



**University of
Nottingham**

UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

Saudis in Intercultural Communication: Bridging Gaps in Pragmatic Competence

Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy

September 2025

Yasir Mohammed A Alwulayi

20405575

Supervisors:

Prof. Louise Jane Mullany

Dr. Malgorzata Chalupnik

School of English, Faculty of Arts

University of Nottingham

Abstract

The increasing global interconnectedness and English's dominance as an international language have highlighted the need for pragmatic competence in second and foreign language education. While much emphasis has previously been placed on the development of grammar and vocabulary, there is now wide recognition that effective communication also requires mastery of pragmatic norms. From an inter-language pragmatic perspective, this study identifies and compares apologies, complaints, and refusals strategies and semantic formulas performed by Saudi EFL/ESL learners compared with ones performed by Saudi monolingual speakers of Arabic and British English native speakers as control groups. It aims to shed light on this topic by discovering four main points: First, it identifies and compare the types of semantic formulas used in the speech acts of complaints, apologies, and refusals across British English native speakers, Saudi Arabic monolinguals, Saudi EFL learners, and Saudi ESL learners. Second, it examines the structural organization of these speech acts within and across participant groups. Third, this study investigates how address terms influence the expression of these speech acts in each cultural and linguistic group. Fourth, it assesses the extent to which contextual factors, particularly social distance and imposition degree, influence participants' speech act performance. This study adopts a comparative, cross-sectional, and qualitative-quantitative (mixed-methods) research design. This study uses a descriptive and analytical approach, utilizing Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) to collect data and systematically categorize linguistic responses. The key findings of this study show that pragmatic competence is both culturally situated and developmentally influenced. Although native speakers and ESL participants demonstrated flexible and contextually rich pragmatic strategies, EFL participants showed limited variation and sociopragmatic control. Saudi Arabic participants showed complex and culturally consistent strategies rooted in shared values and relational communication. These results affirm the need to address pragmatics explicitly in L2 education, especially in EFL contexts where authentic exposure is limited.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, all praise and thanks are due to Allah, the Most Merciful, the Almighty, whose mercy, guidance, and countless blessings have allowed me to pursue and complete this thesis. Without His will and support, none of this work would have been possible.

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisors, Louise Mullany and Małgorzata Chałupnik, for their invaluable guidance, encouragement, and continued support throughout the course of this research. Their intellectual insight, constructive feedback, and constant patience have not only contributed to the direction of this thesis but have also deeply influenced my academic and personal development. It has been a privilege to work under their supervision and benefit from their expertise in the fields of pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and applied linguistics. Also, I would like to thank the University of Nottingham for providing me with an excellent academic environment to pursue my doctoral studies. Having access to resources and being in a vibrant intellectual community has significantly enhanced my research experience.

In addition, I am deeply grateful to my country, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for its generous support of my academic pursuits abroad. I express my gratitude and appreciation to the Saudi Arabian Cultural Bureau in the United Kingdom for their financial assistance, administrative support, and constant encouragement during my years of study.

Personally, I can never adequately express my gratitude to my beloved parents, Haya and Mohammed, whose love and du'ā' (prayers) have been the foundation of all my achievements. Their faith in me and their continued encouragement are what have sustained me through every challenge. Finally, I would like to express my thanks to my colleagues, friends, and all those who participated in this study for their time, cooperation, and helpful contributions. Their involvement added significance and richness to my research and I am very appreciative of their cooperation.

Contents

Abstract.....	1
Acknowledgements.....	2
List of Tables	7
List of Figures	11
Chapter One: Introduction.....	12
1.1.Introduction	12
1.2.Background of Study.....	13
1.3.Statement of the Problem	15
1.4.Research Aims and Objectives	16
1.5.Research Questions	18
1.6.Significance of Study	19
1.7.Structure of the Thesis.....	20
Chapter Two: Literature Review	23
2.1.Introduction	23
2.2.Pragmatics.....	24
2.3.Factors Affecting the Development of Pragmatic Competence	26
2.4.Speech Act Theory	31
2.5.Politeness and Face Theories.....	33
2.5.1.Grice: The Co-operative Principle and the Maxims	33
2.5.2.Robin Lakoff and the Foundations of Politeness Theory	36
2.5.3.Geoffrey Leech and the Politeness Principle	38
2.5.4.Brown and Levinson: Politeness Theory	41
2.6.Address Terms	45
2.7.Interlanguage Pragmatics	48
2.8.Cross-Cultural Pragmatics and Intercultural Communication	50
2.9.The Role of Input, Instruction, and Feedback in Pragmatic Development.....	51
2.10.Complaints	55
2.11.Apologies.....	61
2.12.Refusals	68
2.13.Summary and Research Gap.....	73
Chapter Three: Methodology	75
3.1.Introduction	75

3.2. Research Design	76
3.3. Participants	78
3.4. Data Collection	81
3.4.1. The Speech Act of Complaint	87
3.4.2. The Speech Act of Apology	89
3.4.3. The Speech Act of Refusal	92
3.5. Data Analysis	94
3.6. Ethical Considerations	100
3.7. Summary	101
Chapter Four: The Speech Act of Complaint	103
4.1. Introduction	103
4.2. Situation of complaint (A student's mobile phone)	106
4.2.1. Saudi Arabic responses:	113
4.2.2. EFL responses:	114
4.2.3. ESL responses:	116
4.2.4. British English responses:	117
4.3. Situation of complaint (Annoying neighbour)	118
4.3.1. Saudi Arabic responses:	123
4.3.2. EFL responses:	124
4.3.3. ESL responses:	126
4.3.4. British English responses:	127
4.4. Situation of complaint (Rude Volunteer)	128
4.4.1. Saudi Arabic responses:	135
4.4.2. EFL responses:	138
4.4.3. ESL responses:	140
4.4.4. British English responses:	142
4.5. Situation of complaint (A sibling's neglect)	144
4.5.1. Saudi Arabic responses:	153
4.5.2. EFL responses:	155
4.5.3. ESL responses:	156
4.5.4. British English responses:	157
4.6. Overall insights	159
4.7. Summary	164

Chapter Five: The Speech Act of Apology	166
5.1.Introduction	166
5.2.Situation of apology (Blocking the Aisle)	169
5.2.1.Saudi Arabic responses:	176
5.2.2.EFL responses:.....	178
5.2.3.ESL responses:.....	179
5.2.4.British English responses:	181
5.3.Situation of apology (Shifts Swapping)	182
5.3.1.Saudi Arabic responses:	189
5.3.2.EFL responses:.....	192
5.3.3.ESL responses:.....	193
5.3.4.British English responses:	195
5.4.Situation of apology (Coffee Cup Falling on the Ground)	198
5.4.1.Saudi Arabic responses:	204
5.4.2.EFL responses:.....	206
5.4.3.ESL responses:.....	208
5.4.4.British English responses:	210
5.5.Situation of apology (Returning a Book)	212
5.5.1.Saudi Arabic responses:	218
5.5.2.EFL responses:.....	219
5.5.3.ESL responses:.....	221
5.5.4.British English responses:	222
5.6.Overall insights.....	223
5.7.Summary	228
Chapter Six: The Speech Act of Refusal	230
6.1.Introduction	230
6.2.Situation of refusal (Bypassing a queue place)	232
6.2.1.Saudi Arabic responses:	240
6.2.2.EFL responses:.....	241
6.2.3.ESL responses:.....	243
6.2.4.British English responses:	244
6.3.Situation of refusal (Wedding)	246
6.3.1.Saudi Arabic responses:	253

6.3.2.EFL responses:.....	255
6.3.3.ESL responses:.....	256
6.3.4. British English responses:.....	258
6.4.Situation of refusal (Borrowing of a mobile phone)	261
6.4.1.Saudi Arabic responses:	267
6.4.2.EFL responses:.....	269
6.4.3.ESL responses:.....	270
6.4.4.British English responses:	272
6.5.Situation of refusal (Organizing an event)	273
6.5.1.Saudi Arabic responses:	280
6.5.2.EFL responses:.....	283
6.5.3.ESL responses:.....	284
6.5.4.British English responses:	286
6.6.Overall insights.....	288
6.7.Summary	293
Chapter Seven: Implications and Conclusion.....	294
7.1.Summary of Key Findings.....	294
7.2.Theoretical Implications.....	296
7.3.Pedagogical Implications	298
7.4.Limitations of the Study.....	301
7.5.Suggestions for Future Research	302
7.6.Conclusion.....	303
References	306
Appendices.....	318
1.Appendix A: Questionnaire for Saudi Arabic participants	318
2.Appendix B: Questionnaire for EFL participants	323
3.Appendix C: Questionnaire for ESL participants	328
4.Appendix D: Questionnaire for British participants.....	333

List of Tables

Table 3.1. Demographic details of participants across all groups.	79
Table 3.2. Situations of complaint in the Discourse Completion Task.	87
Table 3.3. Situations of apology in the Discourse Completion Task.	90
Table 3.4. Situations of refusal in the Discourse Completion Task.	92
Table 3.5. Schaefer and Giddens (1981, 1982) and Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) modified coding scheme for complaints	96
Table 3.6. Olshtain and Cohen (1983) coding scheme for apologies.....	97
Table 3.7. Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990) coding scheme for refusals	99
Table 4.1. Situation of complaint (1) in the Discourse Completion Task.	107
Table 4.2. Frequency of all groups' semantic formulas (complaint situation 1)	107
Table 4.3. All participants' semantic formulas structures results (complaint situation 1)	112
Table 4.4. Saudi Arabic participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 1)	114
Table 4.5. EFL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 1)	115
Table 4.6. ESL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 1)	117
Table 4.7. British participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 1)	118
Table 4.8. Situation of complaint (2) in the Discourse Completion Task.	119
Table 4.9. Frequency of all groups' semantic formulas (complaint situation 2)	119
Table 4.10. All participants' semantic formulas structures results (complaint situation 2)	122
Table 4.11. Saudi Arabic participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 2)	124
Table 4.12. EFL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 2)	125
Table 4.13. ESL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 2)	127
Table 4.14. British participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 2) ..	128
Table 4.15. Situation of complaint 3 (Rude Volunteer) in the Discourse Completion Task.	129
Table 4.16. Frequency of all groups' semantic formulas (complaint situation 3 Rude Volunteer)	130
Table 4.17. All participants' semantic formulas structures results (complaint situation 3 Rude Volunteer)	134

Table 4.18. Saudi Arabic participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 3 Rude Volunteer)	136
Table 4.19. EFL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 3 Rude Volunteer)	139
Table 4.20. ESL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 3 Rude Volunteer)	141
Table 4.21. British participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 3 Rude Volunteer)	143
Table 4.22. Situation of complaint 4 (A sibling's neglect) in the Discourse Completion Task.	144
Table 4.23. Frequency of all groups' semantic formulas (complaint situation 4 A sibling's neglect)	146
Table 4.24. All participants' semantic formulas structures results (complaint situation 4 A sibling's neglect)	152
Table 4.25. Saudi Arabic participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 4 A sibling's neglect)	155
Table 4.26. EFL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 4 A sibling's neglect)	156
Table 4.27. ESL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 4 A sibling's neglect)	157
Table 4.28. British participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 4 A sibling's neglect)	159
Table 5.1. Situation of apology (1) in the Discourse Completion Task.	169
Table 5.2. Frequency of all groups' semantic formulas (apology situation 1)	170
Table 5.3. All participants' semantic formulas structures results (apology situation 1)	174
Table 5.4. Saudi Arabic participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 1)	177
Table 5.5. EFL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 1)	179
Table 5.6. ESL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 1)	181
Table 5.7. British participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 1)	182
Table 5.8. Situation of apology (2) in the Discourse Completion Task.	183
Table 5.9. Frequency of all groups' semantic formulas (apology situation 2)	183
Table 5.10. All participants' semantic formulas structures results (apology situation 2)	187

Table 5.11. Saudi Arabic participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 2)	192
Table 5.12. EFL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 2)	193
Table 5.13. ESL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 2)	195
Table 5.14. British participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 2)	197
Table 5.15. Situation of apology (3) in the Discourse Completion Task.	198
Table 5.16. Frequency of all groups' semantic formulas (apology situation 3)	199
Table 5.17. All participants' semantic formulas structures results (apology situation 3)	203
Table 5.18. Saudi Arabic participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 3)	206
Table 5.19. EFL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 3)	208
Table 5.20. ESL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 3)	210
Table 5.21. British participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 3)	212
Table 5.22. Situation of apology (4) in the Discourse Completion Task.	212
Table 5.23. Frequency of all groups' semantic formulas (apology situation 4)	213
Table 5.24. All participants' semantic formulas structures results (apology situation 4)	217
Table 5.25. Saudi Arabic participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 4)	219
Table 5.26. EFL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 4)	220
Table 5.27. ESL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 4)	222
Table 5.28. British participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 4)	223
Table 6.1. Situation of refusal (1) in the Discourse Completion Task.	232
Table 6.2. Frequency of all groups' semantic formulas (refusal situation 1)	233
Table 6.3. All participants' semantic formulas structures results (refusal situation 1)	239
Table 6.4. Saudi Arabic participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 1)	241
Table 6.5. EFL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 1)	242
Table 6.6. ESL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 1)	244
Table 6.7. British participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 1)	245
Table 6.8. Situation of refusal (2) in the Discourse Completion Task.	246
Table 6.9. Frequency of all groups' semantic formulas (refusal situation 2)	247
Table 6.10. All participants' semantic formulas structures results (refusal situation 2)	252

Table 6.11. Saudi Arabic participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 2)	255
Table 6.12. EFL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 2)	256
Table 6.13. ESL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 2)	258
Table 6.14. British participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 2)	260
Table 6.15. Situation of refusal (3) in the Discourse Completion Task.	261
Table 6.16. Frequency of all groups' semantic formulas (refusal situation 3)	262
Table 6.17. All participants' semantic formulas structures results (refusal situation 3)	267
Table 6.18. Saudi Arabic participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 3)	269
Table 6.19. EFL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 3)	270
Table 6.20. ESL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 3)	272
Table 6.21. British participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 3)	273
Table 6.22. Situation of refusal (4) in the Discourse Completion Task.	274
Table 6.23. Frequency of all groups' semantic formulas (refusal situation 4)	274
Table 6.24. All participants' semantic formulas structures results (refusal situation 4)	280
Table 6.25. Saudi Arabic participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 4)	283
Table 6.26. EFL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 4)	284
Table 6.27. ESL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 4)	285
Table 6.28. British participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 4)	287

List of Figures

Figure 4.1. Frequency percentages of all groups' semantic formulas (complaint situation 1)	108
Figure 4.2. Frequency percentages of all groups' semantic formulas (complaint situation 2)	120
Figure 4.3. Frequency percentages of all groups' semantic formulas (complaint situation 3)	131
Figure 4.4. Frequency percentages of all groups' semantic formulas (complaint situation 4)	146
Figure 5.1. Frequency percentages of all groups' semantic formulas (apology situation 1).....	170
Figure 5.2. Frequency percentages of all groups' semantic formulas (apology situation 2).....	184
Figure 5.3. Frequency percentages of all groups' semantic formulas (apology situation 3).....	199
Figure 5.4. Frequency percentages of all groups' semantic formulas (apology situation 4).....	213
Figure 6.1. Frequency percentages of all groups' semantic formulas (refusal situation 1).....	233
Figure 6.2. Frequency percentages of all groups' semantic formulas (refusal situation 2).....	247
Figure 6.3. Frequency percentages of all groups' semantic formulas (refusal situation 3).....	262
Figure 6.4. Frequency percentages of all groups' semantic formulas (refusal situation 4).....	275

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1.Introduction

Investigating interlanguage pragmatic competence has been increasingly given noticeable attention by researchers where many studies aim to shed light on this topic due to its crucial impact on the development of the communicative and linguistic ability of language learners. In general, interlanguage pragmatic competence studies examine the capability of language learners to realize and achieve the pragmatic competence of a given language (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). It has been contended that investigating interlanguage pragmatic competence is effective in improving the pragmatic competence of second/foreign language learners (Taguchi, 2017). This allows second/foreign language learners to enhance their pragmatic knowledge based on empirical studies which will result in having more effective communication in a second (foreign) language.

From an inter-language pragmatic perspective, this study identifies and compares apologies, complaints, and refusals strategies and semantic formulas performed by Saudi EFL/ESL learners compared with ones performed by British English native speakers as a control group. It aims to shed light on this topic by discovering four main points: First, it identifies and compare the types of semantic formulas used in the speech acts of complaints, apologies, and refusals across British English native speakers, Saudi Arabic monolinguals, Saudi EFL learners, and Saudi ESL learners. Second, it examines the structural organization of these speech acts within and across participant groups. Third, this study investigates how address terms influence the expression of these speech acts in each cultural and linguistic group. Fourth, it assesses the extent to which contextual factors, particularly social distance and the ranking of imposition, influence participants' speech act performance.

1.2. Background of Study

In recent decades, the increasing global interconnectedness and English's dominance as an international language have highlighted the need for pragmatic competence in second and foreign language education. While much emphasis has previously been placed on the development of grammar and vocabulary, there is now wide recognition that effective communication also requires mastery of pragmatic norms, that is, the skill to use language appropriately in various social contexts. Among the most socially sensitive and communicatively complex components of pragmatics are speech acts, such as complaints, apologies, and refusals, all of which could threaten interpersonal harmony if not handled skilfully. These acts are significantly impacted by cultural conventions, social relationships, and situational expectations, making them particularly challenging for second/foreign language learners to perform appropriately.

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, such as Saudi Arabia, learners often do not have sustained exposure to naturalistic English language usage and consequently have limited chances to internalize the complexity of pragmatics of native or near-native language use. Therefore, Saudi EFL learners may transfer strategies from their first language (L1), Arabic, into their English speech, often resulting in pragmalinguistic or sociopragmatic errors. For instance, culturally meaningful expressions of apology or refusal in Arabic may be perceived as overly emotional, indirect, or inappropriate in English, which may lead to misunderstanding or pragmatic failure. Conversely, relying on direct translations of English expressions without understanding their cultural context can contribute to unintended rudeness or impoliteness. In contrast, Saudi ESL learners who are exposed to English-speaking environments tend to have more access to authentic communicative input, which can contribute to the development of more context-sensitive and socially appropriate pragmatic behaviour. At the same time, native English speakers, such as those from the United Kingdom, show their own culturally conditioned preferences in speech acts performance, especially in the usage of indirectness, mitigation, hedging, and politeness strategies. These pragmatic characteristics exemplify broader cultural values such as

individualism, low-context communication, and sensitivity to personal autonomy. Comparatively, Saudi Arabic speech communities tend to be high context, collectivist cultures where religious expressions, kinship terms, and affective language are frequently utilized to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships, including when expressing disagreement or criticism. These cultural differences significantly influence the manner in which speech acts are performed, received, and interpreted.

The study of speech acts in intercultural contexts has been widely given attention in interlanguage pragmatics, a subfield of pragmatics that investigates how L2 learners develop the capability to perform speech acts in their target language. A number of studies have revealed that pragmatic competence develops unevenly and often lags behind other linguistic skills, especially when learners are not exposed to authentic interaction or are unaware of the sociocultural norms of the L2 environment. Yet, most existing studies have chosen to theoretically concentrate on single speech acts or single language pairings, resulting in a gap in the literature, particularly in Saudi Arabia, regarding pedagogically oriented, comprehensive, multi-act, cross-cultural comparisons which include both EFL and ESL learners alongside native and monolingual speakers. This study is designed to fill that gap by investigating how British English native speakers, Saudi monolingual speakers of Arabic, Saudi EFL learners, and Saudi ESL learners structure and perform the speech acts of complaints, apologies, and refusals. By exploring the types of semantic formulas utilised, the structural organization of the speech acts, the use of address terms, and the role of contextual variables such as social distance and imposition, this study aims to shed light on not only cross-cultural differences but also developmental trajectories in pragmatic competence. Identifying these patterns is crucial for designing more effective language instruction and assessment, especially in EFL contexts where pragmatic failure can result in serious communicative failures despite lexical or grammatical accuracy.

In light of the increasing significance of English for international education, employment, diplomacy, and everyday communication, providing learners with the ability to navigate complex interpersonal interactions is more urgent than ever. By situating speech acts within both cultural and developmental contexts, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of

how learners acquire and negotiate pragmatic competence in English, and how cultural values influence the expression of politeness, regret, dissatisfaction, and refusal across linguistic environments.

1.3.Statement of the Problem

While English has become a global channel of communication, the capability to use it appropriately across diverse social and cultural situations relies not only on grammatical competence or lexical knowledge but also on pragmatic competence which is the ability to use language appropriately in context. Among the areas for language learners to develop are speech acts, such as complaints, apologies, and refusals, which are essentially face threatening and socially sensitive. These speech acts are affected by complex sociocultural norms that differ significantly across languages and cultures, which can lead to misunderstandings, unintended rudeness, or even social offense when performed inappropriately.

Even though pragmatics plays a crucial role in second language communication, pragmatic instruction has been underemphasized in many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Educationally in Saudi Arabia, pragmatic competence is rarely treated as a core component of communicative competence, and learners are typically exposed to textbook driven curricula that prioritize structural accuracy over pragmatic appropriateness. Consequently, many Saudi EFL learners struggle to convey speech acts in socially acceptable ways, often depending on direct translations from Arabic or on formulaic expressions that lack sensitivity to the relational dynamics and contextual factors of interaction in English. In addition, most studies in interlanguage pragmatics have concentrated on single learner groups or isolated speech acts, often skipping the broader picture of how learners' pragmatic performance differs across different learning environments (EFL vs. ESL) or in contrast to native speaker norms and monolingual L1 behaviors. While it is generally accepted that immersion in English-speaking environments (as in ESL contexts) supports pragmatic development, no empirical studies have compared the performance of Saudi EFL learners with that of Saudi ESL learners, British native

speakers, and monolingual Saudi Arabic speakers across multiple speech acts. Without such comparative data, it remains unclear to what extent pragmatic competence develops across learning contexts and how L1 cultural norms remain or evolve in L2 interaction.

Moreover, there is a noticeable gap in the literature regarding how address terms, social distance, and ranking of imposition influence learners' pragmatic choices. These contextual variables are crucial to the performance of speech acts, yet many learners are unaware of how to adapt their language to suit these social factors. Due to this, they may unintentionally seem impolite, overly casual, or even inappropriate in their interactions. This may undermine their communicative goals despite otherwise correct language use. Considering the increasing demands placed on learners to function effectively in English across educational, professional, and intercultural contexts, the inability to deliver essential speech acts appropriately poses a serious barrier to effective, respectful, and meaningful communication. This is especially crucial in settings where English is used as a lingua franca among speakers of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Therefore, this study addresses a need to discover how speech acts are performed across different speaker groups and learning contexts. By shedding light on complaints, apologies, and refusals, and exploring how these acts are constructed in relation to semantic formulas, structural organization, address terms, and contextual variables, this study is designed to identify key patterns of variation and development in pragmatic competence. By doing so, it not only addresses the challenges faced by L2 learners, especially in EFL contexts, but also provides evidence-based insights for improving pragmatic instruction and building a more effective cross-cultural communication.

1.4. Research Aims and Objectives

The main aim of this study is to explore how speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds-particularly British English native speakers, Saudi Arabic monolingual speakers, Saudi learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and Saudi learners of English as a Second Language (ESL), perform and construct the speech acts of complaint, apology, and refusal. The

study is designed to discover the types and structures of these speech acts as employed by each group, analyse their pragmatic appropriateness, and shed light on the impact of contextual and cultural variables on their formation and delivery. More specifically, this study is guided by the following objectives:

- To analyze and compare the types of semantic formulas employed in the speech acts of complaints, apologies, and refusals across British English native speakers, Saudi Arabic monolinguals, Saudi EFL learners, and Saudi ESL learners.

This objective is to identify the range, frequency, and distribution of specific linguistic strategies (e.g., explanation, opener, justification, offer of repair) used by participants from different cultures and language learning environments.

- To analyze the structural organization of these speech acts within and across participant groups.

By exploring how speech acts are sequenced and combined (e.g., opener + apology + explanation + closing), this objective discovers the level of pragmatic complexity and coherence achieved by each group and shows structural differences reflective of L1 or L2 norms.

- To examine how address terms influence the expression of these speech acts in each cultural and linguistic group.

This involves investigating the use of kinship terms, religious expressions, honorifics, or culturally specific forms of address as pragmatic tools for mitigating face-threats and establishing or maintaining social relationships.

- To explore the extent to which contextual factors, especially social distance and imposition ranking, influence participants' speech act performance.

This objective aims to explore whether and how speakers modify their language in response to varying social roles, relational proximity, and the seriousness of the situation.

- To investigate developmental patterns in pragmatic competence among Saudi EFL and ESL learners, with a particular emphasis on how immersion in L2 contexts (as in ESL contexts) may enhance or shape their pragmatic behaviors.

This objective aims to develop our understanding of interlanguage pragmatics by exploring how context, exposure, and cultural awareness influence learners' pragmatic behaviour.

- To provide empirically grounded insights into the teaching of pragmatics in EFL and ESL settings, with particular focus on culturally responsive instruction that addresses common areas of pragmatic difficulty for Arabic-speaking learners.

Collectively, these objectives aim to shed light on the methods in which pragmatic competence is manifested across cultures and learning environments, and to bring to light the challenges and opportunities facing L2 learners as they navigate the complex social rules of English communication. The findings are meant to support both theoretical advancements in interlanguage pragmatics and practical improvement in language education.

1.5. Research Questions

To achieve the objectives of this study and identify the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic differences in the performance of the three speech acts of complaints, apologies, and refusals, this study is driven by the following sets of questions. All questions are designed to explore both the intergroup differences and the impact of contextual and cultural factors on pragmatic behaviour.

1.5.1. To what extent do types of apologies, complaints and refusals used by British English native speakers, Saudi monolingual speakers of Arabic, Saudi EFL, and Saudi ESL differ from each other?

1.5.2. To what extent do structures of apologies, complaints and refusals used by British English native speakers, Saudi monolingual speakers of Arabic, Saudi EFL, and Saudi ESL differ from each other?

1.5.3. How do address terms influence the way participants express apologies, complaints, and refusals?

1.5.4. To what extent do the variables of social distance and ranking of imposition have impacts on constructing and producing the speech acts of apology, complaint, and refusal?

These questions serve as the analytical backbone of the study facilitating a systematic analysis of pragmatic performance across cultural, linguistic, and educational boundaries. They are intended to produce comparative insights into the interlanguage development of Saudi learners and to shed light on how culture, learning environment, and communicative conditions influence the performance of speech acts.

1.6. Significance of Study

This study has both theoretical and practical significance for the fields of applied linguistics, interlanguage pragmatics, cross-cultural communication, and second/foreign language teaching. In today's globalized world where English functions as the main language for international, academic, and professional exchange, pragmatic competence has become crucial for effective communication. Yet, despite the growing interest in pragmatics within second language acquisition studies, pragmatic instruction often continues to be marginal or implicit in many language classrooms, particularly in EFL contexts such as Saudi Arabia. This study addresses this gap by providing an in-depth, data-driven account of how three highly face sensitive speech acts, complaints, apologies, and refusals, are performed across four linguistically different groups: British native speakers, Saudi Arabic monolinguals, Saudi EFL learners, and Saudi ESL learners.

Theoretically, this study provides a deeper understanding of how interlanguage pragmatic competence is shaped by learners with different degrees of language exposure. It shows how pragmatic performance differs not only as a result of linguistic proficiency but also in response to sociocultural norms and the communicative environment. Comparing native, monolingual, and bilingual learner data across multiple speech acts offers empirical support for theoretical frameworks that highlight context sensitive, culture specific, and developmental aspects of

speech act performance. In addition, the study engages and refines existing models of politeness theory and speech act theory shedding light on the limitations of Western centric models when applied to Arabic speaking learners and emphasizing the need for interculturally adaptive frameworks.

Pedagogically, this study provides valuable insights into the specific pragmatic challenges encountered by Saudi learners of English especially those in EFL contexts with limited access to authentic input. EFL learners' observable documented tendency to produce overly direct, insufficiently mitigated, or culturally transferred speech acts highlights the need for explicit, culturally responsive pragmatics instruction. Uncovering areas where learners' pragmatic behaviour diverges from native like norms and where it is informed by rich but potentially unrecognized L1 strategies can inform curriculum design, material development, and teacher training in ways that enhance pragmatic fluency and intercultural competence. Additionally, this study sheds light on the influence of immersion and exposure which has implications not only for study abroad programs, but also for designing pragmatically rich classroom environments that simulate real world interaction and provide learners with meaningful input. On a broader level, the study contributes to our understanding of cross-cultural communication by explaining how different cultural groups manage face-threatening acts and negotiate social relationships through language.

