—I think that's very polite, because in an academic environment, this is very appropriate. I think this is the most polite one. *Jó napot kívánok*—I also think this is polite, especially because they write it in Hungarian, since we teach Hungarian as a foreign language. I think it's totally okay. It's true that in a letter it may sound strange, since we use it as a spoken greeting, and in written form it feels a bit odd, but otherwise I think it's polite, especially because they wrote it correctly. *Dear Skadra*—well, that feels impersonal because of the surname. And I don't know if we actually use only the surname like that. It feels strange; it reminds me of the military or the police—calling someone only by their surname. So I don't think it's polite. *Hello Dear*—well, this is not something for this context; it feels... too much, too affectionate, or too personal. I would write that to a family member or my partner. That's how it comes across to me. *Szia*—I appreciate that it's in Hungarian, but of course because of the hierarchy or social rank, I find it a bit impolite, since we don't use it. Just today my second-year students walked into class saying *Szia*, and even though we get along, I still said *Jó napot kívánok*, even though I've trained them countless times. This *szia* is difficult to get out of their heads because they use it everywhere. So I find it a bit impolite, but at least it's in Hungarian. *Dear Miss Marit*—well, maybe it's a typo, probably. Yes. So it's polite because it follows the English pattern of dear + miss + first name, but because of the typo it's a bit strange. It's a little impolite, but overall I still consider it polite—anyone can make a typo. No salutation? Well, that's a bit straightforward, so I don't know—diving straight into the message. Even in a Coospace message I find that a bit impolite. There should be something. And the last one—

I said *Dear Professor* was the most polite, but the last one is also quite polite. They paid attention to everything and wrote out both the title and the name, even if those two letters aren't part of the title—but still, I think it's polite; they made sure to be respectful.

### Interview #8 (Hungarian original):

[...]

R: Te mennyire tartod ezt fontosnak, hogy hogyan indítanak el egy Coospace üzenetet a hallgatók?

I #8: Hát azért ez talán azt mondom, hogy attól is függ, hogy miről van szó, mert hogyha valaki mondjuk saját személyes dolgával kapcsolatban ír, hogy mit tudom én, beteg, ez az amaz, akkor azért lehet, hogy érdemes neki egy kicsit nagyobb feneket keríteni, de hogyha most azt akarja megtudni, hogy 10 perc múlva hol lesz az óránk, mert valahogy elsiklott efölött az információ fölött, akkor lehet, hogy nem kell neki olyan nagy feneket keríteni.

R: És észrevetted-e, hogy vannak ilyen tipikus területek, nemzetiségek, ahogy mondjuk meglátsz egy üzenetet, és tudod, hogy na ez biztos mondjuk ők írták?

I #8: Igazából nem. Nem, mert nem kapok annyi üzenetet egyrészt. Másrészt meg nem. Nem. Nem. Inkább azt mondom, hogy az tűnik föl, hogy mit tudom én, hogy X nemzet baromira nem tud angolul, és még írni se. Tehát olyanok, hogy legszívesebben körbe mutogatnám a kollégáimnak, hogy úristen, megint mit írtak. Meg hát azt tudjuk, hogy például az ilyen arab, meg iráni népek az égvilágon semmit nem írnak nagykezdőbetűvel, mert hogy náluk valószínűleg nincs is olyan, mint kis- és nagybetű, de ez nem zavarja őt abban, hogy a saját nevét is ugyanúgy kisbetűvel írja, tehát ezen nem nagyon van mit fennakadni.

R: Ha kapsz egy külföldi hallgatótól egy levelet, amiben ugye angolul ír valamit, de magyarul kezdi a levelet arról, mit gondolsz? Mint mondjuk itt volt a *szia, jó napot kívánok*, és hasonló.

I #8: Szerintem az egy kedves gesztus. Nyilván nem érzékenyülök el tőle, de azzal együtt úgy gondolom, hogy főleg mivel általában mint magyartanárként fordulnak hozzám, ezért szerintem ez tényleg egy kedvesség mondjuk.

[...]

### Interview #8 (English translation):

[...]

R: How important do you consider it how students start a Coospace message to you?

