

## MASTER'S THESIS

### The role of e-mail messages in the chain of communication and use of language in e-mails among colleagues in a secondary school setting

Chan, Hok Kan Angela Pearl

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**THE ROLE OF E-MAIL MESSAGES IN THE CHAIN OF  
COMMUNICATION AND USE OF LANGUAGE IN E-MAILS  
AMONG COLLEAGUES IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL SETTING**

**CHAN HOK KAN, ANGELA PEARL  
STUDENT NO. 02402467**

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## ABSTRACT

E-mail messages have been a very common tool for communication in various domains. The study adopts the qualitative approach in sociolinguistics (ethnography) in examining how e-mails can play a role in the chain of communication where people choose to use e-mail as the medium of communication instead of other ways of communication such as face-to-face communication. It also examines the language use in e-mails that shows the negotiation of work among colleagues. The secondary school setting has been chosen for the study. E-mails are being used to stipulate the work that has been mentioned in an 'earlier stage' of the chain of communication, the initial stage of the communication among colleagues, that is, internal communication usually starts with face-to-face interaction. At a certain point of time, when more critical information has been decided, e-mails tends to be the main medium of carrying those information to the others. Apart from negotiating work, e-mails can be use by people with more power in the workplace to express their gratitude. The function of expressing gratitude could maintain the social relationship between people in the workplace by minimizing the unfavourable effects of giving out work by the more powerful people or it can be viewed as a reinforcement of good performance. The study examines the social relationship building among colleagues in using e-mails as a nearly indispensable communication tool in the workplace.

## 摘要

電子郵件之運用在日常生活中日趨普遍。電子郵件作為人與人之間溝通工具之一，本論文研究它在人們溝通過程中扮演的角色及其發揮的功能。本論文亦特別探討電子郵件中的語言運用的情況，研究其如何傳遞訊息。

本論文以一所中學為研究對象，深入探討校內員工之間運用電子郵件的情況，當中包括其在傳遞訊息，員工溝通及人際關係等各方面扮演的角色及發揮的功效。

電子郵件之運用與人類訊息溝通已成不可分割之關係。

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