1.7. Structure of the Thesis

This dissertation consists of seven chapters, each building progressively toward a deep understanding of how complaints, apologies, and refusals are performed across different linguistic and cultural groups. The structure is organized to move from the theoretical and contextual foundation, through methodological implementation and data analysis, to interpretative discussion and educational application.

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter presents the background, rationale, and scope of the study. An overview is provided with regard to the research problem, objectives, and questions. It sheds light on the theoretical and practical importance of investigating speech acts across native, EFL, and ESL contexts.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter reviews the relevant theoretical approaches and empirical studies related to interlanguage pragmatics, speech act theory, politeness theory, and cross-cultural communication. It critically reviews prior studies on the speech acts of complaints, apologies, and refusals, and highlights the gaps that this study is designed to address.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter explains the study design, which includes participant selection, data collection tools (particularly the use of Discourse Completion Tasks), data classification methods, and analytical frameworks as well as addressing the validity and reliability of the study along with the ethical considerations.

Chapter Four: Results of complaints

This chapter details the findings related to the speech act of complaint. There is a comparative analysis of the types and structures of complaints, the use of address terms, and the influence of social distance and imposition level across the four participant groups.

Chapter Five: Results of apologies

This chapter presents a detailed analysis of how participants perform the speech act of apology. It follows the same structure as the previous chapter and discusses group specific preferences, cultural influences, and pragmatic strategies.

Chapter Six: Results of refusals

This chapter focuses on the performance of the speech act of refusal across the participant groups analysing semantic formula utilization, structural complexity, contextual sensitivity, and the pragmatic role of address terms in producing refusals.

Chapter Seven: Implications and Conclusion

The final chapter summarizes the key findings across all three speech acts and explains their theoretical, pedagogical, and methodological implications. It provides a reflection on the study's limitations, suggests areas for future research, and concludes with remarks that underscore the broader relevance of pragmatic competence in intercultural communication and language education.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1.Introduction

This chapter provides an in-depth review of the literature that informs and frames the scope of this study. In order to study the development of pragmatic competence in relation to the speech acts of complaints, apologies, and refusals, it is first essential to place the research within the broader field of pragmatics and applied linguistics. Pragmatics, as the study of meaning in context, has developed into an essential field in understanding how speakers employ language to perform social actions and manage interpersonal relationships. As the present study is focused specifically on cross-cultural and interlanguage aspects of speech acts, the literature review will establish the theoretical foundations that underpin these phenomena in addition to addressing previous empirical studies that highlight differences between native and non-native speakers in speech acts performance.

This chapter starts with an overview of pragmatics, introducing its scope, definitions, and relevance to second language acquisition. This will be followed by a review of factors that affect the development of pragmatic competence. Speech Act Theory will then be discussed as the core of pragmatics research, alongside politeness and face theories, which serve as key conceptual frameworks for understanding how language users navigate interpersonal relationships. Detailed consideration will be given to seminal contributions by Grice, Lakoff, Leech, Brown and Levinson, along with later critiques and refinements of these models. After reviewing the theoretical frameworks, this chapter will explore research on specific speech acts, including apologies, complaints, and refusals. These speech acts are not only essential to the preservation of social cohesion but are also among the most face-threatening, which makes them highly insightful sites for cross-cultural and interlanguage analysis. Finally, this chapter will summarize key insights from the literature to identify gaps and open concerns. This will justify the present research focus and methodology.

2.2. Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a central branch of linguistics that deals with the methods through which language is used in context to perform social actions and convey meanings that go beyond the literal semantic content of words. Pragmatics is concerned with language's contextual, interactive, and functional aspects, while syntax and semantics deal with its structural and propositional aspects. Levinson (1983) views pragmatics as the study of the relationship between language and its users in a way that emphasizes that meaning is constructed not solely through linguistic form but also through social, cultural, and situational variables. Similarly, Yule (1996) defines pragmatics as the study of speaker meaning, contextual interpretation, and the manipulation of implied meaning. Thomas clarifies that the term "pragmatics" can be seen as "meaning in interaction" (1995, p. 22) where the meaning is treated as not only the product of words or phrases and as not only the product of the speaker or the hearer's interpretation, but as "a dynamic process, involving the negotiation of meaning between speaker and hearer, the context of utterance (physical, social and linguistic) and the meaning potential of an utterance" (Thomas, 1995, p. 22). These definitions highlight the fact that pragmatics is not simply about what is said but also about how it is said, why it is said, and how it is interpreted by interlocutors. For more clarification, Thomas (1995) highlights three stages (levels) through which meaning is made. The meaning-making process begins in its first level with the so-called "abstract meaning", which is the conventional dictionary meaning for each word, phrase, and sentence. Then, the second level which is "context meaning" in which "sense" and "reference" are assigned. The last level is "force", which represents the level of understanding the intents of speakers.

The birth of pragmatics as a discipline in the second half of the twentieth century highlighted a broader "pragmatic turn" in linguistics and philosophy of language. In this turn, the functional and contextual aspects of language were emphasized. This was largely driven by philosophers such as Wittgenstein (1953), Austin (1962), and Searle (1969), who argued that utterances are instruments of action rather than mere vehicles of information. This understanding of language as an action provided the groundwork for subsequent linguistic approaches to pragmatics, including speech act theory, politeness theory, and discourse analysis.

In applied linguistics, pragmatics has become particularly significant in second language acquisition (SLA) and interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), where the primary concern is on how learners develop the skills to perform speech acts and communicate in socially appropriate methods. Pragmatic competence has been generally identified as a key element of communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980; Bachman, 1990). When speakers possess grammatical competence, they can construct syntactically accurate sentences, but pragmatic competence allows them to select forms that are appropriate in social and cultural contexts (Thomas, 1983). In other words, pragmatic competence acts as a bridge between “knowing how to form a sentence” and “knowing how to use it appropriately.”

There is a widely accepted framework that differentiates between pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics (Thomas, 1983). Pragmalinguistics relates to the linguistic resources available to perform speech acts (e.g., modal verbs, hedges, apologies, discourse markers), while sociopragmatics focuses on the contextual and cultural aspects that govern their appropriate use (e.g., politeness norms, power relations, social distance). For instance, in refusing a request, English speakers may opt for concise indirectness such as “I’m afraid I can’t” while Arabic speakers may give more detailed justifications to preserve the hearer’s dignity. This contends that learners not only need linguistic structures, but also awareness of how those linguistic structures are interpreted within different sociocultural contexts.

Usually, the already explained three levels of meaning are easily applied by native speakers when communicating while language learners and non-native speakers may have difficulty extracting the meaning which may hinder their communication from being successful and effective. The non-native speakers’ ability to manage the abstract meaning of words and phrases does not guarantee an ability to manage the intended meaning. There are many linguistic challenges, such as polysemous, homographs, and homonyms, that require a deeper level of interpretation in order to determine the intended meaning. The inability to deal with these different levels of meaning leads to what Thomas called “pragmatic failure” (1983, p. 94), which is often more problematic to communication than grammatical errors, since it directly influences interpersonal

relationships and can result in misunderstandings or negative evaluations of the speaker's politeness, sincerity, or social appropriateness.

Research in pragmatics has revealed that learners' pragmatic performance is influenced by a variety of elements, including L1 impact, proficiency level, exposure to authentic input, and explicit instruction (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996; Taguchi, 2011). For Saudi learners of English, pragmatic challenges often occur because of different cultural differences including politeness norms, power relations, social distance, and forms of address. For instance, the frequent employment of religious expressions in Arabic as mitigators of complaints or apologies may not be translated smoothly into English, which leads to pragmalinguistic or sociopragmatic misalignments. This explains why a deep understanding of pragmatics is crucial for analyzing speech acts such as complaints, apologies, or refusals, which are fundamentally face-threatening and thus need careful consideration of social relations.

2.3. Factors Affecting the Development of Pragmatic Competence

The acquisition and development of pragmatic competence in a second/foreign language is a complicated dynamic process shaped by linguistic, cognitive, sociocultural, and pedagogical variables. A pragmatic approach to language is dynamic, socially embedded, and culturally variable, in contrast to grammar, which is largely rule-based and systematized. Consequently, learners' capability to acquire pragmatic competence relies not only on their linguistic proficiency but also on their chances for authentic interaction, their awareness of culture, and the teaching approaches to which they are exposed. One of the most significant factors affecting L2 pragmatic development is the learner's first language (L1). L1 transfer can influence how learners conceptualize politeness, indirectness, and face management in L2 (Odlin, 1989; Kasper, 1992). Positive transfer occurs when L1 and L2 share similar pragmatic practices, while negative transfer (or interference) happens when L1-based strategies are inappropriately employed in L2, resulting in pragmatic failure.

Learner-related variables also play a role in pragmatic development. These consist of proficiency level, motivation, attitude, personality features, and cultural orientation. Bardovi-Harlig (2001) points out that while grammatical proficiency does not guarantee pragmatic competence, a certain level of linguistic proficiency is essential to communicate pragmatic strategies effectively. Motivation and openness to cultural learning also contribute to whether learners actively seek opportunities to practice pragmatic skills and adopt L2 norms. For example, learners who consider English as a tool for international communication may be more willing to adapt their pragmatic strategies than those who see it purely as an academic requirement.

The sociocultural environment in which learning happens exerts further influence. In collectivist cultures such as Saudi Arabia, politeness and face-saving are often oriented toward group solidarity, hierarchy, and honor (Feghali, 1997). This does not align with the more individualistic orientation of British English, where politeness strategies often prioritize autonomy and negative face. Such cultural differences can influence learners' interpretations of pragmatic norms and can either facilitate or hinder their capability to approximate native-like pragmatic performance.

Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) carried out a study that is considered one of the most important pioneering studies that shed light on the development of pragmatic competence. Most of the studies conducted prior to this study concentrated on pragmatic competence from the perspective of use and not from the developmental perspective. This study paved the way for subsequent studies (e.g., Niezgoda & Röver, 2001; Schauer, 2006) to shed more light on this topic. In their study, Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei investigated the pragmatic competence of learners of English as EFL and ESL. Their study examined the developmental aspects of pragmatic competence and compared the performance of EFL with ESL. In addition, it discussed variables that have an impact on the development of pragmatic competence. Specifically, they examined the participants' awareness of the grammatical competence (the competence that is related to linguistic accuracy) and the pragmatic competence (the competence that is related to the suitability of this language according to specific situations). They investigated the participants' ability to recognize grammatical and pragmatic errors as well as participants' sensitivity to these errors. This study attempted to answer the following research questions:

“- Does the environment influence awareness: Do ESL and EFL learners show the same degree of awareness?”

“- Does the learners' level of proficiency influence their degree of awareness?”

“- Do learners and teachers show the same degree of awareness?”

To answer these questions, the researchers recruited a total of 708 participants. Participants were EFL and ESL students and teachers from Hungary, United States of America, and Italy. They were from different proficiency levels with no balance in the variable of gender. To investigate the participants' pragmatic and grammatical awareness, the researchers created different scenarios which consisted of the speech acts of refusal, suggestion, apology, and request. Then, participants were asked to interact with a grammatical and pragmatic video judgment task by recognizing the following:

- Sentences that are grammatically correct and pragmatically suitable
- Sentences that are grammatically incorrect and pragmatically suitable
- Sentences that are grammatically incorrect and pragmatically unsuitable
- Sentences that are grammatically correct and pragmatically unsuitable

Finally, participants finished a questionnaire aimed at finding out the participants' background, learning experiences, type of exposure to English language, and their level of English language proficiency.

Results showed that ESL students and teachers were able to recognize the pragmatic inappropriateness and rated them as more crucial than the grammatical incorrectness which, in contrast, was rated by EFL students and teachers as more crucial than the pragmatic inappropriateness. On the one hand, this clear gap between the performance of EFL students and teachers and the performance of ESL students and teachers shows how different the EFL learning environment is from the ESL learning environment with regard to pragmatic competence. The EFL learning environment gives attention to the correct linguistic forms rather

than giving attention to the conditions of using these linguistic forms. This enhances the awareness of EFL students and teachers regarding grammatical errors and, in contrast, weakens their awareness regarding the importance of being pragmatically competent. On the other hand, this gap between the performance of ESL and the performance of EFL may show that, in addition to having a different educational style in the ESL learning environment, there are many additional factors, such as motivation, proficiency, and length of stay in the target language community, that may have contributed to enhancing the pragmatic awareness of ESL students and teachers.

Results show that language proficiency played a role in influencing pragmatic competence where participants with the lowest pragmatic awareness were the lowest in the level of language proficiency. This is due to their limited linguistic capabilities that do not offer them many linguistic options and do not allow them to deal with the linguistic diversity and the large number of strategies and linguistic alternatives that are used in the language.

Moreover, results reveal that ESL learners who spent more time in the target language community showed a higher pragmatic awareness than others who spent less time in the target language community. This difference may be considered a result of:

- They spent more time than others in classrooms.
- They spent more time than others communicating with teaching and administrative staff.
- They spent more time than others communicating generally to achieve the daily life requirements.
- They spent more time than others in relationships and social life in general.

In this context, the researchers went further and raised an important point that may be considered one of the main factors that contributed to the development of ESL learners' pragmatic competence, which is motivation. Learners' motivation and desire to learn may effectively contribute to the development of pragmatic competence. Specifically, when establishing social relationships from the target language community, ESL learners will face different pragmatic challenges that hinder them from making effective conversations. This may

motivate ESL learners to learn and focus on developing their pragmatic competence continuously. This conclusion is supported by the results of this study which revealed that the learners who spent less time in the target language community showed less pragmatic competence than those who spent a longer time in the target language community.

Shedding more light on this topic, Niezgoda and Röver (2001) examined the pragmatic and grammatical awareness of English language learners. The aim of their study was to shed more light on the impact of learning environment and language proficiency on the pragmatic awareness of English language learners. Participants were 172 EFL and ESL learners. The total number of EFL learners was 124 and they were a group of Czech learners studying in a university undergraduate program that teaches and trains English language teachers. The total number of ESL learners was 48 and they were a group of international students from different nationalities and from different proficiency levels studying English language in the United States of America. The data collection method used in this study is very similar to the method used in the previous study conducted by Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998).

Interestingly, this study shows completely different results from those shown by Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's (1998) previous study even though both studies used an identical data collection tool. On the one hand, results show that EFL learners have a higher ability than ESL learners in recognizing the pragmatic inappropriateness. In addition, EFL learners rated the pragmatic inappropriateness as more serious than the grammatical incorrectness. This indicates that EFL learners have a higher pragmatic awareness than ESL learners.

On the other hand, with regard to the level of language proficiency, low-proficiency EFL and ESL learners recognized the pragmatic inappropriateness more than they recognized the grammatical incorrectness and they also rated the pragmatic inappropriateness as more serious than the grammatical incorrectness.

Niezgoda and Röver (2001) emphasized that learning environment is not the only crucial factor in the development of pragmatic competence where the results of this study do not support the idea that the learning environment in the target language community is the most important supporting factor in the development of pragmatic competence. EFL learners, although they

were not in the target language community, showed a higher pragmatic competence than ESL learners who were in the target language community. In other words, this indicates that the Czech EFL environment provides what EFL learners need in terms of practical knowledge and strategies related to developing the pragmatic competence. Therefore, instructional methodologies play a crucial role in bridging the gap between limited input and the demands of real-world communication (Rose & Kasper, 2001; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010).

In addition to instructional methodologies, all discussed factors highlight the interdisciplinary and contextual nature of pragmatic competence development. It is not merely a linguistic ability, but a socially and culturally constructed process formed by transfer, input, instruction, learner variables, and cultural environment. Understanding these variables is crucial for understanding the performance of Saudi learners of English in this study, as it provides insight into why certain pragmatic challenges of performing speech acts exist and how they may be addressed pedagogically.

2.4.Speech Act Theory

Speech Act Theory, first introduced by Austin (1962) and further developed by Searle (1969, 1979), provides a foundational approach to understanding language as a form of social action rather than a neutral transporter of information. The theory argues that when people communicate, they are not only conveying words and sentences but also doing actions such as promising, requesting, apologizing, refusing, or complaining. This understanding changed the concentration of linguistic work from abstract structures to the functional and performative features of language in daily interaction. Austin (1962) distinguished three different levels of action in every utterance: locutionary acts (the literal act of making a meaningful utterance), illocutionary acts (the speaker's intended purpose, such as a refusal or complaint), and perlocutionary acts (the influence on the listener, such as persuading, comforting, or offending). Searle (1969) expanded Austin's work by dividing illocutionary acts into categories such as

assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations, each performing a specific communicative function.

Speech Act Theory is crucially relevant to pragmatics and interlanguage research, as it serves as a conceptual foundation for understanding how learners perform communicative acts across languages and cultures. For example, a refusal in English might be realized through simple indirectness (“I’m afraid I can’t”), whereas in Arabic, it may involve multiple turns of detailed cultural justification and face-saving devices. From a speech act stance, both utterances have the same illocutionary force (refusal) but are different in their pragmalinguistic realization and sociopragmatic appropriateness. In applied linguistics, speech acts have become a main analytical unit in researching interlanguage pragmatics (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). The Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) marked a milestone in this field, offering comparative data regarding how requests and apologies are communicated across languages and by non-native speakers. It showed that learners often depend on L1-based strategies, leading to cross-cultural pragmatic inconsistencies and sometimes pragmatic failure. For instance, Saudi EFL learners may rely on direct complaints based on Arabic norms, which in English contexts may be perceived as confrontational.

However, both Austin’s and Searle’s taxonomies of speech acts have been criticized for lacking a clear theoretical foundation (Levinson 1983), for internal inconsistencies (Thomas 1995), and for an overreliance on English verb forms (Leech 1983). Nevertheless, Austin’s and Searle’s taxonomies significance for the development of pragmatics remains considerable. Thomas (1995) describes speech acts theory as the first systematic study of linguistic use and one that has brought to the surface crucial issues for pragmatic research. Similarly, Ogiermann (2009a) notes that speech acts are a central component in much of the studies conducted within cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics. Ishihara (2006) further emphasises that speech acts are arguably the most extensively researched topic in interlanguage pragmatics. The present study concentrates on three specific speech acts: complaints, apologies, and refusals. These were selected because unsuccessful application of them in an L2 context can prevent the intended

message from being properly understood and, in addition, risks a partial or even complete communication breakdown between learners and native speakers.

Other works by scholars such as Grice (1975) and Brown and Levinson (1987) have given consideration to the relationship between indirectness, politeness, and the management of face in communication.

2.5. Politeness and Face Theories

2.5.1. Grice: The Co-operative Principle and the Maxims

The study of politeness in pragmatics should be understood by first situating it within the broader framework of Grice's Co-operative Principle (CP) and the conversational maxims, presented in his seminal work *Logic and Conversation* (1975). Grice's contribution paved the way for modern pragmatics as it provided a systematic account of how meaning is negotiated between speakers and hearers in daily interaction. Grice himself did not formulate a theory of politeness, but his Co-operative Principle provided the framework upon which subsequent theorists, such as Lakoff (1973), Leech (1983), and Brown and Levinson (1987), built their theories.

Paul Grice (1913–1988), a philosopher of language, tried to demonstrate how speakers communicate more than what is literally expressed in their utterances. This interest arose from dissatisfaction with strictly semantic theories of meaning, which he felt could not capture the richness of conversational inference. Traditional semantics could capture the literal meaning of words and sentences, but struggled to explain how listeners interpret implied meanings, sarcasm, or understatements. Grice's revolutionary understanding was that communication is not merely the conveyance of semantic content, but a collaborative activity driven by shared rational principles. He argued that speakers and hearers tacitly follow a Co-operative Principle: "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the

accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” (Grice, 1975, p. 45).

This concept does not specify how conversations should occur in a moral sense but rather describes rational expectations that make communication intelligible. Speakers are assumed to co-operate in order to reach mutual understanding and hearers interpret utterances with the assumption that the speaker is following this principle. To put the Co-operative Principle into practice, Grice proposed four categories of conversational maxims which are quantity, quality, relation, and manner. These maxims provide an analytical framework for understanding how meaning is constructed in communication.

- Maxim of Quantity: This maxim relates to the amount of information provided. A speaker who breaches this maxim by being under-informative (“Where is my book? In the house”) or over-informative (“In the house, under the sofa, next to the left cushion, wrapped in a plastic bag”) violates cooperative expectations.
- Maxim of Quality: This maxim demonstrates truthfulness. Listeners presume that speakers provide accurate information unless evidence suggests otherwise.
- Maxim of Relation/Relevance: This maxim is crucial as participants expect contributions to pertain to the ongoing topic. Irrelevance (“How’s your thesis going? Lovely weather today”) can imply avoidance, indirectness, or humor, triggering the search for implicature.
- Maxim of Manner: This maxim concerns clarity of communication and delivery form. Violations usually take place in convoluted or ambiguous speech, while deliberate flouting may generate stylistic effects such as irony or satire.

Grice’s four maxims are not inflexible rules but rather a set of assumptions that guide interpretation. Speakers often flout maxims deliberately, and hearers interpret additional meanings, known as conversational implicatures, by presuming that the Co-operative Principle still holds. For example:

A: Do you like the food?

B: Well, the plates are very nice.

In this instance, B flouts the maxim of relevance, but A assumes that the food is not good. Therefore, Grice's theory moved attention from literal semantics to pragmatic inference, transforming language use study.

The concept of implicature is a central concept in Grice's theory. Implicatures occur when the literal meaning of an utterance diverges from the speaker's intended meaning, and the listener must interpret the latter based on shared assumptions about cooperation. Grice distinguished between:

Conventional implicatures: They are based on specific linguistic forms (e.g., "but" implies contrast, regardless of context).

Conversational implicatures: They are context-dependent inferences driven by the Co-operative Principle and maxims.

Conversational implicatures can be generalized (e.g., "Some of the students passed" implies not all) or specialized (context-specific, e.g., "There's a garage around the corner" implies that it is open and sells petrol). Implicature is therefore a process by which speakers say one thing but mean another without explicit encoding. This serves as an essential foundation for analyzing indirectness, politeness, and face-saving strategies, as later developed by politeness theorists. For example, indirect refusals ("I'm not sure I can make it") are based on implicature rather than explicit negation.

Even though Grice did not explicitly discuss politeness, his approach has been crucial to its theorization. Politeness often includes deliberate flouting of maxims to avoid face-threat. For example:

Politeness as indirectness: Speakers frequently violate the maxim of relevance or quantity to soften refusals or complaints. Instead of saying "No", a speaker might say, "I'm really busy these days", counting on the hearer to infer refusal.

Politeness as understatement: Mitigating complaints by minimizing offense ("It's a little inconvenient") implies violating the maxim of quantity.

Politeness as vagueness: Utilizing ambiguous or indirect phrasing (“Maybe we could consider another option”) violates the maxim of manner to maintain harmony.

In this sense, Grice's maxims serve as the framework for cooperative expectations and politeness emerges from manipulating these expectations. Later theories by Lakoff (1973), Leech (1983), and Brown and Levinson (1987) explicitly built upon Grice's contributions, adapting them to the social nature of communication.

2.5.2. Robin Lakoff and the Foundations of Politeness Theory

It has long been recognized that politeness is a central element of human communication. It shapes not only what people say but how they say it and how their utterances are perceived. An early and influential attempt to theorize politeness systematically is the work of Robin Lakoff, whose contributions in the early 1970s provided one of the first frameworks for analyzing politeness as a linguistic phenomenon. Based on the philosophical insights of Paul Grice, but moving decisively beyond his rationalist orientation, Lakoff's theory turned attention to the social aspect of interaction. Lakoff argued that politeness is not simply an optional component to communication but an essential rule-governed aspect of language use, crucial to maintaining interpersonal relationships and mitigating potential conflict. In particular, her conceptualization of politeness rules of Don't Impose, Give Options, and Make the Addressee Feel Good served as the groundwork upon which later theories, including Leech's Politeness Principle (1983) and Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1987), were developed.

Lakoff's work arose at a time when linguistic research was progressing beyond syntax and semantics into the pragmatic and sociolinguistic aspects of language. Chomskyan generative grammar, dominant in the 1960s, had prioritized formal structures over communicative functionality. Pragmatics, in contrast, seeks to understand how meaning is negotiated in real-world contexts. In 1973, Lakoff presented her theory of politeness in *The Logic of Politeness; or, Minding Your P's and Q's*, explicitly engaging with Grice's Cooperative Principle. In addition to

Grice's rational approach to communication, Lakoff argued that speakers are also governed by social rules that help them maintain harmony and reduce conflicts. Her work was also influenced by her broader interest in gender and language. In her crucial book *Language and Woman's Place* (1975), she argued that women's linguistic behavior often conveyed expectations of politeness and deference, positioning politeness within structures of power and inequality. Consequently, Lakoff's contribution should be viewed in light of two intellectual currents: the rise of pragmatics and the rise of language and gender studies. As she connected politeness to power, imposition, and solidarity, she anticipated many of the debates that would dominate politeness studies for decades.

Lakoff presented three rules of politeness, which she saw as helping to guide conversational behavior along with Grice's Cooperative Principle. These rules aimed to clarify how speakers balance the informational objectives of communication with the interpersonal objective of maintaining social harmony.

- Don't Impose (Rule of Distance): This rule embodies the basic social constraint of respecting others' autonomy. Speakers are expected to reduce imposition on their interlocutors, avoiding commands or blunt requests that limit the addressee's freedom of action. Indirectness is a crucial strategy here. For example, instead of saying "Shut the window", one might say, "Could you close the window if it's not too much trouble?". By being aware of the imposition, the speaker is respectful of the hearer's negative face (a term later used by Brown and Levinson).
- Give Options (Rule of Deference): This rule is concerned with providing the addressee with options rather than forcing them into a single course of action. It shows an orientation toward equality and respect, allowing interlocutors to retain agency in the interaction. For example, "would you prefer to meet tomorrow, or would later in the week be better?". The addressee feels that their preferences are valued, which mitigates potential impositions.
- Make the Addressee Feel Good (Rule of Camaraderie/Solidarity): This rule emphasizes the role of positive politeness of building rapport, showing friendliness, and enhancing social

bonds. Compliments, inclusive language, and expressions of empathy are included in this rule. For example, "That's a fantastic suggestion, let's work on it together". The speaker strengthens solidarity in a way that enhances the interpersonal aspect of communication. Together, these three rules can be seen as socially oriented complements to Grice's maxims. Where Grice demonstrated how people exchange information cooperatively, Lakoff showed how they navigate communication social risks.

Lakoff's key point was that politeness is not secondary, but an essential part of communication. It shows the fundamentally social nature of language as communication is not merely about sending information but about negotiating relationships. Her rules predicted the later distinction between negative politeness (avoidance of imposition) and positive politeness (creation of solidarity) proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). Despite this, Lakoff's perspective was less formalized, offering a set of rules rather than a predictive theory. This has led some scholars to characterize her model as a "proto-theory" of politeness.

2.5.3. Geoffrey Leech and the Politeness Principle

Although Grice's (1975) Co-operative Principle revolutionized the study of conversational meaning, and Lakoff (1973, 1975) emphasized politeness as a set of pragmatic rules for maintaining social harmony, Geoffrey Leech (1983) introduced the most systematic and integrated early attempt to theorize politeness as a principle of language use in its own right. In his influential work *Principles of Pragmatics*, Leech argued that communication is driven not only by the Co-operative Principle but also by a Politeness Principle (PP), which helps explain why speakers often appear to flout Grice's maxims in ways that are socially appropriate. His model enriched pragmatics by explicitly articulating how politeness interacts with cooperation, offering a taxonomy of maxims specially designed to address the relational aspect of communication.

Leech's model quickly became one of the most influential politeness theories, contributing to empirical studies of speech acts such as apologies, complaints, refusals, and requests. At the

same time, his work received considerable criticism for being overly formalist, culturally biased, and insufficiently attentive to politeness' dynamic and evaluative nature. However, Leech's Politeness Principle continues to be a cornerstone in the field due to it being both an analytical tool and a historical bridge between Lakoff's rules and Brown and Levinson's (1987) face-based model. Leech's approach must be seen as an extension of and response to Grice's Cooperative Principle. Grice discussed how speakers generate implicatures by assuming cooperation, but he acknowledged that conversational contributions often seem to flout maxims, especially in cases involving politeness. For example:

A: Do you like my new haircut?

B: Well, it's certainly unique.

In this example, B appears to violate the maxim of quality (by not directly stating a negative opinion), but the response is interpretable because it adheres to broader social norms of politeness.