I #8: Well, I'd say it depends on what the message is about. If someone writes about something personal—like being sick, or something similar—then maybe it's worth putting a bit more effort into the message. But if someone wants to know where our class is in ten minutes because they somehow missed the information, then they don't need to make such a big deal of it.

R: And have you noticed patterns—like typical nationalities or anything else—where you can already tell from the message who probably wrote it?

I #8: Not really. No. I don't receive that many messages, first of all. And secondly—no. Not really. I'd rather say what stands out is that some nationalities don't know English at all—not even how to write it. Sometimes I feel like showing my colleagues what they wrote, saying “Oh my God, look at this!” And of course we know that Arab or Iranian students never use capital letters for anything; probably because their writing system doesn't have lowercase/uppercase. But this doesn't stop them from writing their own name in lowercase as well—so there's not much point getting upset about it.



R: If you receive a message from a foreign student who writes the message in English but starts it with a Hungarian greeting—what do you think about that? Like *szia, jó napot kívánok*, and similar?

I #8: I think it's a nice gesture. I don't get emotional about it, but I think it's kind—especially because they usually write to me as a Hungarian language teacher. So I consider it a nice gesture.

[...]

## **Appendix D: Interview protocol**

Interview aim: The interviews aimed to gain deeper insights into instructors' perceptions and evaluations of various salutations written by international students.

Participants: Hungarian as a Foreign Language instructors teaching international medical students.

Ethical considerations: Participation was voluntary and anonymous.

Interview format:

- Semi-structured interviews
- Conducted in Hungarian
- Conducted in person or online via Zoom (depending on availability)
- Duration: between 11.08 and 22.47 minutes, total: 3 hours, 27 minutes and 46 seconds
- Audio recorded with the participants' consent
- Transcribed using Turboscribe, manually checked, and anonymized

### Interview Procedure

#### *1) Background questions*

- age, gender
- native language, languages spoken
- teaching experience
- frequency of receiving CooSpace messages

#### *2) Evaluation of the eight salutations*

All interviewees received the salutations in the following order:

- Dear Professor
- Jó napot kívánok
- Dear Skadra
- Hello dear
- Szia
- Dear Ms Marit

- no salutation
- Dear Dr. Skadra Margit

There were no strict guidelines regarding the order in which the salutations had to be evaluated by the instructors.

### *3) Further questions*

The following questions were asked in Hungarian, with the same content but not always the exact same wording:

1. Coospace üzenetek esetében mennyire tartod fontosnak a megszólítást? (How important do you consider salutations in Coospace messages?)
2. Észrevetted, hogy bizonyos nemzetiségű vagy régióból származó diákok hajlamosak meghatározott megszólítási formákat használni? Ha igen, milyen hasonlóságokat vagy különbségeket figyeltél meg? (Have you noticed whether students from certain nationalities or regions tend to use specific forms of salutation? If so, what similarities or differences have you observed?)
3. Mit gondolsz arról, ha a hallgatók magyar szavakat vagy kifejezéseket használnak az angol nyelvű Coospace üzenet megszólításában? (What do you think about students using Hungarian words or expressions in the salutation of an English-language Coospace message?)
4. Kaptál már valaha olyan megszólítást, amit rendkívül udvariatlannak találtál? Ha igen, jelezted ezt a diáknak? Ha igen, milyen formában? (Have you ever received a salutation that you found extremely impolite? If so, did you bring this to the student's attention? If yes, in what way?)
5. Mit gondolsz, szükség lenne-e egy átfogó intézményi vagy egyetemi szintű iránymutatásra, amely támogatná a hallgatókat abban, hogyan írjanak Coospace-üzeneteket oktatóiknak – jelen esetben különös tekintettel a megszólítás formáira? (What do you think about the need for a comprehensive institutional or university guideline to support students in writing Coospace messages to their instructors – particularly with regard to appropriate forms of address?)
6. Van-e bármi, amit fontosnak tartasz megemlíteni a témával kapcsolatban, de eddig az interjúban nem került szóba? (Is there anything else you consider important to mention regarding this topic that has not been discussed in the interview so far?)

Note: In many cases, participants' answers led to further spontaneous follow-up questions.