Leech pointed out that Grice's approach could not fully account for such cases because it was oriented toward truth and efficiency rather than social appropriateness. He proposed that the Politeness Principle addresses this issue by providing an account of why speakers sometimes "violate" maxims for the sake of social harmony. In other words, politeness is not merely a phenomenon, but a principle in its own right, complementing cooperation. Leech (1983, p. 132) defines the Politeness Principle as follows:

"Minimize (other things being equal) the expression of impolite beliefs and maximize (other things being equal) the expression of polite beliefs."

This overarching principle reflects the general tendency for speakers to avoid face-threatening acts (FTAs) and enhance face-supporting acts. To apply this principle, Leech presented a set of six politeness maxims, paralleling Grice's conversational maxims but oriented toward interpersonal rather than informational objectives.

- Tact Maxim: This maxim accounts for indirectness in requests and offers. For example, “Could you possibly lend me a pen?” reduces imposition compared to “Give me a pen.”
- Generosity Maxim: This maxim is clearly visible in offers and invitations. For example, “Let me do that for you” shows the speaker’s willingness to take on the cost. It often occurs in cultures where humility and self-effacement are valued.
- Approbation Maxim: Compliments, congratulations, and positive evaluations are driven by this maxim. Avoiding criticism or softening complaints also shows it.
- Modesty Maxim: This maxim shows why boasting is often impolite, while self-deprecation is seen as polite. For instance, “I was lucky to succeed” rather than “I succeeded because I’m brilliant.”
- Agreement Maxim: This maxim guides conversational strategies like hedging disagreement (“I see your point, but...”). In cultures where harmony is given priority. This maxim is particularly significant.
- Sympathy Maxim: Expressing condolences, empathy, or shared joy shows this maxim. For instance, “I’m so sorry for your loss” or “I’m thrilled to hear about your success.”

Collectively, these six maxims articulate politeness dimensions more systematically than Lakoff’s three rules. They show that politeness is multidimensional that involves not just the avoidance of imposition but also positive expressions of solidarity, humility, and empathy. Leech also suggested that politeness is measured along several scales, which describe the level of politeness required in a given context:

- Cost Benefit Scale: Politeness becomes more important as the cost to the hearer increases (e.g., borrowing a car vs. borrowing a pen).
- Optionality Scale: The more options offered to the hearer, the more polite the statement is (e.g., “Would you like to join us, or would you prefer to rest?”).
- Indirectness Scale: Indirectness often signals politeness, though this varies from culture to culture.
- Authority and Social Distance Scales: Speakers adjust their politeness according to their relative power and familiarity.

These scales represent Leech's attempt to make politeness analytically measurable, which places his work within a quasi-quantitative approach to pragmatics.

2.5.4. Brown and Levinson: Politeness Theory

The study of politeness in pragmatics reached a crucial moment with the publication of Brown and Levinson's *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (1978/1987). Their theory has been described as a key and widely cited model in politeness research (Watts, 2003; Eelen, 2001), and has influenced empirical studies of speech acts, interlanguage pragmatics, and cross-cultural communication for decades. By explicitly integrating the insights of Erving Goffman's (1967) concept of face and driven by the Gricean concept of implicature, Brown and Levinson argued that politeness is a universal phenomenon grounded in the management of "face" in interaction.

Firstly, Goffman's (1959) work is considered as one of the most important 20th century works in sociology and anthropology. In which, he presented his dramaturgical theory which suggests that the whole world is a stage and all men and women are actors and actresses and each one of them plays many and different roles in her/his time. We, as human beings, have different masks that we wear and show to others in order to reflect the best of us according to the different situations we are involved in and according to people who we are interacting with. Goffman went beyond that and argued that there is no true self. He explains that the character/identity is not fixed but constructed and based on a combination of these different roles. By saying this, he argued against the idea that each one of us has a fixed character/identity in interaction. He mentions that there are two types of identities, the front-stage identity and the back-stage identity. In back-stage, we prepare our front-stage roles based on our experiences, values, cultures, religions, and based on the good impressions that these roles will provide the audience with about us. In this, we will manage the impressions that others will have about us where a good, bright, and nice image of ourselves will be created and maintained. In front-stage situations, which are the real-life interaction situations, there are certain rules, expressions, behaviours and acts that are

considered appropriate in a specific culture and members of this culture interact accordingly in order to reflect the most appropriate image of themselves.

Goffman (1967) continued explaining how the social world works and presented one of the most fundamental and important concepts in all concepts that tried to understand human communication. This concept is “Expressive Order”, According to him, “Expressive Order” in human interaction is all meanings and values that are being maintained and repaired consistently with face/line. In any human communication, we, as human beings, should maintain the expressive order of an interaction. To do so, we should save and maintain the face of people who we are interacting with. Mutually, they should make the same efforts to maintain our face, based on the situations that we are involved in. In doing this kind of “drama”, every member of an interaction plays his character and interacts with other characters in a way that does not ruin the scenario taking into consideration the different details that the scene has. Always, there should be a moral commitment to keep and save the expressive order and if it breaks down, which will inevitably happen, it should be restored through doing different acts and strategies that will help in repairing it. If no efforts are done to repair the expressive order, the communication will collapse. In other words, any member of an interaction who does not have this moral commitment to keep and repair the expressive order will be socially undesirable where other members will see her/him as an unsafe member to interact with. To conclude, Goffman introduced crucial concepts that paved the way for other researchers to go further in understanding and illustrating how face works.

According to Brown and Levinson’s conceptual framework, all competent language users have face wants, which are constantly at risk in interactions. Speech acts that threaten these wants are referred to as face-threatening acts (FTAs). Politeness strategies are linguistic and pragmatic resources speakers use to minimize or avoid such threats. Brown and Levinson classified politeness strategies into positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on record, and off record. It is argued that the determination of a strategy is based on contextual variables such as social distance, relative power, and imposition ranking. Brown and Levinson’s model, as explained earlier, is heavily influenced by Goffman’s (1967) Concept of Face. Brown and Levinson adopt this concept but translate it into two types of face wants:

Positive face: It is the desire to be liked, accepted, and included.

Negative face: It is the desire to be free from imposition and to have one's autonomy respected.

Brown and Levinson describe politeness strategies as pragmatic inferences, often depending on indirectness (flouting maxims) to mitigate FTAs. Politeness is therefore aligned with the Gricean implicature, but oriented toward social rather than informational cooperation. By synthesizing Goffman and Grice, Brown and Levinson propose a framework of politeness as strategic face management that is universal in scope but different in application. The theory revolves around the notion of face-threatening acts. Brown and Levinson believe that many speech acts naturally threaten either the speaker's or the hearer's face. Threats to Negative Face (Impositions) include:

- Directives: requests, orders, suggestions ("Close the window").
- Commissives: promises, offers that impose obligations ("I'll help you move").

Threats to Positive Face (Disapproval, Distance) include:

- Expressives: complaints, criticisms, insults ("You're always late").
- Assertions: disagreement, challenges ("That's wrong").

Threats to Speaker's Face include:

- Admissions of guilt, apologies ("I'm sorry, I made a mistake").
- Confessions of failure ("I can't do it").

FTAs are ubiquitous in interaction, but speakers routinely minimize them by using politeness strategies based on the act's weight. Brown and Levinson divide politeness strategies into four types, arranged along a line of directness and facework.

- Bald on Record (Direct, unmitigated expression): It is employed when efficiency is prioritized over politeness. For example, "Shut the door". It is viewed as appropriate in emergencies, close relationships, or situations with minimal face risk.
- Positive Politeness Strategies (Redressive action oriented toward positive face): Strategies involve use of ingroup markers ("mate," "bro"), compliments ("That's a great idea"), inclusive language ("Let's do it together"), and hedging disagreement ("I see your point, but..."). For instance, "Could you shut the door, my friend? It's getting a bit chilly."

- Negative Politeness Strategies (Redressive action oriented toward negative face): Strategies involve indirectness (“Could you possibly...?”), apologies and hedges (“I hate to bother you, but...”), and deference (“Sir,” “Professor”). For instance, “I’m terribly sorry to bother you, but would you mind shutting the door?”
- Off Record (Indirectness): This avoids explicit imposition and leaves interpretation to the hearer. It can be accomplished by hints, understatement, metaphors, or irony. For instance, “It’s really cold in here.” (implying request to shut the door).

This framework presents a systematic analysis of how politeness strategies are related to different face needs and indirectness levels.

Since its first appearance in 1978 and its expanded edition in 1987, Brown and Levinson’s Politeness Theory has been one of the most influential theories in the study of linguistic politeness. Their theory of face-threatening acts (FTAs), positive and negative face, and the four politeness strategies equipped researchers with a systematic vocabulary and analytical framework that has been applied in numerous studies. Nonetheless, this dominant influence has also made the framework the most critiqued theory in pragmatics (Watts, 2003; Eelen, 2001; Locher & Watts, 2005). On the one hand, researchers have challenged its ethnocentrism, overly rationalistic assumptions and static conceptualization of social relations. Some have argued for abandoning the model altogether and others have tried to revise it or supplement it with alternative approaches. On the other hand, Brown and Levinson claimed that politeness is a universal phenomenon, which is rooted in the universal nature of face. Although this claim was meant to broaden the theory’s applicability, it has been one of the most controversial points of the theoretical framework. Gu (1990), who examined Chinese politeness, explained that politeness is conceptualized in different ways across cultures. In Chinese, *limao* (politeness) signifies respect, modesty, and refinement, not just face management. Wierzbicka (1991) noted that concepts such as “face” and “politeness” are culture specific speech acts rooted in Anglo cultural scripts, not universals. She highlighted the need for ethnopragmatics that grounds analysis in indigenous categories. The Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) led by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) identified both commonalities and divergences in politeness

strategies across cultures. Cultural contexts vary in how they interpret and value some strategies (such as indirectness in requests).

While Brown and Levinson's theory has faced considerable criticism, it nevertheless continues to serve as a valuable analytical tool in speech act studies, especially in studies comparing politeness phenomena, for which, as Ogiermann (2009b: 210) observes, no adequate alternative has yet been proposed. In the context of this thesis, the differences they highlight between negative and positive politeness strategies proved particularly useful, as it showed that the Saudi participants tended to use positive politeness strategies more frequently than their British counterparts.

Politeness and face theories have generally offered a crucial foundation for exploring how social relationships and interactional goals influence language use. These concepts have been particularly influential in applied fields, where the focus extends to how learners of a second/foreign language acquire and perform pragmatically appropriate behavior.

2.6.Address Terms

The previous section reviewed politeness and face theories and showed how speakers use different linguistic strategies to maintain interpersonal relationships and mitigate face-threatening acts. One crucial but often underexamined linguistic resource employed to fulfil these politeness goals is address terms. Address terms function as relational markers that enable speakers to convey respect, solidarity, distance, or intimacy, which have a crucial role in face control and politeness realisation (Braun, 1988; Brown & Levinson, 1987). Since politeness is realised not only through indirectness but also through relational linguistic choices, address terms provide important insights into how speakers build and negotiate interpersonal relationships during interaction.

Address terms represent a crucial component of interpersonal communication and are one of the most salient linguistic resources by which speakers build, negotiate, and manage social relationships. As pragmatic devices, they encode social meanings, interpersonal attitudes,

politeness orientations, and cultural norms in addition to their referential function. Address terms play a particularly important role in speech acts that have interpersonal sensitivity where speakers must carefully handle face concerns and relational harmony. Due to the importance of address terms in this study, it is necessary to explore their theoretical foundations, classifications, functions, and intercultural variation in order to understand the results within the broader field of pragmatics and intercultural communication.

Address terms are generally defined as linguistic forms employed by speakers to directly address their interlocutors. Braun (1988), whose work is one of the most comprehensive treatments of address systems, defines address terms as “words and phrases used for addressing” (p. 7). This definition emphasizes their interactional significance rather than their grammatical form, which points to their role in communication rather than simply their linguistic structure. Similarly, Fasold (1990) defines address forms as linguistic expressions that describe the identity of the addressee and specify the social relationship between interlocutors. Based on these definitions, it can be seen that address terms operate primarily at the pragmatic level and serve as indicators of social meaning rather than simply as grammatical elements. In particular, address terms are different from reference terms, which refer to individuals who are not directly involved in interaction. Address terms are employed when speakers directly engage with their interlocutors, which makes them integral to interactional relationship management (Braun, 1988).

Address terms are deeply rooted in social structures and cultural norms, as they represent speakers’ perceptions of social distance, power relations, and solidarity. Brown and Gilman’s (1960) seminal distinction between power and solidarity establishes a fundamental framework for understanding address systems. Based on their model, address forms encode either hierarchical relationships based on power differences or horizontal relationships based on solidarity and closeness. For instance, the employment of titles such as “Professor” reflects recognition of institutional authority, while the use of first names signals familiarity and equality. This distinction shows that address terms serve as linguistic markers of social organisation and interpersonal alignment. The relevance of this framework to intercultural communication is especially significant, as cultures vary in how power and solidarity are expressed linguistically.

Address terms can be classified into several main categories, including personal names, titles, kinship terms, honorifics, and terms of endearment. Personal names, particularly first names, are usually associated with solidarity and familiarity, especially in English-speaking cultures where the use of first names has become increasingly common in many contexts. Conversely, titles and title-plus-last-name combinations are indicators of formality, respect, and social distance. The choice between these forms indicates speakers' orientation toward relational hierarchy and politeness. Kinship terms, such as "brother," "sister," and "uncle," belong to another crucial category. These terms may be employed literally to refer to family members or metaphorically to convey solidarity and shared identity. This metaphorical use is especially common in Arabic-speaking cultures, where kinship terms are frequently employed as politeness strategies even among non-relatives (Farghal & Shakir, 1994). Honorifics are another category, and they serve as markers of respect and status. Some cultures elaborate these forms more than others, which show cultural differences in hierarchical orientation (Parkinson, 1985).

The pragmatic implications of address terms go beyond identification to include the management of politeness, face, and interpersonal relationships. According to Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, communication includes the control of face, defined as individuals' public self-image. Address terms contribute to face control by communicating respect, solidarity, or deference. For instance, the utilization of respectful address forms may serve as a negative politeness strategy by acknowledging the interlocutor's social status and reducing imposition. In contrast, the use of familiar address forms may serve as a positive politeness strategy by expressing solidarity and closeness. This dual function illustrates the flexibility of address terms as pragmatic resources.

Cultural variation plays a crucial role in address term use, as different societies have distinct address systems that represent their cultural values and social structure. Arabic address systems are generally more elaborate than English ones and involve heavy use of kinship terms, honorifics, and religious expressions (Parkinson, 1985). These forms reflect the collectivist orientation of Arabic-speaking societies, where social relationships and group identity are highly valued (Hofstede, 2001). The frequent employment of kinship terms among Saudi speakers, even

in non-familial contexts, shows the importance of relational closeness and solidarity. In contrast, English address systems are relatively less elaborate, and speakers may depend more on indirectness and other politeness strategies rather than frequent address term employment.

Address terms are also closely related to pragmatic competence, which involves the ability to use language appropriately in context (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Pragmatic competence is the knowledge of how social relationships influence linguistic choices, including address term use. In second/foreign language contexts, learners may transfer address practices from their first language, which may result in pragmatic transfer (Kasper, 1992). This transfer may lead to pragmatic failure if the transferred forms are inappropriate in the target language (Thomas, 1983). For instance, Saudi learners of English may overuse kinship terms or solidarity markers in contexts where native English speakers would not. Such differences may be viewed as overly familiar or inappropriate, even if the speaker's intention is polite.

The use of address terms therefore shows not only cultural norms but also speakers' level of pragmatic competence. In second and foreign language contexts, learners may transfer address term conventions from their first language into the target language, which may result in pragmatic transfer (Kasper, 1992). This transfer can influence how speech acts are perceived by native speakers and may contribute to pragmatic failures. Consequently, understanding address term usage is essential for explaining interlanguage pragmatic development, which is discussed in the following section.

2.7. Interlanguage Pragmatics

Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP) arose in the late 1980s and early 1990s as a separate research area positioned at the intersection of second language acquisition (SLA) and pragmatics. It aims to investigate how non-native speakers understand and perform speech acts in a second language and how their pragmatic competence develops over time (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993; Kasper & Rose, 2002). ILP is based on the notion of interlanguage, first introduced by Selinker

(1972), which refers to the developing linguistic system of L2 learners that is shaped by their L1, their developing knowledge of the L2, and the learning environment. Just as learners' interlanguage grammar shows a transitional system, their pragmatic competence in L2 shows an interlanguage pragmatics system, influenced by transfer, developmental sequences, and exposure.

Among the most important topics in ILP research is pragmatic transfer, which happens when learners carry over L1-based pragmatic norms into their L2 interaction (Odlin, 1989). Thomas (1983) differentiates between two types of pragmatic failure: *pragmalinguistic failure*, where learners misapply or misuse linguistic tools (e.g., overusing modal verbs for politeness), and *sociopragmatic failure*, where learners misjudge the sociocultural norms of the target language community. For example, Saudi learners may transfer Arabic norms of politeness into English by producing relationally oriented refusals. While these may be appropriate in Arabic, in English they may be interpreted as unnecessarily elaborate or evasive (Nelson et al., 2002). Such pragmatic transfer is especially significant in speech acts such as complaints, apologies, and refusals, which are highly sensitive to cultural beliefs surrounding politeness and face. Among the major contributions of ILP research is the analysis of developmental patterns in L2 pragmatic acquisition. Studies have shown that learners go through stages of pragmatic development, often beginning with reliance on literal, direct forms, and moving toward more indirect or more sophisticated strategies as their linguistic and sociocultural awareness grows (Kasper & Rose, 2002). For instance, early stage learners may refuse with a blunt "No", later adopting softened forms such as "I'm not sure I can manage that right now". This developmental process shows that pragmatic competence is not a one time acquisition but a gradual process that is influenced by exposure, instruction, and awareness.

ILP also draws attention to the asymmetry between grammatical and pragmatic development. Learners may reach high levels of grammatical accuracy yet continue to experience pragmatic failure. Bardovi-Harlig (1999) revealed that advanced learners often produce grammatically correct but pragmatically inappropriate utterances, which points to the relative autonomy of pragmatic competence from grammatical proficiency. This shows that pragmatic competence

needs particular attention in instruction and cannot be assumed to follow automatically from grammar acquisition.

This study contributes to understanding the interlanguage nature of Saudi EFL and ESL pragmatic systems by analyzing how Saudi learners make complaint, apology, and refusal speech acts. It illustrates not only how Arabic norms shape English performance but also how exposure, instruction, and context contribute to pragmatic development. Consequently, ILP provides a conceptual and methodological framework for comparing learners' speech acts across cultures.

2.8. Cross-Cultural Pragmatics and Intercultural Communication

Cross-cultural pragmatics refers to the systematic comparison of how different linguistic and cultural communities express and perceive speech acts, politeness strategies, and other pragmatic aspects. Studies in this area include the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) led by Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989), which looked at how requests and apologies were realized in different languages. This project showed that certain speech act strategies are universal, but linguistic forms and the relative importance of politeness or mitigation vary significantly across cultures. For instance, Hebrew speakers preferred direct requests, while English speakers used more indirect forms, which reflected differences in cultural norms regarding imposition and politeness.

Intercultural communication extends cross-cultural pragmatics by exploring what happens when speakers from different cultural backgrounds communicate. Communication failure often occurs not from lack of vocabulary or grammar but from pragmatic inconsistencies. For example, Scollon and Scollon (2001) show how Western speech patterns that emphasize brevity and efficiency may clash with East Asian or Middle Eastern patterns that emphasize relationality and elaboration. In Arabic-English interactions, this can manifest in misunderstandings related to the sincerity of apologies, the directness of complaints, or the length of refusals. The study of cross-cultural pragmatics and intercultural communication highlights the cultural nature of speech acts

and shows that what counts as polite, sincere, or appropriate is not universal but varies according to culture. For Saudi learners of English, intercultural communication is a unique challenge as they must deal with two pragmatic systems, one grounded in Arabic sociocultural values and the other in English cultural practices. Understanding how these learners move around this space is essential for describing their pragmatic preferences and for designing instructional strategies that help them achieve intercultural competence.

2.9. The Role of Input, Instruction, and Feedback in Pragmatic Development

In order to perform effective communication in L2, linguistic knowledge and sociocultural knowledge are both crucial and need to be developed simultaneously. The field of Interlanguage Pragmatics concentrates on understanding and clarifying both types of knowledge. In addition, it aims to study methods of learning and teaching as well as any obstacles that may prevent learners from mastering these two types of knowledge. A number of studies have explored the effectiveness of pragmatic instruction (House & Kasper 1981; Wildner-Bassett 1994; Kubota 1995; Cohen 1996; Tateyama, Kasper, Mui, Tay & Thananart 1997; Cook 2001; Ishihara 2003). While much of this research has concentrated on advanced learners, Wildner-Bassett (1994) and Tateyama et al. (1997) showed that pragmatic routines can also be effectively explained to beginners. Kasper (1997) highlights the significance of this conclusion for curriculum and syllabus design. He notes that it challenges the widespread assumption that pragmatics instruction is only appropriate once learners have developed a solid foundation in grammar and vocabulary.

Cook (2001) studied how learners of Japanese as a foreign language differentiated between polite and plain (impolite) speech styles. His study found that more than 80% of students failed to notice this difference and often confused the two forms. Follow-up interviews with teachers showed that they did not emphasise the difference in their instruction because they considered it 'obvious information.' Nevertheless, once teachers explicitly brought students' attention to these forms, learners improved and were more successful in recognizing them. Cook (2001) also found that one class produced significantly fewer errors, which he credited to the teacher's

consistent inclusion of role plays and social activities to practice the difference. In light of these findings, Cook (2001) concluded that to help learners develop full communicative competence in a second/foreign language, instruction in pragmatics is just as crucial as instruction in grammar, phonology, and semantics.

As mentioned above, many studies show that the majority of pragmatic aspects can be taught. This leads to a conclusion that the intervention of teachers and policy makers can contribute positively to the development of learners' pragmatic competence. This conclusion allowed the research efforts to go further and study the best methods and techniques by which pragmatic features can be taught effectively.

From an instructional perspective, there is a large number of studies conducted in order to examine different techniques and methods. The main aim of these studies was to compare the advantages and disadvantages of direct and indirect teaching methods based on the impact of the development of pragmatic competence. This was implemented either by comparing different sets of students who received different teaching methods or by examining students who were taught compared with a different group of students who were not taught. The longitudinal approach to research was also adopted in this field where some studies investigated the impact of different teaching methods on the development of pragmatic competence over a specific period of time. This consisted of examining a large number of pragmatic aspects such as requests, compliments, forms of address, complaints, refusals, and apologies.

Carrying out a comparison between explicit and implicit teaching of pragmatic features faced many challenges that researchers needed to overcome in order to reach conclusions regarding the best teaching method. The most challenging issue was to find a clear separation between explicit strategies and implicit strategies. It was noticed by researchers that some implicit strategies are included in some explicit strategies which made it more difficult for researchers to find a clear answer for this crucial question. For example, the implicit strategy of Consciousness-Raising Tasks is usually used as a part of the explicit teaching method. However, despite this overlap, many studies (e.g., Jeon & Kaya, 2006; Takahashi, 2010) reached a conclusion, where their studies generally revealed that learners show a better development of different pragmatic

features when they were instructed explicitly. In other words, the explicit teaching of pragmatics has been empirically proven as the most effective method that helps second/foreign language learners to carry out better communication in L2. Nevertheless, this conclusion does not negate that adopting some implicit strategies may contribute effectively to support the explicit teaching method in developing the learners' pragmatic competence.

Thomas (1983) contends that developing pragmatic competence is primarily the responsibility of educational policy makers in language learning and English language teachers who are supposed to provide language learners with the accurate pragmatic knowledge and tools that allow learners to express themselves with as much competence as possible. English language learners are supposed to learn how to express their ideas, desires, and feelings in a way by which weaknesses such as impoliteness and rudeness can be avoided. However, the intentional choice to speak rudely is a personal and cultural matter that must be respected. Nevertheless, a learner's unintentional rudeness is what English language teachers should work to avoid. In other words, the role of teachers is not about creating a new identity or a new system of beliefs for their learners, their role is to enlighten learners about the possibilities of being misunderstood and how this can be avoided. This can be implemented by making different efforts that will lead to raising English language learners' pragmatic awareness in general.

Rose and Kasper (2001) also observed that explicit instruction of pragmatics such as teaching speech act strategies, role-playing situations, and providing metapragmatic information contributes to measurable outcomes in both production and comprehension. Ishihara and Cohen (2010) further argue that pragmatics needs to be incorporated into language teaching not as an optional component, but as an essential component of communicative competence. Instruction is highly effective when it includes consciousness-raising activities, where learners study authentic data, compare L1 and L2 norms, and reflect on their own pragmatic preferences. This intentional focus allows learners to notice cross-cultural differences that may otherwise be unnoticed.

Feedback also has an important role to play in pragmatic development. Corrective feedback may take the form of explicit (e.g., pointing out that a refusal was too blunt) or implicit (e.g., recasts

or reformulations). Taguchi (2011) argues that feedback is particularly important in pragmatics because learners may not always see their pragmatic errors as errors. Instead, they may believe their statements were appropriate. Feedback increases learners' awareness of sociopragmatic norms and allows learners to adjust their strategies. For instance, Saudi EFL learners who are corrected for overly direct complaints may learn to use hedges or indirect markers that are more consistent with English norms.

Trying to explore the teaching process in Saudi Arabia, Abdulaziz Al-Qahtani (2020) examined the topic of teaching pragmatic competence from three different aspects:

- The importance of teaching pragmatic competence
- The Saudi EFL teachers' efforts in supporting the process of teaching pragmatic competence
- The challenges that face Saudi EFL teachers in supporting the process of teaching pragmatic competence

The results of this study show that, in classroom, Saudi EFL teachers adopt and apply different strategies to teach pragmatic competence. More importantly, this study concludes that the most challenging issue faced by Saudi EFL teachers is "lack of pragmatic competence materials" that they can use and apply in classroom. This study explained obstacles hindering teaching pragmatic competence from being more effective and successful in a Saudi EFL context. As a new reliable study, its conclusions are valuable where the current study tries to contribute in providing some answers, explanations, and materials that Saudi EFL teachers and policy makers need in order to enhance Saudi EFL learners' pragmatic competence. In line with this and in a study that was conducted by Alsulayyi (2018), it was argued that Saudi EFL learners often encounter English in classroom settings where pragmatic norms are underrepresented or insufficiently taught. As a result, their pragmatic competence shows fossilized and L1 influenced patterns that hinder appropriate performance of speech acts. Furthermore, this study contended that in order to develop the pragmatic competence of English language learners, there should be an instructional intervention and any future study that will support this instructional process will be valuable.

2.10.Complaints

Complaints are among the most socially sensitive and pragmatically complex speech acts as they are related to expressing dissatisfaction, criticism, or disapproval of another person's behavior. Complaints as face-threatening acts (FTAs), according to Brown & Levinson (1987), risk damaging the hearer's positive face (the desire to be accepted) and potentially the speaker's face as well if the complaint is rejected or escalates into conflict. Therefore, complaints offer a particularly rich ground for exploring pragmatic competence, cross-cultural variation, and interlanguage pragmatics.

Within pragmatics, complaints began to be studied in the 1980s as researchers worked to apply speech acts theory and politeness models to real-world communication. Olshtain and Weinbach (1987, 1993) are among the first scholars to propose a taxonomy for complaints, which they define as speech acts whereby the speaker conveys disapproval, annoyance, or grievance as a reaction to what they see as a socially unacceptable action by the hearer. Their framework suggests that complaints can be classified along a continuum from indirect hints to explicit blame. The strategies proposed by Olshtain and Weinbach (1993) consist of:

- Hints: Implicitly showing dissatisfaction without explicit reference (e.g., "It's really noisy here").
- Expression of disapproval: Directly showing dissatisfaction (e.g., "I don't like the way you talk to me").
- Explicit complaint: Attributing fault to the hearer overtly (e.g., "You're always late").
- Threats/warnings: Showing potential consequences (e.g., "If you're late again, I won't wait for you").

This taxonomy paved the way for subsequent empirical research and has allowed scholars to code and compare complaints across languages and contexts. It also brought to light the dual nature of complaints as they can serve as mechanisms of conflict but also as instruments for negotiating norms and managing relationships.

As another important contribution, Trosborg's (1995) work situates complaints within the broader category of conflictive speech acts, along with threats, reprimands, and accusations. She emphasizes that complaints are especially risky because they openly challenge the hearer's behavior and need careful balance between directness and mitigation. Trosborg's data collected from Danish learners of English showed that complaints often integrate direct expressions with indirect strategies, such as justification or appeal to norms, to minimize face-threat. Her foundational framework established the analytical categories still employed in much contemporary research, which provided scholars with tools to study complaints' linguistic and sociocultural dimensions.

Complaint research has found a wide range of cross-cultural differences in how complaints are expressed, mitigated, and interpreted. Even though the desire to complain is universal, there are a wide range of preferred strategies and linguistic realizations. Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), in the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP), pointed out that English speakers typically favor indirect complaints using hedges and mitigation to avoid confrontation ("I was worried when you didn't call" rather than "You never call me"). Conversely, Hebrew speakers were more likely to use direct strategies, which is in line with cultural norms of bluntness and clarity.

House and Kasper (1981) analyzed German and English complaints and concluded that Germans employed more explicit and direct expressions of dissatisfaction whereas English speakers preferred indirectness presenting complaints as suggestions or requests ("Maybe you could be on time next time"). These observations are consistent with the argument that Anglo politeness norms tend to favor indirectness and mitigation, whereas other cultural groups may prioritize honesty, clarity, or relational solidarity. Arabic complaints, particularly, show distinctive features. Abdo (2021) studied Egyptian Arabic complaints and discovered that they were often more direct than Western English complaints but framed relationally, with appeals to solidarity and shared beliefs. It was observed that complaints often combined explicit criticism with religious or moral appeals ("God doesn't like people who treat others this way"), which revealed the cultural significance of complaints in broader value systems. These cross-cultural studies show that while

complaints universally threaten face, the degree of directness, mitigation, and elaboration differs significantly.

Complaints are highly sensitive to contextual variables such as power, distance, and severity of offense, in line with Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness framework. The greater the power differential, the more likely speakers are to reduce complaints. In contrast, a complaint against a subordinate can be more direct. As discussed in Trosborg (1995), learners were particularly challenged with modifying complaint strategies according to power dynamics, often making inappropriately direct complaints to superiors. Another factor is the seriousness of the offense. Olshtain and Weinbach (1993) observed that minor offenses elicited hints or indirect complaints, while serious offenses prompted explicit criticism or threats. Cultural differences determine what counts as "serious". In collectivist societies such as Saudi Arabia, breaches of hospitality or social obligations may be considered more serious than in individualistic societies. Additionally, gender has been explored in some studies. Holmes (1995) found that women in New Zealand tended to have more mitigated forms than men, aligned with broader gendered patterns of politeness. These studies show that complaints are not fixed speech acts but are dynamically shaped by social variables. For L2 learners, it is important to master not just linguistic forms but also sociocultural norms that govern complaint appropriateness.

Research on complaints has significant implications for both language teaching and pragmatics theory. Pedagogically, complaints emphasize the importance of integrating pragmatic instruction into language teaching programs. It is important to inform learners that complaints are culturally sensitive and strategies vary across languages. Ishihara and Cohen (2010) analyzed the speech act of complaints in their influential book *Teaching and Learning Pragmatics: Where Language and Culture Meet*. They explored various speech acts, including complaints, within the context of intercultural communication and pragmatic instruction. They highlight the significance of raising learners' awareness of cultural differences in speech act realizations, which involves understanding how complaints are expressed differently across cultures. Their approach advocates for explicit instruction and consciousness-raising techniques to improve learners' pragmatic competence, especially in recognizing and appropriately responding to speech acts.

such as complaints in different cultural settings. It shows that pragmatic competence does not automatically follow grammatical proficiency. Learners may formulate grammatically correct but pragmatically inappropriate complaints, which emphasizes the need to consider pragmatic competence as a distinct domain of acquisition. For Saudi learners particularly, instruction should highlight the differences between Arabic directness and English indirectness, which would provide learners with the skills to navigate intercultural communication successfully.

With regard to studies that have investigated the speech act of complaint in the Saudi context, research remains relatively limited compared to other speech acts such as requests. One of the earliest studies that specifically addressed complaints among Saudi speakers is Al-Shorman (2017), who investigated complaint strategies employed by Saudi and Jordanian native speakers of Arabic. The primary aim of this study was to explore similarities and differences in complaint realisation across these two Arabic-speaking cultures and to examine the impact of sociocultural variables on complaint behaviour. The participants consisted of 150 male undergraduate students from universities in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and Irbid, Jordan. Data were collected using an open-ended Discourse Completion Test (DCT), which enabled participants to produce written responses to hypothetical complaint situations.

Al-Shorman (2017) divided complaint strategies into four main categories: direct complaint, offensive act, calmness and rationality, and opting out. Within these categories, participants employed a range of strategies, including explicit complaints, threats, requests for repair, challenges, and expressions of blame. The findings showed that both Saudi and Jordanian participants used multiple complaint strategies, reflecting the complexity of complaint behaviour in Arabic-speaking cultures. However, significant differences were observed between the two groups. Saudi participants were found to use more direct complaint strategies compared to Jordanian participants, who demonstrated relatively greater use of indirect and mitigating strategies. These findings suggest that complaint behaviour may vary across Arabic-speaking cultures despite shared linguistic and religious backgrounds, which emphasizes the importance of examining Saudi pragmatic behaviour independently rather than treating Arabic speakers as a homogeneous group. Furthermore, Al-Shorman (2017) also found that social power influenced

participants' complaint behaviour, with speakers adjusting their level of directness depending on the relative social status of the interlocutor. This result is consistent with politeness theory, which predicts that speakers modify their linguistic behaviour to address face concerns in situations involving power differences (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The relevance of these findings to the present study is particularly significant, as the current research also investigates the role of social distance and ranking of imposition in shaping complaint behaviour.

Further insight into Saudi complaint behaviour is given by Al-Jabali (2018), who studied complaint strategies among Saudi and Jordanian female native speakers of Arabic. This study was conducted to investigate whether complaints observed among male speakers would also be reflected in female speakers and to explore potential gender-related differences. The participants consisted of 34 female undergraduate students, including 17 Saudis and 17 Jordanians, aged between 18 and 25. Data were collected using a DCT consisting of three complaint scenarios designed to reveal participants' responses in situations involving interpersonal conflict.

The results showed that both Saudi and Jordanian participants used a wide range of complaint strategies. This demonstrates the richness and variability of complaint behaviour in Arabic-speaking cultures. However, unlike Al-Shorman's (2017) findings, Al-Jabali (2018) found that Saudi participants tended to favour more indirect complaint strategies, whereas Jordanian participants employed relatively more direct and confrontational strategies. This apparent inconsistency between the findings of Al-Shorman (2017) and Al-Jabali (2018) illustrates the complexity of complaints and suggests that pragmatic performance may be influenced by multiple interacting factors, including gender, context, and individual variation.

Additionally, the contrasting findings of these two studies point to the need for further research examining Saudi complaint behaviour across different contexts and participant groups. It is difficult to attribute these differences to broad cultural explanations, as pragmatic behaviour is shaped by a wide range of sociocultural, contextual, and individual factors (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Consequently, while these studies provide valuable initial insights, their findings should be

interpreted cautiously. Furthermore, the relatively small sample size used by Al-Jabali (2018) limits the generalisability of the results and emphasizes the need for larger-scale studies.

While the studies mentioned above focused on complaint behaviour in Arabic, Al-Rashidi (2017) extended this line of research by examining complaint strategies used by Saudi learners of English. This interlanguage pragmatics study analyzed complaint behaviour among three groups: Saudi native speakers of Arabic, Saudi EFL learners, and American native speakers of English. The study aimed to identify differences in complaint strategy usage across these groups and to examine the extent to which Saudi EFL learners demonstrated pragmatic transfer from Arabic to English.

The participants consisted of 61 individuals, consisting of 17 Saudi Arabic monolingual speakers, 34 Saudi EFL learners, and 10 American native English speakers. Data were collected using a DCT adapted from Umar (2006), and responses were analysed using Trosborg's (1995) complaint coding framework. The findings revealed that all three groups used a range of complaint strategies, including expressions of dissatisfaction, requests for repair, and accusations. However, important differences were observed in the frequency and distribution of these strategies. One of the most significant findings of Al-Rashidi's work was that Saudi EFL learners showed clear evidence of pragmatic transfer. Learners used complaint strategies influenced by Arabic sociocultural norms, including relatively high levels of directness and the use of relational expressions. These findings support Kasper's (1992) argument that pragmatic transfer plays a central role in interlanguage development. Moreover, pragmatic transfer was observed in both positive and negative forms. This indicates that learners' first language pragmatic knowledge can both facilitate and hinder target language pragmatic performance.

Al-Rashidi's results are highly relevant to the current study, which also examines Saudi EFL learners' complaint behaviour and compares it with both native English speakers and Saudi Arabic speakers. However, one limitation of Al-Rashidi's study is the relatively small number of native English participants, which may limit the strength of cross-cultural comparisons. In addition, the study did not include Saudi ESL learners living in English-speaking environments, which means that the role of immersion in pragmatic development was not investigated.

In general, all discussed studies provide a significant insight into Saudi complaint behaviour in both Arabic and English contexts. They show that Saudi speakers use a wide range of complaint strategies and that their pragmatic behaviour is influenced by sociocultural norms, power relations, and language background. However, these studies also reveal important gaps in literature. Particularly, few studies have examined complaint behaviour across multiple Saudi participant groups within a single research design, and limited research has investigated the role of contextual variables such as social distance and ranking of imposition.

The present study addresses these gaps by analyzing complaint behaviour across four participant groups: British English native speakers, Saudi Arabic monolingual speakers, Saudi EFL learners, and Saudi ESL learners. By adopting a comprehensive comparative approach, the current study provides a more detailed understanding of Saudi pragmatic competence and intercultural communication. Additionally, it extends previous research by exploring the role of address terms in complaint behaviour, which has received limited attention in previous Saudi complaint studies. This contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how Saudi speakers handle interpersonal relationships during complaint situations.

Previous research shows that complaint among Saudi speakers is shaped by a complex interaction of cultural norms, pragmatic competence, and contextual variables. Nonetheless, further research is needed to fully understand how Saudi speakers perform complaints in intercultural contexts, particularly when interacting with native English speakers. The present study contributes to addressing this need by providing a detailed examination of Saudi complaint across multiple cultural and linguistic contexts.

2.11. Apologies

Apologies are among the most important speech acts in pragmatics and interlanguage pragmatics particularly due to their centrality in maintaining social harmony and repairing interactional breaches. The purpose of apologizing is to repair damaged interpersonal relations, redress

violations of social norms, and re-establish the hearer's face. This relational nature has made apologies highly attractive to researchers in linguistics, psychology, and intercultural communication. During the past four decades, a considerable amount of research has explored how apologies are realized across languages, how learners acquire them in second languages, and how cultural values influence their performance.

The study of apology in pragmatics gained traction in the late 1970s and early 1980s, largely in response to the speech act framework (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). A cornerstone for much subsequent research was Olshtain and Cohen's (1983) classification of apology strategies, which is still widely used today. They noted five key strategies: (1) an expression of an apology (e.g., "I'm sorry," "Excuse me"), (2) acknowledgment of responsibility (e.g., "It was my fault"), (3) explanation or account (e.g., "I was delayed by traffic"), (4) offer of repair (e.g., "I'll pay for the damage"), and (5) promise of forbearance (e.g., "It won't happen again"). These strategies can be used individually or in combination, which formed what Olshtain and Cohen referred to as a "semantic formula." Researchers were able to use this framework to develop a systematic method for coding and comparing apologies across languages and cultures. In 1984, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), as part of the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP), extended the classification system and used it to analyze large-scale cross-cultural data, particularly with a focus on Hebrew and English. Their results revealed the variability in how speakers of different languages choose apology strategies and how cultural values impact their choice. For example, English speakers often use concise statements of apology and describe their actions in a concise manner while Hebrew speakers use more elaborate explanations.

One of the foundational studies was carried out by Holmes (1990), who studied apologies in naturally occurring New Zealand English corpora. She discovered that apologies served multiple functions in addition to face-repair, including the expression of empathy, mitigation of offense, and enhancement of social solidarity. Importantly, Holmes highlighted that apologies are deeply rooted in sociolinguistic variation. Gender, power, and context all contribute to how and when apologies are used. For instance, women in her data apologized more frequently than men, an

observation that sparked considerable debate and subsequent research on gendered apology behavior.

These early research established apology as an important site for investigating the intersection of language, culture, and social interaction. They provided classifications and coding schemes that are still widely used, while also emphasizing the need for cross-cultural and interlanguage research to understand the diversity of apology behaviors globally. Cross-cultural studies of apology have become increasingly popular since the 1980s often using discourse completion tasks (DCTs) or role-plays to collect comparable data across languages. These studies consistently demonstrate that while the need to apologize is near-universal, the methods in which apologies are realized are highly culture-specific, influenced by values of politeness, honor, solidarity, and face. For example, House (1988) showed that German speakers offered fewer apologies and more accounts than English speakers in a way that is consistent with cultural norms that prioritize justification over the overt expression of regret. Trosborg (1995) investigated apologies across Danish, English, and German speakers. It was confirmed that cultural preferences strongly influence the balance between formulaic apologies, accounts, and offers of repair. Arabic apologies, particularly, have gained attention because of their distinctive concentration on emotional intensity, repetition, and religious expressions. Bataineh and Bataineh (2006) explored Jordanian Arabic apologies and observed that speakers often combined multiple strategies such as repeated expressions of regret, elaborate explanations, and appeals to God (“Inshallah it won’t happen again”) in order to enhance sincerity and relational repair. Research on Arabic-speaking English learners have revealed some patterns of transfer. Hussein and Hammouri (1998) discovered that Jordanian EFL learners overused explicit apology formulas (“I’m very sorry”) and used fewer offers of repair, in line with Arabic norms of emotional intensity. Al-Ali (2012) discovered that Jordanian learners relied heavily on religious expressions when apologizing in English, which is a form of sociopragmatic transfer that may confuse or seem unnatural to native speakers. Nelson, Carson, Batal, and El-Bakary (2002), exploring Egyptian learners, showed that their English apologies often included detailed explanations and promises of forbearance, which reflects Arabic conventions of relational elaboration.

The scope of other research has extended beyond Western and Middle Eastern languages. Sugimoto (1997), in his study of Japanese apologies, highlighted their role as a cultural script deeply tied to values of harmony (*wa*) and hierarchy. It is common for Japanese apologies to be expressed in formulaic expressions (“*sumimasen*,” “*moushiwake arimasen*”), with less emphasis on explanations or offers of repair. As opposed to American apologies, which often focus on individual responsibility. Similar studies of Chinese apologies (Chang, 2009) show a preference for explicit acknowledgment of responsibility and deference to authority, which adhere to Confucian values of hierarchy and relational harmony. These cross-cultural observations show that while the strategies identified by Olshtain and Cohen (1983) are common across languages, their frequency, sequencing, and combinations can vary significantly.

On the one hand, proficiency and exposure can significantly influence interlanguage apologies. Félix-Brasdefer (2007) explored Spanish EFL learners in Mexico and Spanish ESL learners in the U.S. It was found that ESL learners produced more target-like combinations of strategies, while EFL learners leaned heavily on L1 transfer. Bella (2012) reported similar results for Greek learners of English who gradually shifted from literal translation of Greek apology norms toward more English-like usage with increased exposure.

On the other hand, research shows that instruction can help overcome these challenges. Rose and Kasper (2001) made significant contributions to the study of apologies, particularly in the context of second language (L2) acquisition and interlanguage pragmatics. In their work, they highlight the benefits of incorporating pragmatic competence into language teaching and emphasize the complexities involved in learning speech acts like apologies. Rose and Kasper (2001) analyze the development of pragmatic competence in L2 learners focusing primarily on how learners acquire the ability to perform speech acts appropriately in a second language. They study the relationships between pragmalinguistic knowledge (knowledge of language forms) and sociopragmatic knowledge (knowledge of social norms) in this process. Their research has indicated that both factors are crucial for effective communication and that learners may develop these competencies at different rates. A review is provided of classroom-based research on the teaching of pragmatics as well as examining learning processes and results when instructional

environments are tailored toward specific pragmatic features, such as apology. Rose and Kasper (2001) also address the challenges learners face in acquiring appropriate pragmatic strategies and the role of contextual factors in shaping their language use. They argue that explicit instruction in apology strategies through role-plays, metapragmatic explanation, and consciousness-raising can improve learners' ability to approximate native-like language use. Likewise, Ishihara and Cohen (2010) argue that instruction should extend beyond teaching formulae ("I'm sorry") to include consciousness-raising activities that expose learners to real variation in apology use, encourage comparison between L1 and L2 styles, and enhance sociopragmatic awareness. These results demonstrate the importance of integrating pragmatics into language pedagogy.

Research has clearly shown that apologies are sensitive to contextual variables such as power, social distance, gender, and the severity of the offense. The severity of the offense is a crucial determinant. Olshtain (1989) observed that minor offenses (e.g., bumping into someone) resulted in brief and formulaic apologies, while more serious offenses (e.g., breaking an object) led to elaborate combinations of strategies, including offers of repair and promises of forbearance. However, cultural norms influence what counts as "serious." For instance, in collectivist cultures, missing a social gathering may be perceived as a grave offense that needs an elaborate apology, while in more individualistic cultures, it may be dismissed with a brief excuse. This shows that apologies are not fixed formulae but interactionally negotiated acts whose shape relies on multiple variables. For L2 learners, this multidimensionality implies that they must not only grasp the linguistic forms but also gain sensitivity to the sociocultural dimensions of apology use.

Research on the speech act of apology in the Saudi context has gradually emerged over the past decade. This has provided important insights into Saudi pragmatic norms and intercultural communication. One of the earliest and most comprehensive studies is Al-Laheebi and Sori Ya'Allah (2014), who investigated apology strategies employed by Saudi Arabic speakers across five regional universities representing the major geographical regions of Saudi Arabia, including the north, south, east, west, and central regions. The study involved 370 Saudi undergraduate

students from various academic disciplines, which made it one of the largest studies examining apology behaviour within the Saudi context. Data were collected using two elicitation methods: a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) and role-play interactions, which enabled the researchers to capture both written and spoken apology performance.

To analyse the data, the researchers adopted a combined coding framework drawing on established models developed by Olshtain and Cohen (1983), Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), and Holmes (1990), all of which have been widely used in cross-cultural pragmatics research. The results showed that Saudi participants had a preference for indirect apology strategies, especially those that avoided explicit acceptance of responsibility. Participants frequently used explanations, justifications, and accounts that mitigated personal blame. This tendency demonstrates that Saudi speakers may orient towards protecting their own positive face while simultaneously attempting to maintain social harmony. From a politeness perspective, this behaviour reflects the dual face-management function of apologies, which includes repairing the hearer's face while also protecting the speaker's social identity (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Holmes, 1990).

Further insight into Saudi apology behaviour is provided by Hariri (2015), who examined apologies produced by Saudi Arabic speakers in authentic academic email communication. The study included 20 Saudi university lecturers and students, both male and female, and analysed a total of 140 academic emails. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain insight into participants' perceptions of apology use.

The findings showed that apologies were frequently employed as relational strategies aimed at maintaining social harmony rather than merely acknowledging wrongdoing. In contrast to Al-Laheebi and Sori Ya'Allah's (2014) research results, Hariri found that Saudi speakers did not necessarily view apologies as threatening to the speaker's face. Instead, apologies were often employed to protect interpersonal relationships and demonstrate politeness. This finding supports Holmes' (1990) argument that apologies serve important social functions in maintaining interpersonal relationships. Hariri's study also showed significant gender-based differences. Female participants were more likely to employ direct apology strategies, including explicit

expressions of regret, whereas male participants tended to favour indirect strategies, such as providing explanations without explicitly admitting fault. Moreover, power relations played a significant role in apology performance. Lecturers, who held higher institutional status, tended to use more indirect apology strategies, whereas students used more direct apologies. This result reflects the influence of social hierarchy on pragmatic behaviour, which has been widely documented in politeness research (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

While the studies mentioned above examined apology in Arabic, Alsulayyi (2016) extended this line of research by exploring apology strategies used by Saudi teachers of English as a Foreign Language when communicating in English. This study is particularly useful because it examined Saudi speakers' pragmatic performance in a second language, making significant contributions to interlanguage pragmatics research. The study consisted of 30 Saudi EFL teachers with upper-intermediate to advanced English proficiency and used a DCT consisting of ten apology situations. The findings showed that participants' apology performance in English was strongly shaped by their first language pragmatic norms. Saudi participants frequently used strategies that reflected Arabic apology conventions, including extensive use of explanations and indirect strategies. These findings provide clear evidence of pragmatic transfer, supporting Kasper's (1992) claim that learners' first language plays a crucial role in shaping second language pragmatic performance. Furthermore, Alsulayyi discovered that apology strategies varied according to gender, social distance, and power relations. This illustrates the importance of contextual variables in shaping pragmatic behaviour.

In addition, another study examining Saudi apology behaviour in English is conducted by Qari (2017), who carried out a comparative study examining apology and request strategies among Saudi Arabic native speakers, Saudi EFL learners, and British English native speakers. Data were collected using a Written Discourse Completion Task (WDCT), which allowed for systematic comparison across groups.

The results revealed that Saudi EFL learners showed clear evidence of pragmatic difficulties when performing apologies in English. Learners frequently depended on direct translation from Arabic and used strategies that did not fully align with English pragmatic norms. This resulted in cases

of negative pragmatic transfer, where learners' first language pragmatic knowledge interfered with appropriate target language performance. These findings support previous research demonstrating that pragmatic competence does not automatically develop alongside grammatical competence and requires targeted exposure and experience (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001).

Furthermore, Qari's study also revealed that Saudi EFL learners showed weaker pragmatic competence compared to native speakers, especially in their ability to appropriately handle apologies and manage interpersonal relationships. These findings emphasize the importance of pragmatic instruction in language education, as learners may struggle to acquire appropriate pragmatic norms without appropriate exposure.

Generally, these studies provide important insights into apology among Saudi speakers in both Arabic and English contexts. They provide evidence that Saudi speakers use a range of apology strategies influenced by sociocultural norms, face considerations, and contextual variables such as power and social distance. Additionally, research examining Saudi EFL learners provides clear evidence of pragmatic transfer and sheds light on the challenges learners face in acquiring appropriate pragmatic competence in English. Nevertheless, despite these crucial contributions, significant gaps remain in the literature. Particularly, limited research has compared Saudi speakers across different language environments, such as EFL and ESL contexts. The current study addresses these gaps by examining Saudi speakers' pragmatic competence within a broader intercultural framework, comparing Saudi Arabic monolingual speakers, Saudi EFL learners, Saudi ESL learners, and British English native speakers. By adopting a comparative approach, the present study provides a more comprehensive understanding of Saudi pragmatic competence and contributes to ongoing studies on intercultural communication.

2.12. Refusals

Refusals are one of the most complex and socially challenging speech acts as they consist of the acts of denying, rejecting, or declining another person's request, offer, invitation, or suggestion.

Refusals are naturally problematic face-threatening acts (FTAs) (Brown & Levinson, 1987). On the one hand, they threaten the hearer's positive face because rejecting an offer or request denies their wants or expectations. On the other hand, refusals also pose a risk to the speaker's negative face because they may require justification, mitigation, or negotiation that encroaches upon the speaker's autonomy. This unique nature makes refusals one of the most difficult speech acts to grasp both in native and non-native interaction.

Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990) work is one of the most significant contributions to the field. They established a classification of refusal strategies built on a large corpus of data from American English and Japanese speakers, which they gathered through discourse completion tasks (DCTs). Their classification differentiates between direct and indirect strategies, as well as adjuncts to refusals. Direct refusals involve blunt negations ("No", "I can't") and negative willingness/ability ("I don't think I can"). Indirect refusals involve a variety of strategies including excuses, reasons, explanations ("I'm busy that day"), alternatives ("Maybe another time"), postponements, avoidance, and hedges. Adjuncts can be supportive moves that soften refusals, such as positive remarks ("That's a great idea, but..."), gratitude ("Thanks for asking"), or expressions of regret ("I'm sorry"). Beebe et al. (1990) showed that Japanese speakers used more indirect strategies, excuses, and hesitation markers, while Americans tended to employ more direct but concise refusals. Japanese refusals were often longer and more elaborate, which reflects cultural scripts that emphasize harmony (*wa*) and the avoidance of confrontation. Beebe et al.'s (1990) model illustrates the sequential and complex nature of refusals, which often involve multiple strategies combined to minimize face threat. In contrast to single-turn acts, refusals frequently occur across turns and require delicate negotiation.

Nelson, Carson, Al-Batal, and El Bakary (2002) studied refusals among Egyptian Arabic and American English speakers. The researchers explore the similarities and differences in refusal strategies between native speakers of Egyptian Arabic and American English. They used a modified version of the Discourse Completion Test to collect refusals in different contexts such as requests, offers, invitations, and suggestions. This study included 24 Egyptian participants and 30 American participants, which resulted in 250 and 298 refusals respectively. It revealed that

both Egyptian Arabic and American English speakers used similar strategies when refusing including direct refusals, indirect refusals, and adjuncts to refusals. Nevertheless, the frequency and combination of these strategies were different between the two groups. Cultural norms and social contexts contributed to the choice and frequency of refusal strategies. For example, Egyptian speakers employed more indirect strategies and gave more reasons or excuses in their refusals compared to American speakers. The study emphasized the concept of pragmatic transfer where learners of a second language utilize strategies from their native language. This transfer results in both appropriate and inappropriate refusals in the target language depending on the cultural norms associated with the speech act. In this study, differences found reflect cultural values where collectivist Arabic societies value relational maintenance and avoidance of blunt rejection, while American individualism prioritizes efficiency and directness.

Arabic refusals have been particularly observed for their dependence on elaboration, justification, and religious expressions. Al-Issa (2003) carried out research on refusals exploring how sociocultural norms affect the realization of refusals among Jordanian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners. He discusses how learners' native cultural norms and values influence their performance of refusals in a second language potentially leading to pragmatic transfer. The study shows examples where Jordanian EFL learners transferred sociocultural norms from their native culture to their English refusals. This transfer can influence the appropriateness and effectiveness of refusals in the target language context. Additionally, Al-Issa (2003) found that Arabic refusals often included lengthy explanations, repetition, and appeals to God ("Inshallah, next time"). The study highlights the importance of raising learners' awareness of sociocultural differences and providing explicit instruction on appropriate refusal strategies in the target language to reduce pragmatic transfer. It highlights the need for language educators to pay attention to learners' cultural backgrounds and incorporate pragmatic instruction into language teaching to improve communicative competence.

The speech act of refusal has received increasing attention in Saudi pragmatic research due to its inherently face-threatening nature and its importance in handling interpersonal relationships. Refusals represent a particularly sensitive speech act as they involve rejecting an interlocutor's

request, invitation, offer, or suggestion, which poses a threat to the hearer's positive face and potentially disrupts social harmony (Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Brown & Levinson, 1987). In Saudi culture, where maintaining social relationships and demonstrating politeness are highly valued, refusal behaviour provides important insight into culturally specific pragmatic norms as well as Saudi speakers' intercultural pragmatic competence.

One of the earliest studies investigating Saudi refusal in English is Al-Kahtani (2005), who carried out a cross-cultural investigation comparing refusal strategies produced by American native speakers of English, Saudi EFL learners, and Japanese EFL learners. The study adopted Beebe et al.'s (1990) semantic formula framework, which has become one of the most widely employed models for analysing refusal strategies in interlanguage pragmatics research. This framework classifies refusals into direct strategies, indirect strategies, and adjuncts, which allows for systematic comparison across cultural and linguistic groups.

Al-Kahtani's results showed clear differences between native and non-native speakers in their refusal performance. Saudi EFL learners displayed limited pragmatic flexibility and often relied on a narrow range of strategies, especially indirect refusals involving explanations and excuses. Although indirectness is generally associated with politeness, the learners' performance was frequently characterised by inappropriate strategy selection and insufficient mitigation, which resulted in pragmatically ineffective refusals. These results were interpreted as evidence of weak pragmatic competence and suggest that Saudi EFL learners may lack sufficient exposure to authentic English pragmatic norms. The study demonstrated the importance of incorporating pragmatic instruction into language teaching. It emphasises that grammatical competence alone is not enough to achieve communicative effectiveness. In terms of intercultural pragmatics, these results are particularly significant because they suggest that Saudi learners may experience difficulty adapting their refusal behaviour to align with English sociocultural expectations. This confirms findings within interlanguage pragmatics research that learners' pragmatic competence develops more slowly than their grammatical competence and is strongly influenced by first language sociocultural norms (Kasper & Rose, 2002).

While Al-Kahtani's study concentrated on Saudi learners' refusal performance in English, Ababtain (2021) studied refusal strategies produced by Saudi native speakers of Arabic and provided significant insight into refusal within the Saudi cultural context itself. The study included 50 Saudi participants, equally divided between male and female speakers, representing a wide age range and diverse educational backgrounds. Data were collected using a Discourse Completion Task that included six refusal situations adapted from previous studies, and responses were analysed using Beebe et al.'s (1990) classification framework. The findings showed that the most frequently employed refusal strategy among Saudi Arabic speakers was the indirect strategy of providing excuses, reasons, and explanations. This strategy enables speakers to soften refusal and minimise potential face threat to maintain social harmony. In addition, the study also identified gender-based differences in refusal. Female participants were more likely to use indirect strategies and additional mitigating devices, whereas male participants showed relatively more direct refusal patterns.

Further insights into Saudi refusal in English is provided by Qadi (2021), who studied refusal strategies used by Saudi EFL learners. The study involved 20 Saudi male university students and used a Discourse Completion Test developed by Tuncer (2016). The data were analysed using Beebe et al.'s (1990) refusal classification model, which allowed for comparison with previous research. Results revealed that Saudi EFL learners showed a strong preference for indirect refusal strategies, especially expressions of regret and explanations. These strategies were often combined with adjuncts, such as expressions of appreciation or positive remarks, in order to soften the refusal. This pattern demonstrates an orientation towards maintaining politeness and preserving interpersonal relationships.

The studies mentioned above provide important insights into refusal among Saudi speakers in both Arabic and English contexts. They show that Saudi speakers tend to favour indirect refusal strategies, especially explanations and expressions of regret. This reflects the importance of politeness and face management in Saudi culture. Furthermore, studies examining Saudi EFL learners shed light on the challenges learners face in acquiring appropriate pragmatic competence in English and provide evidence of pragmatic transfer from Arabic. However, despite

these contributions, important gaps remain in literature. In particular, few studies have investigated refusal behaviour within a comprehensive intercultural framework that compares Saudi speakers across different language environments. The current study addresses these gaps by examining Saudi speakers' pragmatic competence across multiple groups, including Saudi Arabic monolingual speakers, Saudi EFL learners, Saudi ESL learners, and British English native speakers. By using a comparative intercultural approach, the study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of Saudi pragmatic competence and furthers intercultural communication and pragmatic development research.

2.13. Summary and Research Gap

The literature presented in this chapter shows the rich and complex nature of pragmatic competence in second language acquisition. Pragmatic competence is generally viewed as a unique competence that is different from linguistic competence (Thomas, 1983). According to Taguchi (2017), in teaching a language, developing pragmatic competence requires research and teaching efforts in order to allow learners to reach the highest levels of competence. On the one hand, the research efforts aim to investigate teaching methods that could support achieving the educational goals. Moreover, the research efforts aim to investigate each culture separately in order to explore similarities and differences between the mother culture and the targeted culture. On the other hand, the teaching efforts aim to adopt and use research results where cultural similarities should be strengthened, and cultural differences should be taught using suitable teaching methods. This increases learners' confidence and awareness of the possibilities of misunderstanding which will allow them to be more able to deal with different pragmatic challenges. During this developmental process, there are many factors that have impacts on the development of pragmatic competence such as learning environment (Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei, 1998). One of the most important pragmatic aspects that needs to be studied and developed is speech acts. Performing speech acts differs from one culture to another as it requires taking into account different politeness strategies that save the face of interlocutors

(Brown and Levinson, 1987). Saving the face of interlocutors contributes positively to the continuation of the social relationships in a friendly manner (Goffman, 1967).

In Saudi Arabia, pragmatic competence and the factors affecting it have not been extensively studied and until now there are no sufficient educational materials that help language teachers and policy makers to develop the learners' level of pragmatic competence in English language (Al-Qahtani, 2020). In addition to the scarceness of studies, the research efforts in discovering speech acts in Saudi Arabia has many gaps that require new studies to fill in. More research effort is needed to shed light on the roles played by contextual variables such as social distance and imposition degree and cultural variables such as address terms.

The current study fills in these research gaps by identifying and comparing speech acts of apologies, complaints, and refusals performed by Saudi EFL/ESL learners compared with ones performed by Saudi monolingual speakers of Arabic and British English native speakers taking into account the variables of degree of imposition and social distance. By studying types, structures, address terms, and the impact of social variables such as distance and imposition, the current study provides a comprehensive picture of how pragmatic competence develops in Saudi learners. The results contribute to both theoretical understanding of interlanguage pragmatics and practical insights for language teaching in EFL contexts.

The theoretical and empirical studies discussed in this chapter inform the analytical frameworks and coding procedures detailed in Chapter Three. In particular, the discussion of politeness theory, face management, and speech act realization provides the conceptual foundation for the structural and semantic formula analyses presented in Chapters Four, Five, and Six.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1.Introduction

Building on the theoretical foundations established in Chapter Two, this chapter outlines the methodological design adopted to investigate cross-cultural variation in complaint, apology, and refusal performance. This chapter explains the processes through which data were collected, analysed, and interpreted. Pragmatics studies, especially in interlanguage contexts, need careful attention to the interplay between linguistic forms, social variables, and communicative intent. Therefore, the methodology was built to identify the linguistic strategies used by participants along with the contextual and relational aspects that shape their choices.

The first part of this chapter begins by reviewing the research design and approach, which places the study within a qualitative-quantitative mixed-methods approach. A mixed approach was used as pragmatic competence includes both quantifiable patterns (such as frequency and distribution of speech act types) and qualitative aspects (such as levels of politeness, appropriateness, and contextual sensitivity). Subsequent parts discuss the participant groups and sampling procedures as well as justification for the selection of British English speakers, Saudi Arabic monolinguals, and Saudi EFL and ESL learners. This chapter then discusses the instrument used for data collection with a particular focus on its effectiveness in collecting controlled yet contextually grounded pragmatic data. The procedures for administering the tasks are described in detail followed by an explanation of the coding framework used to categorize speech act strategies and structures. Additionally, the ethical considerations for this study are described in terms of confidentiality and respect for cultural sensitivities taking into account the cross-cultural nature of the study.

3.2. Research Design

This study adopts a comparative, cross-sectional, and qualitative-quantitative (mixed-methods) research design with the goal of exploring the pragmatic performance of three major speech acts which are complaints, apologies, and refusals among four different groups: (1) native speakers of British English, (2) Saudi monolingual speakers of Arabic, (3) Saudi EFL learners, and (4) Saudi ESL learners. It is framed within the area of interlanguage pragmatics, with special concentration on the impact of context and culture on the production of face-threatening acts (FTAs).

The purpose of this research design was to enable a detailed analysis of pragmatic variation across both L1 and L2 users of English, and to identify potential influences of sociocultural norms, linguistic transfer, and language learning environments (EFL vs. ESL) on speech act performance. This study uses a descriptive and analytical approach, utilizing Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) to collect data and systematically categorize linguistic responses. Quantitative indicators are employed to compare frequencies and patterns of speech act strategies, while qualitative analysis allows for the interpretation of discourse-level characteristics and culturally rooted options. The rationale for adopting a cross-cultural comparative framework is based on the necessity to better understand how pragmatic competence is performed, transferred, or hindered in second/foreign language contexts. Previous studies have revealed that L2 learners' speech acts often show the influence of L1 norms, contributing to pragmatic transfer or pragmatic failure (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). Furthermore, variations between learners in EFL of Saudi Arabia and ESL of the United Kingdom or other English-speaking countries environments are particularly crucial for studying the role of authentic input and sociocultural experience in the growth of pragmatic awareness.

A crucial methodological decision in this study centered on the participants' IELTS scores. IELTS scores were collected to ensure that participants were proficient in English, but they were not used as an analytical variable. The decision was based on theoretical and methodological considerations. First, a main aim of the study was to explore the role of sociocultural exposure, particularly experience in an English-speaking environment, in shaping pragmatic performance.

The central research questions did not deal with linguistic accuracy or general language proficiency, but rather with the sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic realization of speech acts across different cultural contexts. Incorporating IELTS scores as a variable in the analysis would have changed the focus from sociocultural experience to general proficiency. Second, pragmatic competence and grammatical proficiency, although related, are not the same. Research in interlanguage pragmatics has consistently demonstrated that high linguistic proficiency does not automatically result in high pragmatic competence (Taguchi, 2011). Learners may have advanced grammatical knowledge while still lacking sensitivity to contextual variables such as social distance, power relations, and degree of imposition. In contrast, individuals with moderate proficiency may show relatively sophisticated pragmatic awareness if they have substantial exposure to authentic interaction in the target culture. Consequently, treating IELTS scores as a predictive variable for pragmatic performance would risk confusion between two distinct dimensions of communicative competence.

Third, the participant groups in this study were carefully selected to minimize extreme proficiency differences. All EFL and ESL participants met the institutional English requirements necessary for an academic study. This ensured that they were equipped with sufficient linguistic resources to perform the discourse completion tasks meaningfully. The relatively comparable proficiency range across groups reduced the possibility that major differences in performance were attributable to basic language ability. As a result, the more salient distinguishing variable between groups was not proficiency level but experiential exposure to English-speaking environments. Moreover, including IELTS scores into the analysis would have required considering proficiency as a continuous independent variable and statistically modelling its relationship with each semantic formula category. Taking into account the study's focus on cross-cultural pragmatic variation rather than proficiency effects, such modelling would have introduced an additional analytical layer that was not directly aligned with the research objectives. The deliberate exclusion of IELTS scores from the main analysis therefore shows a deliberate effort to maintain conceptual clarity and avoid misattributing sociopragmatic differences to general language proficiency. However, it should be noted that IELTS scores were not disregarded entirely. Rather, they served as a screening mechanism to make sure that non-

native participants were equipped with adequate linguistic competence to complete the tasks. In this sense, proficiency was controlled for at the sampling stage rather than analyzed as a primary explanatory variable.

Through the comparison between native and non-native performances, this study aims to provide empirical insights into the nature and extent of pragmatic competence among Saudi learners, as well as contributing to broader pedagogical implications for English language teaching. The concentration on the speech acts of complaints, apologies, and refusals, which are socially and emotionally complex, allows for a rich examination of how learners handle politeness, face, and imposition across linguistic and cultural barriers.

This methodological approach helps to achieve the overarching goals of the study:

3.2.1.To explore and compare the types and structures of the three different speech acts across groups.

3.2.2.To investigate the role of social distance, ranking of imposition, and address terms in speech act performance.

3.2.3.To identify the similarities and differences among learners and native speakers in various learning contexts.

3.2.4.To identify the pedagogical implications of the findings for improving pragmatic instruction in both EFL and ESL settings.

3.3.Participants

To fulfil the objectives of this study and ensure valid cross-cultural and interlanguage comparisons, participants were purposely selected to represent four different groups, each representing different degrees of exposure to English, cultural norms, and sociolinguistic backgrounds.

Participants	Number	Age	Education	Type of Exposure to English Language
British English native speakers	30	18 to 30	Undergraduate/ Postgraduate	Native speakers
Saudi Arabic EFL learners	30	18 to 30	Undergraduate/ Postgraduate	EFL (Saudi Arabia)
Saudi Arabic ESL learners	30	18 to 30	Undergraduate/ Postgraduate	ESL (United Kingdom)
Saudi monolingual speakers of Arabic	30	18 to 30	Undergraduate/ Postgraduate	-

Table 3.1. Demographic details of participants across all groups.

As mentioned above, a total of 120 participants were involved in this study, with 30 individuals per group, ensuring balanced representation across the following categories:

3.3.1. British English native speakers:

This group included 30 adult native speakers of British English, who live in the United Kingdom. They are students at the University of Nottingham (School of English). The study supervisors helped and allowed the researcher to get access to this group of participants via a large module, 'Studying Language', in the School of English at the University of Nottingham. Participants were chosen to ensure sociolinguistic diversity while remaining within a common L1 and cultural frame of reference. Responses from them served as the baseline for native pragmatic norms in English and served as a standard against which the other groups' performances could be compared.

3.3.2.Saudi Arabic EFL learners

This group consisted of 30 Saudi EFL learners studying in Saudi Arabia. They are high-level students in the English Department at the College of Arts and Education, Majmaah University, which is located in the Central Region of Saudi Arabia. This group of participants had received English instruction in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context, where exposure to authentic spoken English and pragmatic input is often limited to classroom instruction and media. Responses of this group of participants were crucial for understanding how pragmatic competence needs to be improved in non-immersive learning contexts and how L1 transfer affects L2 speech act performance in such settings.

3.3.3.Saudi Arabic ESL learners

This group consisted of 30 Saudi ESL learners who were residing in English-speaking country (the United Kingdom) for academic purposes. They are students who study different majors at the two Nottingham universities (University of Nottingham and Nottingham Trent University), England, United Kingdom. The researcher had access to this group of participants via the Saudi Students Club. The club, based in Nottingham, helps researchers and allows them to access participants during club events. These participants had continuous and immersive exposure to native English language use through daily interactions in academic, social, and different contexts. This group of participants provided insight into how authentic input and cultural immersion affect the acquisition of L2 pragmatic norms, especially in comparison to their EFL counterparts.

3.3.4.Saudi monolingual speakers of Arabic

This group comprised 30 Saudi adult participants whose only functional language was Arabic. They study at different departments in the College of Arts and Education at Majmaah University. This group of participants had little to no exposure to English in communicative environments and none were actively studying English at the time of the study. The goal of including this group was to identify L1 pragmatic norms in Arabic and to facilitate cross-linguistic contrast in how speech acts are conceptualized and performed in the participants' mother language.

All participants were adults, ranging in age from 18 to 30 years. All participants were educated with university undergraduate and postgraduate students representing all four participants' groups. Participants were chosen through a non-probability purposive sampling method, tailored to the needs of cross-cultural pragmatic research where cultural competence and language background must be taken into account to ensure comparability. Before participating, all individuals were informed about the purpose of the study in line with ethical research practices. The combination of these four groups allowed for a triangulated comparative analysis:

- NSs vs. EFL/ESL learners: to explore L2 pragmatic competence and development.
- MSAs vs. EFL/ESL learners: to investigate patterns of L1 transfer and interference.
- EFL vs. ESL learners: to study the effect of learning context on pragmatic acquisition.
- NSs vs. MSAs: to explore cross-cultural pragmatic differences between native linguistic communities.

By studying these relationships, the study can not only analyze the accuracy and appropriateness of speech act performance in English among Saudi learners but also explore the impact of sociocultural background and immersion on pragmatic adaptation.

3.4.Data Collection

The primary data collection tool utilized in this study is a Discourse Completion Task (DCT), a well-established elicitation instrument widely used in interlanguage pragmatics and cross-cultural speech act studies. The DCT was designed to investigate how participants perform complaints, apologies, and refusals across different social contexts, to allow for systematic comparison of pragmatic strategies, discourse structures, and contextual sensitivity among the four participant groups.

The issue of appropriate data collection methods has been one of the most controversial issues in interlanguage and cross-cultural pragmatics. Each data collection method has shown different strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, the appropriateness of data collection methods may differ

from one study to another depending on the aims of each study. In this study, data was collected using an open-ended questionnaire in the form of a Written Discourse Completion Task (WDCT).

The Written Discourse Completion Task (WDCT) is a well-known and widely used tool to collect data in inter-language and cross-cultural studies. In which, the researcher creates a number of scenarios (usually eight to twelve scenarios) and ask participants to react and respond accordingly (Ogiermann, 2018). It was adopted in a large number of pragmatic and politeness studies including Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz' - (1990), Tanck's (2002), and Delen and Tavils' (2010) work. The WDCT has been one of the most applied tools in pragmatics. It is considered a reliable method to elicit pragmatic representative data (Blum-Kulka, 1982).

There are many types of Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) that are used to collect data related to measuring the pragmatic knowledge and competence of participants. Specifically, there are six known types of DCTs that have already been used in many previous studies (Parvaresh & Tavakoli, 2009). These six types are: Written Discourse Completion Task (WDCT), Multiple Choice Discourse Completion Task (MDCT), Oral Discourse Completion Task (ODCT), Discourse Role-Play Task (DRPT), Discourse Self-Assessment Task (DSAT), and Role-Play Self-Assessment (RPSA)

All these six types are somewhat similar when it comes to the goals that they achieve. However, they differ among themselves when it comes to the methods used to achieve these goals. All these types aim to create specific scenarios and ask participants to interact with these scenarios in different ways. Some of these types ask participants to interact with the scenarios through writing, some through voice recordings, some through multiple choice, and some through self-assessment of video recordings (ibid).

In this study, the WDCT was chosen to be the data collection tool due to many justifications related to the objectives of this study. On the one hand, the WDCT gives participants a high level of privacy in terms of not being identified by their names and in terms of not having their voices recorded. This reduces stress on participants and allows them to interact with the scenarios naturally whatever responses they wish to write. In other words, some of the speech acts investigated in this study may require some offensive or annoying responses that participants may find themselves embarrassed to express while their voices are being recorded. The WDCT

frees participants from all these restrictions and gives them complete freedom and convenience to express and interact with scenarios without any kind of pressure on them. For example, when participants are asked to respond to a particular scenario of complaint, as a Face Threatening Act, in which they or their rights are being infringed, expressing the complaint in writing with an anonymous identity will be less stressful than expressing it with a known identity or with a recorded voice or video. Therefore, choosing the WDCT as the data collection method in this study contributes to increasing the reliability of data. On the other hand, taking into account the objectives of this study, the WDCT gives the researcher the ability to make a balanced comparison between the pragmatic knowledge of different groups of participants. Other types do not allow the researcher to make this comparison easily and satisfactorily.

While DCTs are useful for gathering speech act data, they are sometimes criticized for lacking the spontaneity and interactional complexity of real-life conversations. In other words, when participants complete the WDCT and interact with its scenarios, they do not speak or communicate realistically. They just understand the scenarios, take the variables into account, and then simulate the expected responses according to the pragmatic knowledge that they have in their memory. (Barron, 2003). This is one of the main counterarguments that may question the effectiveness of the WDCT as a reliable research tool used to collect data. The WDCT reflects what participants think they would say if they were in such scenarios rather than what they would actually say if they lived in these scenarios realistically (Schneider, 2011).

Nevertheless, this limitation was addressed firstly by carefully contextualizing each scenario with social and emotional cues, allowing free-form responses rather than forced-choice options, and supporting DCT results with qualitative interpretation that takes into consideration tone, structure, and pragmatic context. Secondly, this study is based originally on achieving educational and teaching goals where it seeks to identify the linguistic patterns, formulas, and features that the participants believe that they are considered appropriate taking into account the linguistic level of participants and the cultural and social variables of the scenarios. In other words, when participants, as representatives of a specific culture and based on their pragmatic knowledge, choose specific patterns and consider these patterns as socially and culturally suitable according to specific scenarios, this contributes effectively to identify the linguistic strategies and patterns

used in this specific culture based on the pragmatic knowledge of participants as real representatives (Ogiermann, 2018).

Nonetheless, it still can be argued that naturally occurring data collection methods can be used as additional main methods to collect data in this study. However, according to Nguyen (2019), data of naturalistic methods are considered difficult to be obtained and analyzed. They may not support the WDCT in answering the research questions because they provide a large number of pragmalinguistic and sociolinguistic qualities that may not be relevant to the aims of the study which will result in wasting time and effort. In addition, some previous studies (e.g., Beebe and Cummings, 1996; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2013) compared the semantic formulas, on which the current study focuses on, elicited from WDCT with ones elicited from naturally occurring data collection methods. Results showed that both types of collection methods included identical semantic formulas.

Moreover, the naturally occurring data collection methods do not allow the researcher to have control on variables that may have impacts on the production of speech acts and, more importantly, it does not allow for an easy comparison between different types of pragmatic performance which this study is about. One of the major strengths of DCTs is their flexibility to control context. Each participant is given the same situational instructions, which allows for direct comparison of linguistic performances across L1 and L2 users, isolation of specific variables such as social distance and ranking of imposition, and elicitation of specific speech acts that might otherwise not be observed naturally within limited observational windows. Furthermore, in the context of this study, the WDCTs were especially appropriate given that they addressed face-threatening acts (FTAs), which are often avoided or softened in everyday communication. By employing structured scenarios, they ensured that participants would engage with these acts explicitly, providing insight into their preferred pragmatic strategies, degree of mitigation, and sensitivity to cultural norms.

Therefore, taking into account the aims of this study and the arguments mentioned above, naturalistic data are not considered suitable additional methods to elicit appropriate data for this study. The decision to only employ DCTs in this research is therefore deliberate and strategic, in

line with the research's main objectives: to explore the underlying pragmatic strategies, linguistic structures, and cross-linguistic factors related to the formulation of complaints, apologies, and refusals. The DCT's structured design allows the researcher to control for key variables (e.g., distance and degree of imposition), which are more difficult to standardize in naturalistic or ethnographic data collection. Additionally, DCTs provide a practical and ethically sound approach to exploring potentially uncomfortable or face-sensitive speech acts, enabling participants to communicate without fear of real-world consequences. Consequently, the DCT not only serves as a methodological alternative, but also as a highly efficient instrument for providing insight into participants' sociopragmatic awareness and pragmatic decision-making processes—core areas of interest in this study.

The WDCT created for this study consists of a total of 12 situations, four for each speech act: complaints, apologies, and refusals. These situations were designed depending on previous pragmatic studies, adaptations from cross-culturally validated tools, pilot tests among a small group of multilingual individuals to ensure clarity, realism, and cultural neutrality. Participants were instructed to read each scenario and write what they would say in response if they were in the same context. Situations were delivered in the participants' targeted language: English for native speakers, EFL, and ESL participants, and Arabic for monolingual Arabic participants. The DCTs were administered in paper-based formats depending on the participants' location. For ESL learners, the DCT was distributed manually at different locations across Nottingham, United Kingdom. For native English participants, it was also distributed manually during different lab sessions at the School of English, University of Nottingham. As for EFL participants and Arabic monolingual speakers, the DCT was distributed manually in Saudi Arabia, specifically in Majmaah, Riyadh Region, through a number of classroom sessions at Majmaah University. To reduce social desirability bias, participants were instructed that there were no right or wrong responses, and that the purpose was to identify different styles in which people communicate in everyday situations.

In this study, each scenario was constructed to manipulate key contextual variables which are social distance (e.g., friend vs. stranger) and imposition level (e.g., low vs. high transgressions). Specifically, these two variables have not been satisfactorily investigated in Saudi culture for their impacts on constructing and producing the inter-language speech acts of apology, complaint, and refusal. Based on pragmatic theory, degree of imposition refers to the extent to which a speech act restricts the hearer's freedom of action or places a burden upon them (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Imposition is typically related to the costliness of the act in terms of effort, obligation, time, inconvenience, or social expectations. The greater the expected burden placed on the interlocutor, whether it is material, relational, or normative, the higher the level of imposition. In contrast, acts that carry minimal cost or have limited social obligation are considered low in imposition.

In designing the twelve scenarios, imposition was operationalised in relation to three interrelated criteria which are:

- The expected degree of compliance or obligation embedded in the situation.
- The potential relational consequences of performing or refusing the act.
- The extent of face-threat generated by the speech act within that specific interactional context.

Imposition was not decided only by the material magnitude of the request or event, nor by its emotional intensity, but by the interactional pressures and normative expectations surrounding the act. Therefore, situations classified as high imposition were those in which compliance or refusal was likely to carry significant interpersonal implications. These situations were likely to require substantial accommodation or include strong social expectations. Situations classified as low imposition were those where the act required limited effort, involved minimal relational risk, and allowed greater flexibility in response without threatening core social bonds. This operationalisation was carried out consistently across all speech act categories in order to maintain internal methodological coherence. In the following, the WDCT situations used in this study are explained in detail along with the variables considered.

3.4.1. The Speech Act of Complaint

No.	Situation	Speaker's role	Hearer's role	Ranking of imposition	Social distance	Power
1	A student's mobile phone	Complainer (Student)	Complainee (Student)	Low R	High D	(S=H)
2	Annoying neighbour	Complainer (Neighbour)	Complainee (Neighbour)	Low R	Low D	(S=H)
3	Rude volunteer	Complainer (Volunteer)	Complainee (Volunteer)	High R	High D	(S=H)
4	A sibling's neglect	Complainer (Sibling)	Complainee (Sibling)	High R	Low D	(S=H)

Table 3.2. Situations of complaint in the Discourse Completion Task.

- Situation of complaint 1 (English version)

Imagine that you were a student reading some books in the library. A student in the library was sitting next to you reading a book and their mobile phone was receiving messages loudly in a constant manner. The sound of messages alerts was a distraction because the place was very quiet. You decided to talk to the student to express your complaint about their mobile phone's alerts sound.

- Situation of complaint 1 (Arabic version)

تخيل أنه أثناء وجودك في المكتبة، كنت/ي تقوم/ين بقراءة بعض الكتب في قسم المكتبة الصامت. كان أحد زوار المكتبة جالساً/ة بجوارك يقرأ/تقرأ كتاباً وكان هاتفه/المحمول يتلقى الرسائل بصوت عالٍ بشكل مستمر. كان صوت تنبيهات الرسائل مصدر إلهاء وتشتيت لأن المكان كان هادئاً جداً. قررت التحدث إليه/ا للتعبير عن شكواك بشأن صوت تنبيهات الرسائل.

- Situation of complaint 2 (English version)

Imagine that, while you were at home, there were musical sounds coming from the apartment of a neighbor with whom you have a good relationship and mutual respect. You tried to wait for a while hoping that these musical sounds would stop but these sounds continued. You go to your neighbor to deliver your complaint due to these musical sounds.

- Situation of complaint 2 (Arabic version)

تخيل/ي أنه أثناء وجودك في منزلك، كانت هنالك أصوات موسيقية قادمة من شقة أحد جيرانك الذي/التي تربطك به/ا علاقة جيدة واحترام متبادل. حاولت الانتظار لبعض الوقت على أمل أن تتوقف هذه الأصوات الموسيقية، ولكن هذه الأصوات استمرت. ذهبت إلى جارك/تك لتقديم شكواك نظرا لهذه الأصوات الموسيقية.

- Situation of complaint 3 (English version)

Imagine that, during your voluntary work in one of the volunteer organizations, one of the new volunteers in the group who you have never met before was dealing with you badly. This volunteer was issuing orders in a rude manner and asking you to implement them even though this volunteer was not a manager or supervisor and did not have any legal capacity to issue orders. These behaviors prompted you to talk to this volunteer to express your complaints and dissatisfaction with these unacceptable behaviors.

- Situation of complaint 3 (Arabic version)

تخيل/ي أنه أثناء عملك التطوعي في إحدى المنظمات التطوعية، كان/ت أحد المتطوعين/عات الجدد في المجموعة (لم تعرفه/يها مسبقًا) يتعامل/تتعامل معك بشكل سيئ حيث كان/ت يصدر/تصدر الأوامر بطريقة فظة ويطلب/تطلب منك تنفيذها بالرغم من أنه/ا لم يكن/تكن تملك/يملك صفة إدارية او اشرافية وليس لديه/ا أي صفة نظامية لإصدار الأوامر. دفعتك هذه السلوكيات إلى التحدث معه/ا للتعبير عن شكواك وعدم رضاك عن هذه السلوكيات غير المقبولة.

- Situation of complaint 4 (English version)

Imagine that you have two laptops, both in good condition and in good working order. A sibling came to you and told you that their laptop broke down and became unusable. Also, your sibling told you that they would buy a new laptop within three months. Then, your sibling asked you to lend them one of your laptops to use during the next three months and your sibling promised to return it to you when buying a new laptop. You lent your sibling one of your laptops. Three months later, your sibling bought a new laptop and returned yours. Unfortunately, the condition of your laptop was very poor when it was returned, and traces of misuse and neglect were very clear. After that, you wanted to talk to your sibling to express your complaint and resentment about this unacceptable behavior.

- Situation of complaint 4 (Arabic version)

تخيل/ي أن لديك جهاز كمبيوتر محمول، في حالة جيدة ويعملان بشكل جيد. جاء أحد افراد عائلتك إليك وأخبرك أن جهاز الكمبيوتر المحمول الخاص به/ا قد تعطل وأصبح غير صالح للاستخدام. أخبرك/تك أيضًا أنه/ا سيشتري/ستشتري كمبيوتر محمول جديد في غضون ثلاثة أشهر. ثم طلب/ت منك إعارته/ا أحد أجهزة الكمبيوتر المحمولة الخاصة بك لاستخدامه خلال الأشهر الثلاثة القادمة وتم الوعد بإعادته إليك عند شراء كمبيوتر محمول جديد. قمت بإعارته/ا أحد أجهزة الكمبيوتر المحمولة الخاصة بك. بعد ثلاثة أشهر، تم شراء جهاز كمبيوتر محمول جديد وتم إعادة الكمبيوتر المحمول الخاص بك. لسوء الحظ، كانت حالة الكمبيوتر المحمول الخاص بك سيئة للغاية عند إعادته، وكانت آثار سوء الاستخدام والإهمال واضحة جدًا. بعد ذلك أردت التحدث معه/ا للتعبير عن شكواك واستيائك من هذا السلوك غير المقبول.

3.4.2.The Speech Act of Apology

No.	Situation	Speaker's role	Hearer's role	Ranking of imposition	Social distance	Power
1	Blocking the aisle	Apologizer (Customer)	Victim (Customer)	Low R	High D	(S=H)

2	Shifts swapping	Apologizer (Volunteer)	Victim (Volunteer)	High R	Low D	(S=H)
3	Coffee cup falling on the ground	Apologizer (Customer)	Victim (Customer)	High R	High D	(S=H)
4	Returning a book	Apologizer (Sibling)	Victim (Sibling)	Low R	Low D	(S=H)

Table 3.3. Situations of apology in the Discourse Completion Task.

Situation of apology 1 (English version)

Imagine that while you were shopping in an aisle of a shop, a product caught your eye. You picked it up and started reading the details written on it. While you were reading, someone from behind said: Excuse me! You turned around and then you realized that you were blocking the aisle and immediately you wanted to apologize for blocking the aisle.

Situation of apology 1 (Arabic version)

تخيل/ي انه اثناء قيامك بالتسوق في ممر أحد المحلات، لفت انتباهك أحد المنتجات وقمت بأخذه وبدأت في قراءة التفاصيل المكتوبة عليه. أثناء قيامك بالقراءة اذ بشخص من الخلف يقول: لو سمحت! حينها قمت بالالتفاف وأدركت ان وقوفك يغلق الممر، فوراً أردت ان تعتذر/ين له عن قيامك بإغلاق الممر.

Situation of apology 2 (English version)

Imagine that you have volunteered to work in a voluntary organization through which many humanitarian activities are organized. This volunteering organization distributes working hours to all volunteers. One of the team members (represented by the letter A), who you have previously volunteered with and have a good friendship with, asked you if it is possible to swap shifts so that you cover A's shift hours on Tuesday, and A covers your shift hours on Thursday. You said yes and it was agreed. Unfortunately, you forgot and did not cover A's hours on Tuesday.

This put A in an awkward position with the management of the organization. You wanted to talk to A to apologize for what happened.

Situation of apology 2 (Arabic version)

تخيل/ي أنك تطوعت للعمل في إحدى المنظمات التطوعية التي يتم من خلالها تنظيم العديد من الأنشطة الإنسانية. تقوم هذه المنظمة التطوعية بتوزيع ساعات العمل على جميع المتطوعين. أحد المتطوعين في الفريق (سبق لك التطوع والعمل معه/ا في أكثر من مناسبة ولديك صداقة جيدة معه/ا) سأل/تك فيما يتعلق بإمكانية تبديل الورديات بحيث تقوم/ين أنت/ي بتغطية ساعات دوامه/ا يوم الثلاثاء وتقوم/يقوم هي/هو بتغطية ساعات دوامك يوم الخميس. قمت بإعطائه/ا موافقتك وحماسك للفكرة وتم الاتفاق عليها. للأسف، قمت أنت/ي بنسيان هذه الاتفاقية ولم تأت/ين لتغطية ساعات عمله/ا يوم الثلاثاء ووضعت/ه في موقف حرج مع إدارة المنظمة بسبب إخفاقك في تغطية ساعات عمله/ا. بعد ذلك أردت التحدث معه/ا للاعتذار عما حدث.

Situation of apology 3 (English version)

Imagine that while you were in a shopping centre, you bought a cup of coffee and then you started shopping holding that cup. Unfortunately, the cup of coffee fell to the floor and scattered on the floor and on a customer who was next to you at that time. The customer's clothes got wet with your coffee and you wanted to apologize for this unintended event.

Situation of apology 3 (Arabic version)

تخيل/ي أنه أثناء تواجدك في مركز تجاري، قمت بشراء كوباً من القهوة ثم بدأت بالتسوق ممسكاً/ةً بذلك الكوب. لسوء الحظ، سقط كوب القهوة وتناثر على الأرض وعلى العميل/ه الذي/التي كان/ت بجوارك في ذلك الوقت. تبللت ملابس العميل/ه بقهوتك وأردت الاعتذار عن هذا الحدث غير المقصود.

Situation of apology 4 (English version)

Imagine that you borrowed a book from your sibling and (even though your sibling does not need the book) you promised to return the book in a week. Unfortunately, you forgot to return the book on time. So, you go to your brother to return the book and to apologize for this unintended delay.

Situation of apology 4 (Arabic version)

تخيل/ي أنك قمت باستعارة احد الكتب من شقيقك على ان تقوم باعادته بعد أسبوع. لسوء الحظ، نسيت ان تقوم بإعادة الكتاب في الوقت المحدد. لذا، ذهبت الى شقيقك من اجل إعادة الكتاب ومن اجل الاعتذار على التأخير الغير مقصود.

3.4.3.The Speech Act of Refusal

No.	Situation	Speaker's role	Hearer's role	Ranking of imposition	Social distance	Power
1	Bypassing a queue place	Refuser (Customer)	Refused (Customer)	Low R	High D	(S=H)
2	Wedding	Refuser (Sibling)	Refused (Sibling)	High R	Low D	(S=H)
3	Borrowing of a mobile phone	Refuser (Student)	Refused (Student)	High R	High D	(S=H)
4	Organizing an event	Refuser (Volunteer)	Refused (Volunteer)	Low R	Low D	(S=H)

Table 3.4. Situations of refusal in the Discourse Completion Task.

- Situation of refusal 1 (English version)

Imagine that while you were in a shopping centre, you finished choosing a large number of products to buy and you went to the counter to pay. You were in a hurry, but it was too crowded at the payment queue. Anyway, you took your place in the queue and started waiting. Then, a customer came to you and asked you to allow them to be in front of you in the queue because they only wanted to buy one single product and they told you that it will not take a long time to pay. You did not want to allow the customer to take your place because you were in a hurry. So, you wanted to refuse the request.

- Situation of refusal 1 (Arabic version)

تخيل/ي أنك عندما كنت في متجر تسوق، انتهيت من اختيار عدد كبير من المنتجات للشراء وذهبت إلى المحاسب من اجل الدفع. لقد كنت في عجلة من أمرك، لكن طابور انتظار الدفع كان مزدحم للغاية. على أي حال، أخذت مكانك في قائمة الانتظار وبدأت تنتظر/ين. بعد ذلك، أتى/أتت إليك أحد/ى العملاء/العميلات وطلب/ت منك السماح له/ا بأن يكون/تكون أمامك في قائمة الانتظار لأنه/ا أراد/ت شراء منتج واحد فقط وتم اخبارك أن الأمر لن يستغرق وقتًا طويلاً في الدفع. لم ترغب/ين في السماح بأخذ مكانك لأنك كنت في عجلة من أمرك. لذا أردت أن ترفض/ين الطلب.

- Situation of refusal 2 (English version)

Imagine that while you were completing pending tasks that you had to finish as soon as possible, you received a message from a sibling inviting you to attend their wedding which will take place in two weeks. You have many outstanding responsibilities and obligations that do not accept delay or postponement, forcing you to send a message refusing to attend the wedding.

- Situation of refusal 2 (Arabic version)

تخيل/ي أنه أثناء قيامك بإكمال مهام معلقة كان عليك إنهاؤها في أقرب وقت ممكن، تلقيت رسالة من أحد افراد عائلتك المقربين يدعوك/تدعوك فيها لحضور حفل زفافه/ا الذي سيعقد بعد اسبوعين. انت لديك العديد من المسؤوليات والالتزامات المعلقة التي لا تقبل التأخير أو التأجيل مما أجبرك على إرسال رسالة ترفض/ين من خلالها حضور حفل الزفاف.

- Situation of refusal 3 (English version)

Imagine that you were a student sitting in the library writing one of the essays that you were required to submit. A student came to you and asked you to give them your mobile phone because they needed to call a friend. As you have never met and don't trust this student, you refused the request.

- Situation of refusal 3 (Arabic version)

تخيل/ي أنه أثناء تواجدك في المكتبة، بينما كنت تقوم/ين بكتابة إحدى المقالات التي يجب عليك تسليمها، جاء إليك رجل/امرأة ما وطلب/ت منك أن تعطيه/ا هاتفك المحمول لأنه/ا بحاجة إلى الاتصال بصديق. نظرًا لأنك لم تقابله/ا مطلقًا ولا تثق به/ا، قمت برفض الطلب.

- Situation of refusal 4 (English version)

Imagine that, during your volunteer work in a volunteer organization, one of the volunteers, with whom you have a good relationship and mutual respect, invited you to participate with them in organizing a new event that they will supervise. Unfortunately, you were busy with too many missions and could not participate. So, you refused his invitation.

- Situation of refusal 4 (Arabic version)

تخيل/ي أنه أثناء عملك التطوعي في منظمة تطوعية، تلقيت دعوة من أحد المتطوعين/عات، الذي/التي تربطك به/ا علاقة جيدة واحترام متبادل، كانت الدعوة للمشاركة معه/ا في تنظيم حدث جديد سيشرف/ستشرف عليه بنفسه/ا. لسوء الحظ، كنت مشغولًا/لةً بالعديد من المهام ولم تتمكن/ين من المشاركة معه/ا. لذلك، قمت برفض دعوته/ا.

3.5.Data Analysis

The data collected using the Written Discourse Completion Tasks (WDCTs) were analyzed based on two-tiered approach combining both qualitative and quantitative methods, according to research best practices in interlanguage pragmatics (Félix-Brasdefer, 2004; Taguchi, 2011). This combined framework facilitated an in-depth analysis of the strategies, order, frequency, and content of semantic formulas employed to produce apologies, complaints and refusals.

All responses were first transcribed into a uniform digital format. Arabic responses from the Saudi monolingual speakers of Arabic were translated into English for comparative analysis. Careful

attention was given to maintaining pragmatic meaning, tone, and politeness indicators. In order to ensure translation reliability, multiple bilingual speakers were consulted from both the University of Leeds and Majmaah University. Disagreements were resolved through discussion and back-translation with some responses taking long time and more consultations to find the identical equivalent. Following transcription, all responses were sorted by speech act category (complaint, apology, refusal), situation nature (manipulated for social distance and level of imposition), and participant group (British English, ESL, EFL, and Saudi Arabic monolingual speakers). This procedure allowed for both within-group and cross-group comparisons in a way that enabled the researcher to observe patterns of pragmatic formulas use and variation across sociocultural and linguistic contexts.

The complaint speech act structure was studied based on a six-part framework that consisted of Opener, Orientation, Justification, Act Statement, Remedy, and Closing. This framework is a modified combination of the discourse-structural sequencing model developed by Schaefer and Giddens (1981, 1982) and the semantic formulaic approach proposed in the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) led by Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989). Choosing this model was guided by its ability to integrate both the pragmatic and discourse level components of complaint performance which helped to carry out more accurate comparisons among the four groups. While Schaefer and Giddens presented insights into the narrative progression of complaints in spoken interaction, the CCSARP contributed a well-established framework for categorizing speech acts across cultures and languages. The combination of both approaches allows for a detailed analysis that is sensitive to cross-cultural variation, particularly with regard to politeness strategies, directness levels, and interactional goals. Taking into account the cultural and linguistic gaps between the Saudi and British participants, this hybrid approach provides a flexible yet systematic means of exploring potential similarities and differences in complaint behavior.

Formulas	Strategies Examples
I. Opener	Attention-getting Politeness marker Discourse softener Face-saving opening
II. Orientation	Background/context Narrative preface Scene-setting Indirect approach
III. Justification	Mitigation Rationalization Emotional appeal Face-threat minimization
IV. Act Statement	Direct complaint Indirect complaint Hinting Negative evaluation
V. Remedy	Request Suggestion Threat (mild or strong) Negotiation
VI. Closing	Gratitude Positive face strategy Reconciliation Politeness closing

Table 3.5. Schaefer and Giddens (1981, 1982) and Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) modified coding scheme for complaints

Apology speech acts were analyzed using the framework developed by Olshtain and Cohen (1983), which provides five core strategies that speakers may rely on in delivering apologies. This framework was used due to its detailed yet flexible categorization of apology behavior, which makes it ideally suitable for cross-cultural pragmatics research. Considering that this study

explores apology performance among Saudi and British participants, a framework that incorporates both explicit and supportive elements of apology was necessary. Olshtain and Cohen's framework facilitates an in-depth analysis of the linguistic and pragmatic decisions made by speakers, including how they acknowledge responsibility, express regret, restore trust, and handle face-threatening acts across cultural barriers. Additionally, this framework has been widely validated in comparative pragmatics and interlanguage studies, which enhance its applicability to this bilingual, and bicultural context.

Formulas	Strategies Examples
I. An expression of apology (APOL)	Expression of regret Politeness marker
II. Explanation or account (EXPL)	Justification Rationalization Contextualization
III. Taking on responsibility (RESP)	Admission of guilt Denial of intent Self-blame
IV. Offer of repair (REPR)	Compensation Problem-solving Reconciliation attempt
V. Promise of forbearance (FORB)	Commitment to change Assurance Trust restoration

Table 3.6. Olshtain and Cohen (1983) coding scheme for apologies

The classification of refusal performance is built on the one proposed by Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990). This framework was chosen because of its detailed categorization of semantic formulas that include both direct and indirect forms of refusing in multiple languages and

cultures. The speech act of refusal is by its nature a face-threatening, particularly in high-context cultures such as Saudi Arabia, where protecting interpersonal unity is crucial. The Beebe et al. model addresses this pragmatic complexity, providing a systematic overview of the employed refusal formulas such as regret expressions, reasons/excuses, and future acceptance. In light of the current research's cross-cultural focus, this framework offers room for both qualitative interpretations and quantitative coding, allowing for a meaningful comparison of sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic aspects of refusal performance.

Formulas	Strategies Examples
I. No	Blunt refusal Assertive declination
II. Negative willingness/ability	Negative ability Avoidance of obligation
III. Regret	Apologetic softener Face-saving strategy
IV. Excuse/reason/explanation	Justification Contextualization of refusal
V. Offering alternative	Cooperative strategy Polite redirection
VI. Future acceptance/promise	Delayed commitment Hope-giving strategy
VII. Statement of philosophy	Principle-based refusal External justification
VIII. Acceptance as a refusal	Mixed message Softened refusal with positive tone
IX. positive feeling/appreciation	Gratitude Politeness marker Face-enhancing preface or closure

Table 3.7. Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990) coding scheme for refusals

All coding schemes used in this study have been proven valid and reliable. They have been widely used in apologies, complaints, and refusals studies including Ren's (2012), Bikmen and Martis' (2013), Han and Burgueu-Tazeguls' (2016), and Kreishan's (2018) work. Each response was then analyzed and coded according to the type of strategy employed (e.g., expression of regret, justification, Excuse/reason/explanation), the overall structure of the speech act, and the use of address terms and cultural framing (e.g., religious expressions in Arabic). Coding was conducted manually and cross-validated by a second researcher from the University of Leeds, Leeds, United Kingdom. Generally, there was a high level of consistency between the coders and any inconsistencies were addressed through collaborative discussions. Following the coding process, frequency statistics were generated for each component within and across groups. Statistical comparisons were conducted using the frequency of usage and percentages. These analyses enabled the researcher to find answers to questions such as which strategies were most or least frequently used by each group, did the Saudi EFL and ESL learners match native speaker patterns, were certain types of speech act strategies more frequently used in Arabic than in English, and how did social distance and degree of imposition impact language choices. Quantitative findings were then visualized in tables and charts to clearly illustrate patterns and contrasts in pragmatic features choices across speech acts and participant groups.

To add depth to the frequency data, a discourse based qualitative analysis was applied. This included a close reading of all responses to identify linguistic structures (e.g., sequencing of moves, presence of supportive speech acts), cultural symbols and pragmalinguistic selections (e.g., idiomatic phrases, honorifics), sociopragmatic indicators (e.g., tone, emotional intensity, and contextual alignment), and occurrences of L1 transfer/pragmatic failure. This interpretive layer was significant in exploring how and why learners deviated from or were close to native speaker patterns and how cultural norms shaped their pragmatic choicemaking. Qualitative research results were triangulated with quantitative findings to maintain coherence and deepen the analytical insight. The final step was to synthesize the findings across the three speech acts according to the research questions and the theoretical perspective. A number of themes were identified related to the influence of L1 cultural values on L2 pragmatic performance, the

influence of learning context (EFL and ESL), the role of the variables of social distance and degree of imposition, and the role of address terms and mitigation strategies in politeness maintenance. These themes were reviewed in light of relevant literature and theories (e.g., Brown & Levinson, 1987; Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993; Taguchi, 2011) in order for the researcher to make conclusions about pragmatic competence development in cross-cultural and interlanguage environments.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

Ethical integrity is an essential element of any academic research, especially when human participants are involved. This study was conducted in strict adherence to ethical guidelines established by the Faculty of Arts (University of Nottingham). This included obtaining official institutional approvals for recruiting participants across all groups before data collection. The ethical considerations addressed in this study include informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, anonymity, right to withdraw, and cultural sensitivity.

On the one hand, the researcher was the responsible for keeping all data and information of participants secured. No one was allowed to get an access to responses and information of participants. On the other hand, all participants, prior to participation, were provided with a clear and detailed illustration of the study's aims, procedures, and the nature of their participation. This information was presented using a participant information sheet and further explanation was provided in a verbal briefing. Participants were made aware that this study was designed to discover how different groups express complaints, apologies, and refusals across cultures and contexts, and that their responses would be analyzed for research purposes only. Each participant was asked to sign an informed consent form confirming their understanding of the study and willingness to be involved voluntarily. Consent forms made it clear that participation was voluntary and no incentives were offered that could be seen as coercive. All participants were informed that they had the right to refuse participation or withdraw at any time without need for explanation. This right was reiterated as part of the initial recruitment and again at the

start of the DCT activity. It was also explained to participants that withdrawing from the study would not affect their academic standing.

In light of the cross-cultural nature of this study, it was crucial that the data collection process respected the sociocultural norms and linguistic preferences of all participants. All situations were carefully constructed to be realistic, non-threatening, and free of culturally offensive content. In designing the DCTs, consideration was given to potentially sensitive themes such as religion, politics, or gendered interactions that could lead to discomfort or ethical ambiguity. In addition, as part of the translation and interpretation of responses, cultural and linguistic aspects were preserved as much as possible to respect the participants' original intent.

3.7.Summary

This chapter discussed the methodological approach that guided the present study and provided a comprehensive overview of the design, participants, instrument, procedures, and analytical methods used. Based on the research aims and questions, a mixed-methods approach was used to investigate both the quantitative distribution of pragmatic strategies and the qualitative aspects of speech acts performance. This was crucial in light of pragmatics' complex nature, which includes not only the structural realization of speech acts but also their appropriateness within specific social and cultural contexts.

The rationale for the selection of participants was explained. The four groups were chosen to allow for both cross-linguistic and interlanguage comparisons as well as to investigate the effects of exposure to English in EFL versus ESL contexts. The instrument used was justified as an effective tool for gathering speech acts data in a controlled yet socially relevant way. Furthermore, this chapter provided details on the coding framework and procedures for ensuring reliability and validity. The selected methodology was designed not only to maintain academic integrity but also to respect the values and identities of those who contributed to the research. Finally, the methodological framework employed in this study provides a reliable and transparent framework for investigating the development of pragmatic competence in the speech acts of

complaints, apologies, and refusals. By combining quantitative breadth with qualitative depth, and by placing speech acts performance within the broader contexts of social distance and ranking of imposition, this study is able to provide insights into how learners construct and negotiate meaning in intercultural communication. The next three chapters explain and discuss the findings of this study and begin with complaints followed by apologies and refusals.

Chapter Four: The Speech Act of Complaint

4.1.Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the speech act of complaint performed by the four participant groups: British English native speakers, Saudi Arabic monolingual speakers, Saudi EFL learners, and Saudi ESL learners. Complaints are face-threatening acts since they require expressing dissatisfaction while dealing with issues of politeness and relational management. In this chapter, the analysis is driven by the research questions of the extent to which the types and structures of complaints differ across groups, the role of address terms, and the influence of social distance and ranking of imposition on complaint performance. Results show that cross-cultural and interlanguage differences exist in complaint structure and delivery. British English speakers displayed a strong preference for mitigating strategies that included softening devices and explanations in order to reduce face threats. Comparatively, Saudi Arabic monolingual speakers frequently employed different strategies and expressions of dissatisfaction that reflect different cultural norms. Saudi EFL participants showed patterns of weak pragmatic competence and Saudi ESL participants, however, used more complex strategies. Address terms were observed to play a critical role in shaping the tone and force of complaints across some groups. Saudi Arabic participants used them to reinforce solidarity and manage relationships. EFL and ESL participants varied in their use of this tool. Finally, the analysis revealed that both social distance and the ranking of imposition had impacts on how complaints were performed. Some groups made adjustments to their strategies, somehow, in response to these contextual variables, but the degree and manner of adjustment varied according to distinct cultural and linguistic norms.

In order to understand the findings, it is crucial to explain in detail the analytical procedures through which the complaint data were coded, quantified, and transformed into numerical results. As explained in Chapter Three, the complaint data were analysed using a modified six-part discourse-pragmatic framework including Opener, Orientation, Justification, Act Statement,

Remedy, and Closing. This framework integrates the discourse-structural sequencing model proposed by Schaefer and Giddens (1981, 1982) with the semantic formula approach developed in the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper, 1989). The purpose of combining these models was to capture both the functional and sequential organization of complaints. This allowed for a detailed analysis of how participants formulated their responses at both pragmatic and discourse levels.

The coding process started with the identification of the unit of analysis. In this study, the unit of analysis was the semantic formula, defined as a functional component of an utterance that performs a specific communicative role within the overall complaint sequence. Each participant's written response was first read carefully in its entirety in order to understand its overall communicative intention. The response was then segmented into smaller units, with each unit representing a distinct semantic formula corresponding to one of the six categories in the coding framework.

To explain this process, the following example from a Saudi Arabic participant in Complaint Situation 1 is discussed:

"Excuse me, I want to talk to you about something. As you know we are in a library and it is very quiet but your phone is annoying everyone here. Could you put in on silent?"

This response was segmented and coded as follows:

"Excuse me, I want to talk to you about something.": This was coded as an Opener because it functions as an attention-getting and politeness device employed to initiate the interaction.

"As you know we are in a library and it is very quiet.": This was coded as Orientation as it provides contextual background information and establishes the situation leading to the complaint.

"but your phone is annoying everyone here.": This was coded as Justification because it delivers the emotional reaction and provides justification for raising the complaint.

"Could you put in on silent?": This was coded as Remedy as it proposes a solution to resolve the problem.

So, this single response consisted of four semantic formulas: Opener, Orientation, Justification, and Remedy.

Each response provided by each participant was analyzed in this way. When a participant utilized multiple functional components within a single response, each component was counted separately. For instance, if a response included an Opener, Orientation, Act Statement, Remedy, and Closing, this response contributed five semantic formulas to the overall frequency count. After coding all responses, the frequencies of each semantic formula category were calculated. This was carried out by counting how many times each formula appeared across all participants within each group. These individual counts were then summed to provide the total number of semantic formulas for each group.

For instance, Saudi Arabic participants employed the Remedy formula 26 times in Complaint Situation 1. This number was calculated by identifying and counting every instance in which a Saudi Arabic participant proposed a solution, request, or suggestion to resolve the problem. Similarly, British participants utilized the Remedy formula 30 times. This means that across their 30 responses, there were 30 instances where they provided a request or proposed a solution. In addition to calculating raw frequencies, percentages were also calculated to allow comparisons across groups. These percentages were obtained by dividing the frequency of each semantic formula by the total number of semantic formulas produced by that group and multiplying the result by 100. For example, Saudi Arabic participants used a total of 77 semantic formulas in this situation. As 26 of these were Remedy formulas, the percentage was calculated as follows: 26 divided by 77 multiplied by 100 equals 33.7 percent. This calculation enabled the researcher to determine the relative importance of each semantic formula within each group's overall complaint performance.

Along with analyzing individual semantic formulas, the structural organization of each response was also analyzed. This included analyzing how many semantic formulas were combined within each individual response and identifying the structural pattern of each complaint. For instance,

a response including only a Remedy formula such as "Please keep your phone on silent." was classified as a single-formula structure. A response such as "Excuse me. Your phone is annoying. Could you turn your phone sound off?" was classified as a three-formula structure including Opener, Act Statement, and Remedy. Each response was therefore classified according to the number of formulas it included. The number of responses corresponding to each structural category was then counted. For example, Saudi Arabic participants produced five responses consisting of only one semantic formula, eleven responses containing two formulas, eight responses containing three formulas, four responses containing four formulas, and two responses consisting of five formulas.

Additionally, the number of unique structural patterns was also calculated. This included identifying distinct combinations of formulas. For instance, the structure of Opener with Remedy and the structure of Orientation with Remedy were counted as two different structures as they represent different organizational patterns. This distinction between number of responses and number of structures enabled the researcher to identify both frequency of use and diversity of use. The frequency of responses shows how often participants employed a certain number of formulas, while the number of structures shows the range and variety of structural patterns employed. Below is a breakdown of all complaint situations along with their results and discussions.

4.2. Situation of complaint (A student's mobile phone)

"Imagine that you were a student reading some books in the library. A student in the library was sitting next to you reading a book and their mobile phone was receiving messages loudly in a constant manner. The sound of messages alerts was a distraction because the place was very quiet. You decided to talk to the student to express your complaint about their mobile phone's alerts sound."

Situation	A student's mobile phone
Speaker's role	Complainer (Student)
Hearer's role	Complainee (Student)
Ranking of imposition	Low R
Social distance	High D
Power	(S=H)

Table 4.1. Situation of complaint (1) in the Discourse Completion Task.

Types of semantic formulas:

Formulas	Frequency			
	Saudi Arabic	EFL	ESL	British English
I. Opener	22	11	16	20
II. Orientation	14	2	8	17
III. Justification	11	14	13	22
IV. Act Statement	3	9	12	5
V. Remedy	26	29	28	30
VI. Closing	1	2	5	14
Total of formulas	77	67	82	108

Table 4.2. Frequency of all groups' semantic formulas (complaint situation 1)

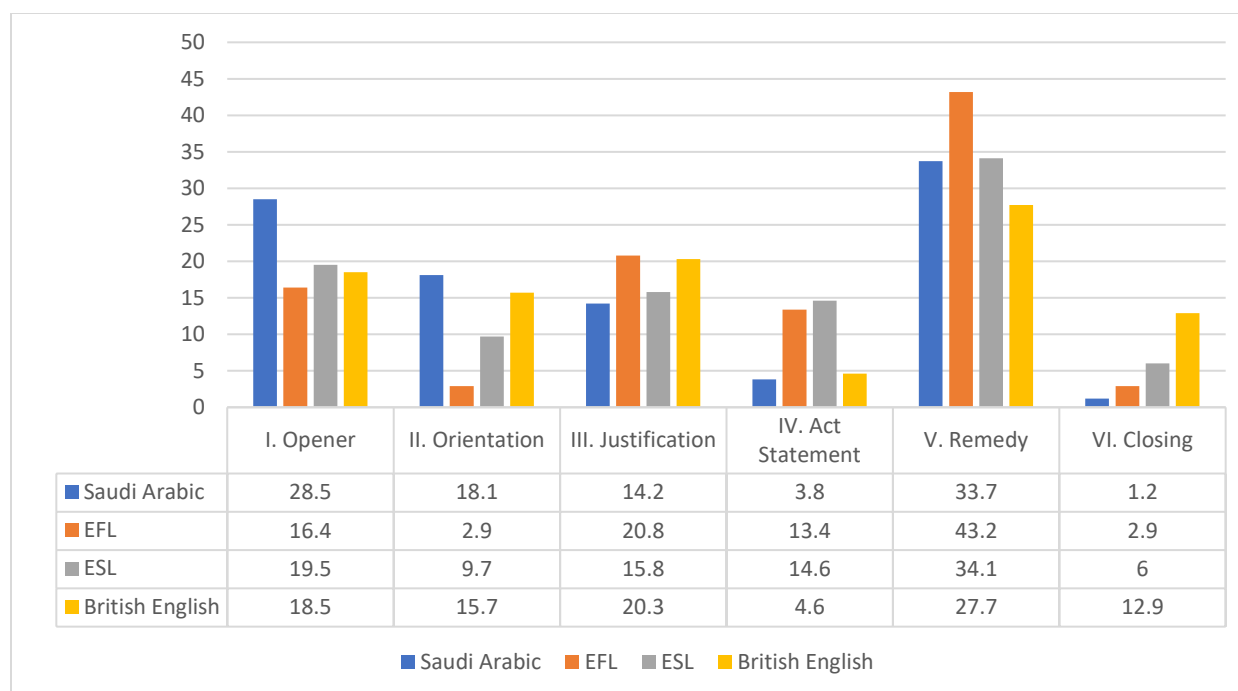


Figure 4.1. Frequency percentages of all groups' semantic formulas (complaint situation 1)

There were 334 semantic formulas used by all participants in this situation. Results show differences in the semantic formula usage across the various participant groups, with British participants demonstrating a high usage of semantic formulas, while Saudi Arabic and ESL participants used less semantic formulas in this situation. EFL participants used the lowest number of semantic formulas with a total of 67. The Remedy semantic formula was utilized prominently across all participant groups. Saudi Arabic participants employed it 26 times, constituting 33.7% of their total semantic formulas. EFL participants showcased a similar emphasis, using the Remedy formula 29 times, representing 43.2% of their formulas. ESL participants also used this formula, employing it 28 times, making up 34.1% of their semantic usage. British participants used the Remedy formula 30 times, comprising 27.7% of their total usage. This formula appeared consistently but with varying percentages among the groups. The Opener formula was also recurrent, with differing degrees of prominence. Saudi Arabic participants utilized it 22 times, accounting for 28.5% of their formulas. EFL participants employed the Opener 11 times, representing 16.4% of their semantic formulas. ESL participants used this formula 16 times, constituting 19.5% of their total usage. British participants showcased

a similar emphasis, employing the Opener formula 20 times, representing 18.5% of their semantic formulas.

Justification emerged as another notable formula used across the participant groups. Saudi Arabic participants utilized it 11 times, comprising 14.2% of their semantic formulas. EFL participants employed the Justification formula 14 times, representing 20.8% of their formulas. ESL participants used it 13 times, making up 15.8% of their total usage. British participants closely showcased a similar emphasis, using the Justification formula 22 times, comprising 20.3% of their formulas. The Act Statement formula appeared with varying prevalence. Saudi Arabic participants employed it 3 times, representing 3.8% of their semantic formulas. EFL participants used the Act Statement formula 9 times, accounting for 13.4% of their formulas. ESL participants employed it 12 times, making up 14.6% of their total usage. British participants also showcased a utilization, employing the Act Statement formula 5 times, representing 4.6% of their semantic formulas. Orientations were employed to a varying extent as well. Saudi Arabic participants used them 14 times, making up 18.1% of their semantic formulas. EFL participants demonstrated a minor usage with 2 Orientations, representing 2.9% of their formulas. ESL participants employed 8 Orientations, comprising 9.7% of their total usage. British participants used Orientations 17 times, accounting for 15.7% of their semantic formulas. Closings were employed to a lesser extent overall. Saudi Arabic participants used the Closing formula once, representing 1.2% of their semantic formulas. EFL and ESL participants showcased a similar minimal usage with 2 instances each, making up 2.9% and 6% of their formulas, respectively. In contrast, British participants employed the Closing formula 14 times, comprising 12.9% of their semantic formulas.

According to the content of their complaints, Saudi Arabic participants displayed uniqueness that reveals a complex usage of politeness strategies, face-saving considerations, and expressions of solidarity deeply rooted in cultural and religious values. On the one hand, Saudi Arabic participants displayed unique kindness and respect for the interlocutor using distinct address terms. There were politeness strategies that emphasize positive politeness by conveying love, appreciation, and friendliness such as (e.g., My heart, silence your phone, it is disturbing us.) and (e.g., My love may Allah make you happy. Can you turn off your phone's volume?). This is particularly noteworthy in scenarios characterized by significant social distance, highlighting the

cultural importance of maintaining positive social relationships. Moreover, the integration of informal yet respect-related terms, exemplified by phrases such as (e.g., Peace be upon you. sorry, longevous, if you turn down the volume of your mobile phone! No command upon you!) demonstrates an interesting blend of positive politeness. The use of "longevous" as a term with cultural and religious connotations not only adds a respectful tone but also serves as a positive politeness strategy of expressing goodwill. "Longevous" is an adjective that describes something, or someone characterized by longevity or long life. As explained in Chapter Four, it is in Saudi culture a prayer for longevity formulated in the form of an address term.

On the other hand, religious expressions play a vital role in Saudi Arabic participants' communication emphasizing shared identity and values. Phrases such as (e.g., Peace and Blessings to you! My brother, your phone has disturbed us. May Allah grant you health and wellness. Turn off your phone as a courtesy, not an order.) intertwine positive politeness with religious solidarity to support closeness and camaraderie. This serves as a face-saving strategy mitigating potential threats to the interlocutor's face. These findings highlight the cultural richness embedded in Saudi Arabic participants' communication practices, showcasing the interconnectedness of linguistic choices, formality, informality, cultural identity, and religious aspects. They show how Saudi Arabic participants use these linguistic choices to maintain face and strengthen social ties. These insights have broader implications for cross-cultural communication, as understanding and identifying these politeness strategies contributes not only to communication effectiveness but also to the preservation of positive social relationships and face.

In reviewing expressions from Saudi ESL participants, politeness characterized by indirect and polite requests is observed. Phrases such as "Could you please" and "Excuse me" reflect tendencies that emphasize a desire to avoid imposition and maintain pleasant communication. Softeners such as "do you mind" and "I don't mean to be rude" add an extra layer of politeness, showing an awareness of potential impacts on the interlocutor's face as well as the desire to maintain it. Solidarity is observed in their expressions through phrases such as "Everyone is getting distracted by it" and "Your phone is making it very difficult for us to concentrate.". This frames their complaints in a way that signifies a collective impact, contributing to a sense of

shared experience. Additionally, phrases such as "Thanks for understanding" convey a positive tone, fostering a sense of shared understanding and cooperation. The expressions of Saudi ESL participants appear more focused compared to the expressions of Saudi Arabic participants. This adjustment may be influenced by the second language environment where other things may seem more appropriate. There is no use of religious or culturally specific terms and contents, which may suggest that a cultural adjustment in communication style has occurred, demonstrating an awareness of politeness expectations within an ESL context.

In contrast, Saudi EFL participants demonstrate a direct and simple communication style. They tend to employ straightforward requests such as "Reduce your phone sound, please?" and "Mute your phone?". There is a difference between this and the more elaborate indirectness observed in the Saudi ESL group. This directness can lead to different interpretations of weak pragmatic competence and pragmatic transfer. Even when polite phrases such as "please" and "excuse me" are used, individual expressions of discomfort are prominent. For instance, the phrase "It's really annoying. Can you turn it on silent mode?" emphasizes a personal impact without explicitly involving others, indicating a lesser emphasis on shared experiences or collective impact compared to other Saudi groups where solidarity was clearly observed in the complaints performed by Saudi Arabic and Saudi ESL participants. In general, Saudi EFL's complaints show a brief and direct approach likely influenced by linguistic choices and weak pragmatic competence. Similar to the Saudi ESL group, there are no culturally specific or religious terms, but the limited content and the odd style may indicate that they were unable to find and use appropriate substitutes. In other words, it appears that they were not competent enough to find and use suitable alternatives, as did the Saudi ESL group.

Expressions of British English participants reveal a consistent use of polite language and considerate requests in their complaints. Phrases such as "I am sorry. could you put your phone on silent please?" and "Sorry, do you think you'd be able to turn your phone off?" demonstrate different strategies that ensure requests are delivered respectfully. They consistently incorporate softeners such as "Sorry" and "I'm really sorry" contributing to a polite and considerate tone. Moreover, the indirect structure of some requests, as seen in "Sorry, do you think you'd be able to turn your phone off?" demonstrates negative politeness strategies, encouraging compliance

without imposing on the interlocutor. Expressions conveying a sense of solidarity are noticeable emphasizing shared experiences and collective goals. Phrases like "It's quite loud, and we're trying to work" strengthen collective understanding and encourage mutual consideration. Additionally, the use of phrases such as "People are working here" emphasizes the collective impact and creates a sense of shared responsibility for maintaining a productive environment. Generally, the British English group's expressions show a communication style marked by an apologetic tone and solidarity which reflects a cultural aspect of their communication style.

Structures of semantic formulas:

		1 Formula structure	Combination of 2 formulas	Combination of 3 formulas	Combination of 4 formulas	Combination of 5 formulas	Combination of 6 formulas	Total
Saudi Arabic	Responses	5	11	8	4	2	-	30
	Structures	2	8	4	3	1	-	18
EFL	Responses	4	17	7	2	-	-	30
	Structures	1	5	5	2	-	-	13
ESL	Responses	1	12	12	4	1	-	30
	Structures	1	5	8	3	1	-	18
British	Responses	-	5	8	12	4	1	30
	Structures	-	3	3	6	2	1	15

Table 4.3. All participants' semantic formulas structures results (complaint situation 1)

Findings show that Saudi Arabic participants and ESL participants used the highest number of semantic formula structures (18 each), followed by British participants (15), and EFL participants used the lowest number of structures (13). Saudi Arabic, ESL, and British participants used the most diverse range of semantic formulas structures. EFL participants used a lower range of semantic formula structures, primarily single formulas and combinations of 2, 3, and 4 formulas. Saudi Arabic participants used a similar range of structures to ESL participants, including single formulas and combinations of 2, 3, 4, and 5 semantic formulas. British participants expressed their complaints using combinations of 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 semantic formulas. While Saudi Arabic

and ESL participants displayed broader structural diversity, the British group stood out for their more complex usage in their formula combinations. Conversely, the EFL participants appeared to exhibit a comparatively narrower range, particularly in their utilization of multiple semantic formulas, indicating a relatively limited ability in constructing complaint structures compared to the other participant groups. Having explained the overall results, a detailed illustration of each group is crucial in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the data.

4.2.1.Saudi Arabic responses:

4.2.1.1.Types of semantic formulas:

The total number of semantic formulas used by Saudi Arabic participants is 77. The most frequently used semantic formula is Remedy, which was used 26 times with a percentage of 33.7%. As the second most used semantic formula, Opener formula was employed 22 times with a 28.5%. There were 14 Orientations made by Saudi Arabic participants which is 18.1% of all semantic formulas. The semantic formula of Justification was used 11 times with a percentage of 14.2%. The semantic formula of Act Statement was used 3 times with a percentage of 3.8% and the semantic formula of Closing was used once with a percentage of 1.2%.

4.2.1.2.Structures of semantic formulas:

In the first complaint situation, Saudi Arabic participants used 18 different semantic formula structures. These structures differed, ranging from single formulas to combinations of 2, 3, 4, and 5 formulas. For individual complaint responses, participants employed the formulas 'Remedy' and 'Justification' independently five times, providing a complete complaint response. In instances where two semantic formulas were combined for a complete response, participants employed eight different structures. For example, they combined 'Remedy' with 'Act Statement' or 'Opener' with 'Justification.' When formulating responses with three semantic formulas, Saudi Arabic participants used four different structures in eight responses. This involved combinations

like 'Opener' with 'Remedy' and 'Justification,' or 'Remedy' with 'Orientation' and 'Justification.' For responses comprising four semantic formulas, participants used three different structures in four responses. For instance, they combined 'Opener' with 'Remedy,' 'Justification,' and 'Closing.' In cases where a complete response required five semantic formulas, participants utilized one specific structure in two responses. This structure included combining 'Opener' with another 'Opener,' 'Justification,' 'Orientation,' and 'Remedy.' Table 4.4 provides examples of Saudi Arabic semantic formula structures in this scenario.

Formulas Structure	Example
Single formula	Can you reduce the volume of your phone? تقدر تقصر صوت جوالك؟
Combination of 2 formulas	Put it on silent! + It's annoying. حطه صامت + تراه مزعج.
Combination of 3 formulas	My heart! + Silence your phone! + It is disturbing us. قلبي! + صمت جوالك + مقروشنا.
Combination of 4 formulas	My dear brother! + If you please, silence the phone! + It is distracting my thoughts. + Thank you! اخوي الغالي + لو سمحت خل جوالك صامت + يشئت افكاري + شكرا.
Combination of 5 formulas	Peace be upon you! + My brother, + may Allah make you happy. + Keep your phone on silent. + You know the nature of the place. السلام عليكم + اخوي الغالي + الله يسعدك + خل جوالك على الصامت + انت عارف وضع المكان.

Table 4.4. Saudi Arabic participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 1)

4.2.2.EFL responses:

4.2.2.1.Types of semantic formulas:

In this scenario, EFL participants employed a total of 67 semantic formulas to formulate their responses. Among these, the most frequently used formula was 'Remedy,' appearing 29 times,

accounting for 43.2% of the total. Next, the 'Justification' formula was the second most commonly used, being used 14 times and representing 20.8%. The 'Opener' formula was used 11 times, making up 16.4%. The 'Act Statement' formula was utilized 9 times, comprising 13.4% of the total. Moreover, there were 2 instances each of 'Orientation' and 'Closing,' together representing 2.9% of all semantic formulas employed by EFL participants in this situation.

4.2.2.2. Structures of semantic formulas:

EFL participants employed 13 different semantic formula structures when making complaints. These structures consisted of single formulas and combinations of 2, 3, and 4 formulas. For single complaint responses, the semantic formula 'Remedy' was used four times by EFL participants. When combining two semantic formulas for complete complaint responses, participants used five different structures in 17 responses. For instance, they paired 'Remedy' with 'Orientation' and 'Opener' with 'Justification.' In constructing responses with three semantic formulas, participants used five different structures in seven responses. Instances included combining 'Orientation' with 'Act Statement' and 'Remedy,' or 'Opener' with 'Remedy' and 'Justification.' For responses containing four semantic formulas, participants utilized two different structures in two responses. An example is combining 'Opener' with 'Remedy,' 'Justification,' and 'Closing.' Table 4.5 shows examples of EFL participants' semantic formula structures.

Formulas Structure	Example
Single formula	Reduce your phone sound please?
Combination of 2 formulas	It is really annoying. + Can you turn it on silent mode?
Combination of 3 formulas	Hello, + could you please turn off the phone? + I'll appreciate that.
Combination of 4 formulas	Excuse me! + Mute your phone? + It's a distraction + I can't focus.

Table 4.5. EFL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 1)

4.2.3.ESL responses:

4.2.3.1.Types of semantic formulas:

ESL participants used a total of 82 semantic formulas in this situation. The formula of Remedy was used 28 times with a percentage of 34.1%. The formula of Opener was employed by ESL participants 16 times with a 19.5% and is the second most commonly used semantic formula. The semantic formula of Justification was used by ESL participants 13 times in this situation with a percentage of 15.8%. The semantic formula of Act Statement was employed 12 times with a percentage of 14.6%. There were 8 Orientations made by ESL participants which is 9.7% of all semantic formulas. The semantic formula of Closing was used 5 times with a percentage of 6%.

4.2.3.2.Structures of semantic formulas:

For the first complaint scenario, ESL participants used 18 distinct semantic formula structures. These structures comprised individual formulas and combinations of 2, 3, 4, and 5 formulas. In individual complaint responses, the semantic formula 'Remedy' was employed once by ESL participants. Combining two semantic formulas for complete complaint responses, participants employed five different structures in 12 responses. For instance, they paired 'Orientation' with 'Remedy' and 'Remedy' with 'Justification.' In constructing responses with three semantic formulas, participants utilized eight different structures in 12 responses. Examples included combining 'Remedy' with 'Justification' and 'Closing,' or 'Opener' with 'Remedy' and 'Act Statement.' In responses containing four semantic formulas, participants utilized three different structures in four responses. For example, they combined 'Opener' with 'Remedy,' 'Justification,' and 'Closing,' or 'Orientation' with 'Act Statement,' 'Justification,' and 'Remedy.' To complete a response that required five semantic formulas, participants used one specific structure in one response. This structure consisted of combining 'Opener' with 'Orientation,' 'Justification,' 'Remedy,' and 'Closing.' Table 4.6 provides examples of ESL participants' semantic formula structures.

Formulas Structure	Example
Single formula	Could you please put your phone on the silent mood?
Combination of 2 formulas	Excuse me! + Can you lower the volume of the phone, please?
Combination of 3 formulas	Hi, + can you just lower your volume please? + It is a bit distracting.
Combination of 4 formulas	Hi, + do you mind putting that on mute? + Everyone is getting distracted by it. + Thanks!
Combination of 5 formulas	Hi, + I don't mean to be rude. + Your phone is making it very difficult for us to concentrate. + I would greatly appreciate it if you turned it on silent. + Thanks for understanding!

Table 4.6. ESL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 1)

4.2.4. British English responses:

4.2.4.1. Types of semantic formulas:

In this situation, British participants used 108 semantic formulas to express their responses. Among these, the 'Remedy' formula was the most frequently utilized, being used 30 times, accounting for 27.7% of the total. Following closely, the 'Justification' formula was second in frequency, used 22 times, constituting 20.3%. The 'Opener' formula was employed 20 times, representing 18.5%, while the 'Orientation' formula was utilized 17 times, with a percentage of 15.7%. In addition, the 'Closing' formula was employed 14 times, making up 12.9%. Lastly, the 'Act Statement' formula was used 5 times, representing 4.6% of all semantic formulas employed by British participants.

4.2.4.2. Structures of semantic formulas:

British participants made complaints employing a total of 15 distinct semantic formula structures. These structures included combinations of 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 semantic formulas. In responses containing two semantic formulas, three distinct structures appeared across 5 responses. For instance, participants mixed 'Remedy' with 'Justification' and 'Orientation' with 'Remedy' in various instances. Moving on to three-formula responses, participants used three different

structures in 8 responses. Examples included combining 'Opener' with 'Remedy' and 'Justification,' as well as 'Orientation' with 'Remedy' and 'Justification.' In response to four semantic formulas, six different structures were used in 12 responses. Instances of these structures comprised combining 'Opener' with 'Remedy,' 'Justification,' and 'Closing,' as well as 'Orientation' with 'Remedy,' 'Act Statement,' and 'Closing.' For complete complaint responses involving five semantic formulas, two different structures were found in 4 responses. An example is combining 'Opener' with 'Orientation,' 'Remedy,' 'Justification,' and 'Closing.' Finally, for six formula responses, one specific structure was utilized in 1 response. In this response, participants combined 'Opener' with 'Orientation,' 'Remedy,' 'Act Statement,' 'Justification,' and 'Closing.' Table 4.7 presents examples of British semantic formula structures used in this situation.

Formulas Structure	Example
Combination of 2 formulas	Please could you put your phone on silent? + Thanks!
Combination of 3 formulas	Excuse me! + Please can you put your phone on silent? + It is distracting me from doing my work.
Combination of 4 formulas	Hey, + could you put your phone on silent? + People are working here, + thanks.
Combination of 5 formulas	Hi, + I'm really sorry + but would you mind turning your phone sound off? + It's just I can't concentrate. + Thanks so much!
Combination of 6 formulas	Hey, + sorry, + do you think you'd be able to turn your phone off please? + It's quite loud + and I'm trying to work. + Thanks!

Table 4.7. British participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 1)

4.3.Situation of complaint (Annoying neighbour)

'Imagine that, while you were at home, there were musical sounds coming from the apartment of a neighbor with whom you have a good relationship and mutual respect. You tried to wait for

a while hoping that these musical sounds would stop but these sounds continued. You go to your neighbor to deliver your complaint due to these musical sounds.'

Situation	Annoying neighbour
Speaker's role	Complainer (Neighbour)
Hearer's role	Complainee (Neighbour)
Ranking of imposition	Low R
Social distance	Low D
Power	(S=H)

Table 4.8. Situation of complaint (2) in the Discourse Completion Task.

Types of semantic formulas:

Formulas	Frequency			
	Saudi Arabic	EFL	ESL	British English
I. Opener	20	9	14	18
II. Orientation	12	2	8	15
III. Justification	8	13	11	18
IV. Act Statement	2	7	9	3
V. Remedy	23	24	26	30
VI. Closing	0	1	7	17
Total of formulas	65	56	75	101

Table 4.9. Frequency of all groups' semantic formulas (complaint situation 2)

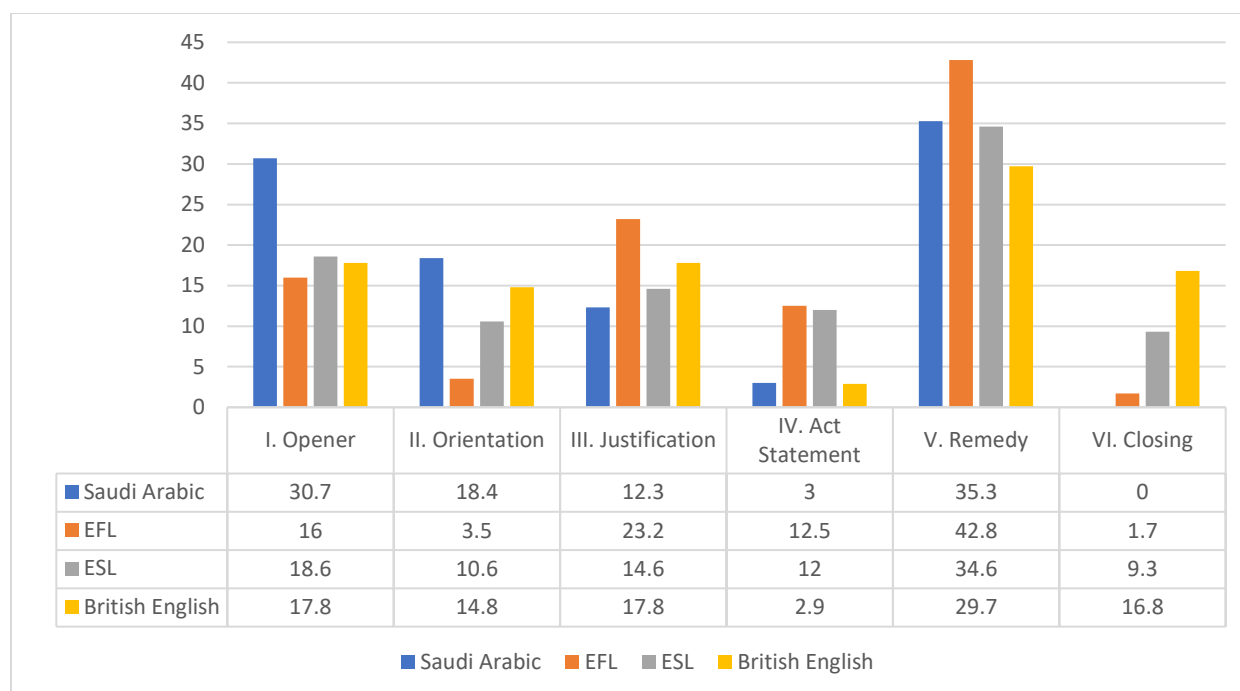


Figure 4.2. Frequency percentages of all groups' semantic formulas (complaint situation 2)

There were 297 semantic formulas used by all participants in this situation. Results show differences in the semantic formula usage across the various participant groups, with British participants demonstrating a high usage of semantic formulas, while Saudi Arabic and ESL participants used less semantic formulas in this situation. EFL participants used the lowest number of semantic formulas with a total of 56. The Remedy semantic formula was utilized prominently across all participant groups. Saudi Arabic participants employed it 23 times, constituting 35.3% of their total semantic formulas. EFL participants showcased a similar emphasis, using the Remedy formula 24 times, representing 42.8% of their formulas. ESL participants also used this formula, employing it 26 times, making up 34.6% of their semantic usage. British participants used the Remedy formula 30 times, comprising 29.7% of their total usage. This formula appeared consistently but with varying percentages among the groups. The Opener formula was also recurrent, with differing degrees of prominence. Saudi Arabic participants utilized it 20 times, accounting for 30.7% of their formulas. EFL participants employed the Opener 9 times, representing 16% of their semantic formulas. ESL participants used this formula 14 times, constituting 18.6% of their total usage. British participants showcased

a close percentage, employing the Opener formula 18 times, representing 17.8% of their semantic formulas.

Justification emerged as another notable formula used across the participant groups. Saudi Arabic participants utilized it 8 times, comprising 12.3% of their semantic formulas. EFL participants employed the Justification formula 13 times, representing 23.2% of their formulas. ESL participants used it 11 times, making up 14.6% of their total usage. British participants used the Justification formula 18 times, comprising 17.8% of their formulas. The Act Statement formula appeared with varying prevalence. Saudi Arabic participants employed it 2 times, representing 3% of their semantic formulas. EFL participants used the Act Statement formula 7 times, accounting for 12.5% of their formulas. ESL participants employed it 9 times, making up 12% of their total usage. British participants also showcased a utilization, employing the Act Statement formula 3 times, representing 2.9% of their semantic formulas. Orientations were employed to a varying extent as well. Saudi Arabic participants used them 12 times, making up 18.4% of their semantic formulas. EFL participants demonstrated a minor usage with 2 Orientations, representing 3.5% of their formulas. ESL participants employed 8 Orientations, comprising 10.6% of their total usage. British participants used Orientations 15 times, accounting for 14.8% of their semantic formulas. Closings were employed to a lesser extent overall. Saudi Arabic participants did not use the Closing formula at all. EFL participants employed the Closing formula once, comprising 1.7% of their semantic formulas. ESL participants showcased a higher usage with 2 instances, making up 9.3% of their formulas. In contrast, British participants employed the Closing formula 17 times, comprising 16.8% of their semantic formulas.

Compared to the control groups, the semantic formulas employed by EFL participants demonstrate both similarities and differences, offering insights into areas for potential improvement. The significant usage of the "Justification" formula suggests an awareness of the importance of providing reasoning or explanations to support viewpoints, which is also observed in both control groups. However, the relatively lower utilization of the "Opener" formula compared to the control groups suggests a potential area for improvement in initiating or introducing a response. EFL participants could benefit from different opening formulas and

patterns identified in this study to engage hearers effectively from the beginning, thereby strengthening the effectiveness of their communication.

While the inclusion of the "Orientation" formula among EFL participants indicates an awareness of providing context or background information, its lower frequency compared to the control groups suggests a need for further development in this area. EFL participants could, instead of uniquely relying heavily on "Act Statement" formula, work on expanding their introductory expressions to provide clearer context and facilitate better understanding which will result in improving their abilities in the contextualization of their responses. Furthermore, the presence of the "Closing" formula in only one instance among EFL participants indicates a potential area for improvement in concluding responses effectively, similar to British English group. EFL participants could work on providing closing formulas to enhance the coherence and completeness of their English responses even though that did not seem to be a main content in Saudi Arabic responses.

Structures of semantic formulas:

		1 Formula structure	Combination of 2 formulas	Combination of 3 formulas	Combination of 4 formulas	Combination of 5 formulas	Total
Saudi Arabic	Responses	6	10	8	4	2	30
	Structures	2	5	6	2	1	16
EFL	Responses	5	14	10	1	-	30
	Structures	1	5	3	1	-	10
ESL	Responses	2	14	11	3	-	30
	Structures	1	4	5	3	-	13
British	Responses	-	4	6	14	6	30
	Structures	-	4	4	5	3	16

Table 4.10. All participants' semantic formulas structures results (complaint situation 2)

Findings show that Saudi Arabic participants and British participants used the highest number of semantic formula structures (18 each), followed by ESL participants (13), and EFL participants used the lowest number of structures (10). Saudi Arabic and British participants used the most

diverse range of semantic formulas structures. EFL and ESL participants used a lower range of semantic formula structures, primarily single formulas and combinations of 2, 3, and 4 formulas. Saudi Arabic participants used a similar range of structures to British participants, including single formulas and combinations of 2, 3, 4, and 5 semantic formulas. While Saudi Arabic and British participants displayed broader structural diversity, the British group stood out for their higher number of responses in their 5 formulas combinations. EFL participants appeared to exhibit a comparatively narrower range, particularly in their utilization of multiple semantic formulas, indicating a relatively limited ability in constructing complaint structures compared to the other participant groups. Having explained the overall results, a detailed illustration of each group is crucial in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the data.

4.3.1.Saudi Arabic responses:

4.3.1.1.Types of semantic formulas:

The total number of semantic formulas used by Saudi Arabic participants is 65. The most frequently used semantic formula is Remedy, which was used 23 times with a percentage of 35.3%. As the second most used semantic formula, Opener formula was employed 20 times with 30.7%. There were 12 Orientations made by Saudi Arabic participants which is 18.4% of all semantic formulas. The semantic formula of Justification was used 8 times with a percentage of 12.3%. The semantic formula of Act Statement was used 2 times with a percentage of 3% and the semantic formula of Closing was not used at all by Saudi Arabic participants.

4.3.1.2.Structures of semantic formulas:

In the second complaint situation, Saudi Arabic participants used 16 different semantic formula structures. These structures differed, ranging from single formulas to combinations of 2, 3, 4, and 5 formulas. For individual complaint responses, participants employed the formulas 'Remedy' and 'Justification' independently, providing a complete complaint response. In instances where two semantic formulas were combined for a complete response, participants employed five different structures in 10 responses. For example, they combined 'Remedy' with 'Act Statement'

or 'Opener' with 'Justification'. When formulating responses with three semantic formulas, Saudi Arabic participants used six different structures in eight responses. This involved combinations like 'Opener' with 'Remedy' and 'Justification,' or 'Remedy' with 'Orientation' and 'Justification'. For responses comprising four semantic formulas, Saudi Arabic participants used two different structures in four responses. For instance, they combined 'Opener' with 'Remedy,' 'Justification,' and 'Orientation'. In cases where a complete response required five semantic formulas, participants utilized one specific structure in two responses. This structure included combining 'Opener' with 'Act statement,' 'Justification,' 'Orientation', and 'Remedy'. Table 4.11 provides examples of Saudi Arabic semantic formula structures in this scenario.

Formulas Structure	Example
Combination of 2 formulas	Excuse me! + if you turn it down please? اسمح لي + لو تقصر عليه تكفى؟
Combination of 3 formulas	My heart! + I didn't expect this from you. + Turn it down as a courtesy not order! قلبي! + ماتوقعتها منك. + قصر عليه مجاملة مو امر!
Combination of 4 formulas	Salam alaikum brother! + How are you? + The music is too loud. + I wish if you turn it down. السلام عليكم اخوي! + كيف حالك؟ + الموسيقى مره عاليه. + أتمنى لو تقصر عليه.
Combination of 5 formulas	Dear brother! + How are you? + I am so sorry. + If you lower the sound? + It is loud. اخوي العزيز! + كيف حالك؟ + اسف مره. + لو تقصر على الصوت؟ + عالي.

Table 4.11. Saudi Arabic participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 2)

4.3.2.EFL responses:

4.3.2.1.Types of semantic formulas:

In this scenario, EFL participants employed a total of 56 semantic formulas to formulate their responses. Among these, the most frequently used formula was 'Remedy,' appearing 24 times, accounting for 42.8% of the total. Next, the 'Justification' formula was the second most

commonly used, being used 13 times and representing 23.2%. The 'Opener' formula was used 9 times, making up 16%. The 'Act Statement' formula was utilized 7 times, comprising 12.5% of the total. There were 2 Orientations made by EFL participants which is 3.5% of all semantic formulas. Moreover, the 'Closing ' formula was utilized by EFL once, comprising 1.7% of the total semantic formulas.

4.3.2.2. Structures of semantic formulas:

EFL participants employed 10 different semantic formula structures when making complaints. These structures consisted of single formulas and combinations of 2, 3, and 4 formulas. For single complaint responses, the semantic formula 'Remedy' was used individually by EFL participants. When combining two semantic formulas for complete complaint responses, participants used five different structures in 14 responses. For instance, they paired 'Remedy' with 'Orientation' and 'Opener' with 'Justification'. In constructing responses with three semantic formulas, EFL participants used three different structures in 10 responses. Instances included combining 'Orientation' with 'Act Statement' and 'Remedy,' or 'Opener' with 'Remedy' and 'Justification'. For responses containing four semantic formulas, participants utilized one structure in one response. This is combining 'Opener' with 'Remedy,' 'Justification,' and 'Closing'. Table 4.12 shows examples of EFL participants' semantic formula structures.

Formulas Structure	Example
Single formula	Turn the music off please?
Combination of 2 formulas	There are sounds coming from your apartment. + Please turn it down!
Combination of 3 formulas	Excuse me! + Can you turn off the music? + It is really annoying.
Combination of 4 formulas	Hey! + How are you? + I think you are having fun + but can you turn down the music?

Table 4.12. EFL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 2)

4.3.3.ESL responses:

4.3.3.1.Types of semantic formulas:

ESL participants used a total of 75 semantic formulas in this situation. The formula of Remedy was used 26 times with a percentage of 34.6%. The formula of Opener was employed by ESL participants 14 times with a 18.6% and is the second most commonly used semantic formula. The semantic formula of Justification was used by ESL participants 11 times in this situation with a percentage of 14.6%. The semantic formula of Act Statement was employed 9 times with a percentage of 12%. There were 8 Orientations made by ESL participants which is 10.6% of all semantic formulas. The semantic formula of Closing was used 7 times with a percentage of 9.3%.

4.3.3.2.Structures of semantic formulas:

For the second complaint scenario, ESL participants used 13 distinct semantic formula structures. These structures comprised individual formulas and combinations of 2, 3, and 4 formulas. In individual complaint responses, the semantic formula 'Remedy' was employed individually by ESL participants. Combining two semantic formulas for complete complaint responses, participants employed four different structures in 14 responses. For instance, they paired 'Orientation' with 'Remedy' and 'Remedy' with 'Justification'. In constructing responses with three semantic formulas, participants utilized five different structures in 11 responses. Examples included combining 'Remedy' with 'Justification' and 'Closing,' or 'Opener' with 'Remedy' and 'Act Statement'. In responses containing four semantic formulas, participants utilized three different structures in 3 responses. For example, they combined 'Opener' with 'Remedy,' 'Justification,' and 'Closing,' or 'Orientation' with 'Act Statement,' 'Justification,' and 'Remedy'. Table 4.13 provides examples of ESL participants' semantic formula structures.

Formulas Structure	Example
Single formula	Can you please turn the sound down?
Combination of 2 formulas	Hey! + Can you turn down the music?
Combination of 3 formulas	Excuse me! + I can't sleep because of the music. + Can you turn it off?
Combination of 4 formulas	Hi, + the music is too loud. + I can't sleep. + Can you turn it down a bit?

Table 4.13. ESL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 2)

4.3.4. British English responses:

4.3.4.1. Types of semantic formulas:

In this situation, British participants used 101 semantic formulas to express their responses. Among these, the 'Remedy' formula was the most frequently utilized, being used 30 times, accounting for 29.7% of the total. Following, the 'Justification' formula was second in frequency, used 18 times, constituting 17.8%. The 'Opener' formula was employed 18 times, representing 17.8%, while the 'Orientation' formula was utilized 15 times, with a percentage of 14.8%. In addition, the 'Closing' formula was employed 17 times, making up 16.8%. Lastly, the 'Act Statement' formula was used 3 times, representing 2.9% of all semantic formulas employed by British participants.

4.3.4.2. Structures of semantic formulas:

British participants made complaints employing a total of 16 distinct semantic formula structures. These structures included combinations of 2, 3, 4, and 5 semantic formulas. In responses containing two semantic formulas, four distinct structures appeared across 4 responses. For instance, participants mixed 'Remedy' with 'Justification' and 'Orientation' with 'Remedy' in various instances. Moving on to three-formula responses, British participants used four different

structures in 6 responses. Examples included combining 'Opener' with 'Remedy' and 'Justification,' as well as 'Orientation' with 'Remedy' and 'Justification'. In response to four semantic formulas, five different structures were used in 14 responses. Instances of these structures comprised combining 'Opener' with 'Remedy,' 'Justification,' and 'Closing,' as well as 'Orientation' with 'Remedy,' 'Act Statement,' and 'Closing'. For complete complaint responses involving five semantic formulas, three different structures were found in 6 responses. An example is combining 'Opener' with 'Orientation,' 'Remedy,' 'Justification,' and 'Closing'. Table 4.14 presents examples of British semantic formula structures used in this situation.

Formulas Structure	Example
Combination of 2 formulas	Hey + would you be able to turn it down a bit please?
Combination of 3 formulas	I am sorry to bother you + but would you mind being a little quieter? + Thank you so much.
Combination of 4 formulas	Hi, + sorry to bother + but do you think you could turn your music down? + I can hear it quite loudly next door.
Combination of 5 formulas	Hi, + how are you? + Really sorry to be huge inconvenience + but is there any chance you could turn the music down? + So sorry to be a pain!

Table 4.14. British participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 2)

4.4.Situation of complaint (Rude Volunteer)

To recap, here is the third complaint scenario: 'Imagine that, during your voluntary work in one of the volunteer organizations, one of the new volunteers in the group who you have never met before was dealing with you badly. This volunteer was issuing orders in a rude manner and asking you to implement them even though this volunteer was not a manager or supervisor and did not have any legal capacity to issue orders. These behaviors prompted you to talk to this volunteer to express your complaints and dissatisfaction with these unacceptable behaviors.'

Situation	Rude volunteer
Speaker's role	Complainer (Volunteer)
Hearer's role	Complainee (Volunteer)
Ranking of imposition	High R
Social distance	High D
Power	(S=H)

Table 4.15. Situation of complaint 3 (Rude Volunteer) in the Discourse Completion Task.

Complaint situations 1 and 2 showed different types of complaints settings that differed in several key variables. Situation 1 revolved around a student complaining about another student's mobile phone. The complaint was characterized by a low ranking of imposition which shows that the issue was relatively minor or routine. The social distance between the students was high which indicates that they were not familiar or close. The scenario was set in an educational setting where such interactions would be common. Situation 2, where the complaint was about an annoying neighbor, also involved a low ranking of imposition which reflects that the complaint was about a minor issue. However, the social distance between the neighbors was low that suggests they were familiar with each other and possibly interact regularly. The context was residential where neighbors normally deal with such neighborly issues.

Here, situation 3, where the complaint involves a rude volunteer, introduces a different set of variables compared to the first two situations. In this scenario, the ranking of imposition is high which shows that the complaint is about a significant and serious matter. The social distance between the volunteers is high, similar to Situation 1 (A student's mobile phone), which implies

that they are not personally acquainted with each other. The context here is a volunteer or professional setting with higher expectations for behavior and professionalism. The following analysis will explore how this scenario of high imposition ranking and high social distance influences participants' complaints compared to other scenarios.

Types of semantic formulas:

Formulas	Frequency			
	Saudi Arabic	EFL	ESL	British English
I. Opener	28	11	17	24
II. Orientation	16	6	15	25
III. Justification	11	18	16	19
IV. Act Statement	4	13	12	6
V. Remedy	26	26	28	30
VI. Closing	0	0	15	23
Total of formulas	85	74	103	127

Table 4.16. Frequency of all groups' semantic formulas (complaint situation 3 Rude Volunteer)

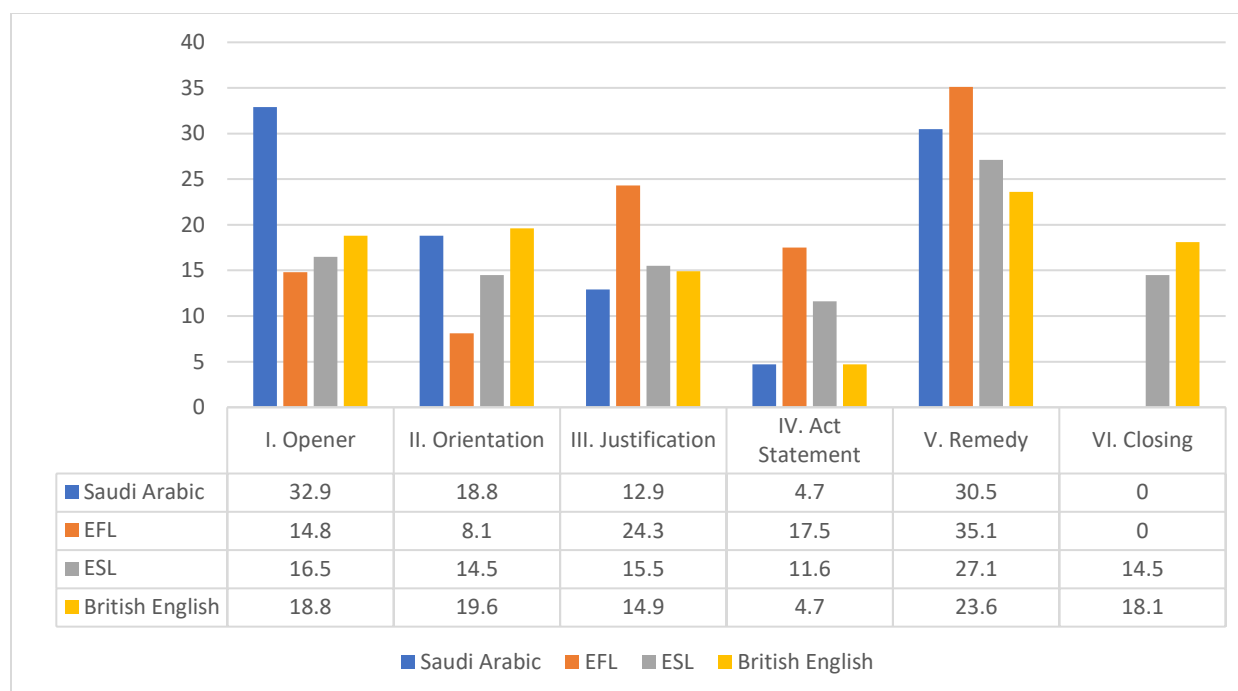


Figure 4.3. Frequency percentages of all groups' semantic formulas (complaint situation 3)

In this scenario, 389 semantic formulations were employed by all participants. The results indicate that the different participant groups employed different amounts of semantic formulas; British participants used a large number of semantic formulas in this scenario, whereas Saudi Arabic and ESL participants used fewer. With 74 in all, EFL participants employed the fewest semantic formulas. The Remedy semantic formula was utilized prominently across all participant groups. Saudi Arabic participants employed it 26 times, constituting 30.5% of their total semantic formulas. EFL participants showcased identical emphasis, using the Remedy formula 26 times, representing 35.1% of their formulas. ESL participants used this formula, employing it 28 times, making up 27.1% of their semantic usage. British participants used the Remedy formula 30 times, comprising 23.6% of their total usage.

The Opener formula was also recurrent, with differing degrees of prominence. Saudi Arabic participants utilized it the most, at 28 times, accounting for 32.9% of their formulas. EFL participants employed the Opener 11 times, representing 14.8% of their semantic formulas. ESL participants used this formula 17 times, constituting 16.5% of their total usage. British participants showcased a close percentage, employing the Opener formula 24 times, representing 18.8% of their semantic formulas.

Another prominent formula employed by all participant groups is Justification. This formula involves providing reasons or explanations to support a statement or action. The Justification formula was used 11 times by Saudi Arabic participants, accounting for 12.9% of their semantic formulas. This relatively moderate use suggests that while Justification is an important aspect, other formulas may be more prominent in their responses. In contrast, EFL participants used the Justification formula 18 times, representing 24.3% of their formulas. This higher frequency indicates that EFL participants might rely more on Justification to clarify their points, possibly due to their need to ensure understanding in a non-native language or due to their inability to use other formulas. ESL participants employed Justification 16 times, comprising 15.5% of their total usage. This reflects a balanced approach where Justification is used significantly but not excessively. British participants utilized the Justification formula 19 times, accounting for 14.9% of their semantic formulas. This usage rate suggests a similar tendency towards explanations, though not as extensively as the EFL group.

The Act Statement formula appeared with varying prevalence. Saudi Arabic participants employed it only 4 times, representing 4.7% of their semantic formulas. EFL participants used the Act Statement formula 13 times, accounting for 17.5% of their formulas. ESL participants employed it 12 times, making up 11.6% of their total usage. British participants employed the Act Statement formula 6 times, representing 4.7% of their semantic formulas.

Orientations were employed to a varying extent as well. Saudi Arabic participants used them 16 times, making up 18.8% of their semantic formulas. EFL participants demonstrated a minor usage with 6 Orientations, representing 8.1% of their formulas. ESL participants employed 15 Orientations, comprising 14.5% of their total usage. British participants used Orientations 25 times, accounting for 19.6% of their semantic formulas.

Finally, the use of Closings differed significantly across the different participant groups. Saudi Arabic and EFL participants did not use the Closing formula at all which may indicate a distinct cultural or linguistic preference for not including closings in their responses. In contrast, ESL participants employed the Closing formula 15 times, representing 14.5% of their formulas. This usage shows a familiarity with this semantic formula, possibly influenced by their higher exposure

to English in the UK native context. British participants displayed the highest frequency of using the Closing formula, employing it 23 times which represented 18.1% of their semantic formulas. This higher percentage shows that closings are more commonly used and expected in their culture. Saudi Arabic and EFL participants' complete absence of Closings contrasts significantly with the British participants' frequent use, while ESL participants are somewhere in between which represents their partial integration into the UK native context.

As with complaint situation 2 analysis, the semantic formulas used by EFL participants show both similarities and differences when compared with the control groups, providing insights into possible areas for improvement. The substantial use of the "Justification" formula, which is also seen in the two control groups, implies an understanding of the significance of offering justifications or explanations to justify responses. Nonetheless, there may be room for improvement in terms of introducing or starting a reaction given the comparatively lesser application of the "Opener" formula in contrast to the control groups. The study uncovered various opening formulas and patterns that EFL participants might use to effectively engage hearers from the outset and boost the effectiveness of their communication.

The fact that EFL participants included the "Orientation" formula shows that they are aware of the importance of giving context or background information, but the fact that they did so less frequently than the control groups implies that more educational work needs to be done in this area. In contrast to their performance in the second complaint scenario, where they focused more on the 'Act Statement' formula, EFL participants largely relied on the 'Justification' formula. Rather than excessively depending on the 'Justification' formula, EFL participants should try extending their opening phrases to give a clearer context and promote greater understanding. This will help them become more proficient at contextualizing their responses. Moreover, the lack of the "Closing" formula among EFL participants suggests a possible area for development in effectively finishing responses, similar to the British English group. Although it did not appear to be a primary focus of the Saudi Arabic responses, EFL participants might improve the coherence and completeness of their English responses by offering concluding formulas.

The following table presents a detailed breakdown of the structures of semantic formulas used by participants across different groups. It categorizes the responses based on the number of formula combinations employed and reveals differences in the complexity and completeness of responses among Saudi Arabic, EFL, ESL, and British participants.

Structures of semantic formulas:

		1 Formula structure	Combination of 2 formulas	Combination of 3 formulas	Combination of 4 formulas	Combination of 5 formulas	Combination of 6 formulas	Total
Saudi Arabic	Responses	4	8	6	8	4	-	30
	Structures	1	7	6	3	3	-	20
EFL	Responses	3	13	10	4	-	-	30
	Structures	1	4	7	2	-	-	14
ESL	Responses	-	13	7	9	1	-	30
	Structures	-	5	5	7	1	-	18
British	Responses	-	3	6	10	6	5	30
	Structures	-	3	5	6	4	1	19

Table 4.17. All participants' semantic formulas structures results (complaint situation 3 Rude Volunteer)

The most semantic formula structures (20) were similarly utilized by Saudi Arabic participants, followed by British participants (19) and ESL participants (18), while EFL participants employed the fewest semantic formula structures (14). Saudi Arabic and British participants used the most diverse range of semantic formulas structures. EFL and ESL participants used a lower range of semantic formula structures with 4 different forms of formulas structures. Saudi Arabic participants used a range of structures including single formulas and combinations of 2, 3, 4, and 5 semantic formulas. While Saudi Arabic and British participants displayed 5 different forms of formulas structures, the British participants differed in their combination of 6 formulas that was employed in 5 responses where Saudi Arabic participants differed in employing the single formula structure. EFL and ESL participants appeared to exhibit a comparatively narrower range, particularly in their utilization of multiple semantic formulas, indicating a relatively limited ability in constructing complaint structures compared to the other participant groups. After providing

an explanation of the overall findings, a detailed explanation of every group is essential to gaining a deeper comprehension of data.

4.4.1.Saudi Arabic responses:

4.4.1.1.Types of semantic formulas:

The Saudi Arabic participants employed 85 different semantic formulas in all. The most frequently used semantic formula is the Opener, which was used 28 times (32.9%). As the second most used semantic formula, Remedy was employed 26 times (30.5%). There were 16 Orientations made by Saudi Arabic participants, which is 18.8% of all semantic formulas. The semantic formula of Justification was used 11 times (12.9%). The semantic formula of Act Statement was used 4 times (4.7%) and the Saudi Arabic participants made no use of the semantic formula of Closing.

4.4.1.2.Structures of semantic formulas:

The Saudi Arabic participants employed twenty distinct semantic formula structures in the third complaint scenario. These combinations varied, comprising combinations of 2, 3, 4, and 5 formulas as well as single formula. For individual complaint responses, participants employed the formula 'Remedy' independently, providing a complete complaint response. In instances where two semantic formulas were combined for a complete response, participants employed 7 different structures in 8 responses. For example, they combined 'Remedy' with 'Act Statement' or 'Opener' with 'Justification'. When formulating responses with three semantic formulas, Saudi Arabic participants used six different structures in six responses. This involved combinations like 'Opener' with 'Remedy' and 'Justification,' or 'Remedy' with 'Orientation' and 'Justification'. For responses comprising four semantic formulas, Saudi Arabic participants used 3 different structures in 8 responses. For instance, they combined 'Opener' with 'Remedy,' 'Justification,' and 'Orientation'. In cases where a complete response required five semantic formulas, participants utilized 3 structures in 4 responses. This included combining 'Opener' with 'Act statement', 'Justification,' 'Orientation', and 'Remedy'. Table 4.18 provides examples of Saudi Arabic semantic formula structures in this scenario.

Formulas Structure	Examples
Single formula	احترم الناس عشان يحترمونا! Respect others so they respect you! مايحق لك تتكلم معي بهذا الشكل. You have no right to talk to me in this way.
Combination of 2 formulas	مو شغللك. + احترم نفسك لو سمحت! It is not your business. + Respect yourself please! حسن اسلوبك معي! + مالك أي سلطة علي. Have a good attitude with me! + I am not subject to your authority.
Combination of 3 formulas	معليش + من انت عشان تتأمر؟ + انا عارف وش جالس اسوي. I am sorry. + Who are you to issue orders? + I know what I am doing. أخوي! + كل واحد عنده شغل يسويه. + ممكن ما تتدخل في شغل غيرك؟ Brother! + Everyone has a job to do. + Can you not interfere in someone else's work?
Combination of 4 formulas	ارجوك أخوي! + انا احترم طبيعة علاقتنا في العمل + لكن انا موب مدير ولا انت مدير بعد. + بطل تتكلم معي على انك مدير! Please dear brother! + I respect the relationship that we have in our work + but I am not a manager and you are not. + Stop talking to me like a manager! اهلا! + كيف حالك؟ + حركاتك ترا مالها أي داعي + وترا نقدر نصعد الموضوع! Hello! + How are you? + What you are doing seems to be unnecessary + and we can escalate the issue.
Combination of 5 formulas	طويل العمر! + اللي يصير هنا ماهو صح. + تراك انت متطوع لا اقل ولا اكثر + واسلوبك هو السبب. + غير اسلوبك! Longevous! + What is happening here is not true. + You are a volunteer no more no less + and your style caused this. + Change your attitude! ياالحبيب! + تراك انت مو مسؤول عني. + ولا انت المدير عشان تتأمر. + الموضوع جالس يستفزني. + التزم الاحترام عشان احترمك! Oh lover! + You are not responsible for me + and you are not the manager to issue orders. + It is irritating me. + Be respectful so I respect you!

Table 4.18. Saudi Arabic participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 3 Rude Volunteer)

The examples provided demonstrate different politeness strategies including the use of terms of address, the use of "please", and the employment of questions. The use of address terms such as "Brother", "Dear brother", "Longevous", and "Oh lover" implies varying levels of familiarity

and closeness. These terms reduce confrontation and convey a sense of solidarity and respect, even when confrontation is possible. For instance, addressing someone as "Brother" or "Dear brother" sets a familiar and in-group tone, which can help minimize the impact of subsequent directives and criticisms. Additionally, the term "Longevous" and "Oh lover", which are informal and friendly, are employed to create a respectful and friendly tone that mitigates the harshness of what follows.

It should be noted that in Saudi culture, the use of the term "oh lover" differs from the use of the term "my love". The term "my love" expresses absolute friendliness, while the term "oh lover" is considered less friendly than the term "my love" and indicates a kind of distance, unlike the term "my love". The term "oh lover" is usually used when they do not know the person or want to reduce something negative being said. However, this does not mean that the term "my love" is not utilized when they do not know the person, but rather it is used when they want to break restrictions and assume absolute friendliness.

As shown in several examples, the inclusion of "please" softens directives and makes requests more polite. For instance, in the statements "Respect yourself please!" and "Please dear brother! Stop talking to me like a manager!", the addition of "please" changes a command into a request indicating a polite and respectful tone. Using "please" is a common politeness strategy that can aid in maintaining a kind tone even when making firm requests.

A question can be used to challenge a listener's behavior indirectly, which is less confrontational than a direct statement. For instance, "Can you not interfere in someone else's work?" and "Who are you to issue orders?" deliver a message and invite discussion rather than open confrontation. It maintains a level of politeness and respect while challenging authority or behavior indirectly without appearing overly aggressive.

Responses also include the use of apologies to mitigate the impact of this face-threatening act. For example, the statement "I am sorry. Who are you to issue orders? I know what I am doing." Starts with an apology in order to reduce the impact of the following challenge to the authority of the listener. By starting with "I am sorry", this acknowledges the potential offensiveness of the challenge. In addition, examples include reciprocal politeness. Statements like "Respect others

so they respect you!" call for mutual respect and set an expectation for behavior based on reciprocity. An assertive and autonomous attitude is also present. Statements such as "I am not subject to your authority," "I know what I am doing," and "You are not the manager to issue orders." demonstrate the speaker's independence and proficiency.

4.4.2.EFL responses:

4.4.2.1.Types of semantic formulas:

In this scenario, EFL participants employed a total of 74 semantic formulas to formulate their responses. Among these, the most frequently used formula was 'Remedy,' appearing 26 times, accounting for 35.1% of the total. Next, the 'Justification' formula was the second most commonly used, being used 18 times and representing 24.3%. The 'Act Statement' formula was utilized 13 times, comprising 17.5% of the total. The 'Opener' formula was used 11 times, making up 14.8%. There were 6 Orientations made by EFL participants which is 8.1% of all semantic formulas. The semantic formula of Closing was not used at all by EFL participants.

4.4.2.2.Structures of semantic formulas:

EFL participants employed 14 different semantic formula structures when making complaints. These structures consisted of single formulas and combinations of 2, 3, and 4 formulas. For single complaint responses, the semantic formula 'Remedy' was used individually by EFL participants. When combining two semantic formulas for complete complaint responses, participants used four different structures in 13 responses. For instance, they paired 'Remedy' with 'Orientation' and 'Opener' with 'Justification'. In constructing responses with three semantic formulas, EFL participants used 7 different structures in 10 responses. Instances included combining 'Orientation' with 'Act Statement' and 'Remedy,' or 'Opener' with 'Remedy' and 'Justification'. For responses containing four semantic formulas, participants utilized 2 structures in 4 responses. This included combining 'Opener' with 'Remedy,' 'Justification,' and 'Act Statement'. Table 4.19 shows examples of EFL participants' semantic formula structures.

Formulas Structure	Examples
Single formula	Don't talk to me in this wrong way! You can't ask me to do anything!
Combination of 2 formulas	I am sorry + but you don't have any legal capacity to issue orders. Stop doing that! + I don't take orders from you.
Combination of 3 formulas	Hello brother! + You have a rude style. + I am not allowing you. I know you are excited + but you are not the manager. + Can you stop asking me please.
Combination of 4 formulas	Hi! + I would like you to stop issuing orders + as you are not a manager. + It is really annoying me. Excuse me! + Who are you when you talk like that to me? + Don't give me orders! + My work is not your business.

Table 4.19. EFL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 3 Rude Volunteer)

As shown in the examples, the statement "Don't talk to me in this wrong way!" is direct with no politeness markers reflecting a confrontational tone. Similarly, "You can't ask me to do anything!" conveys a refusal with no mitigating strategies indicating a firm stance. Additionally, the command "Stop doing that! I don't take orders from you" is blunt without politeness markers showing a confrontational tone. In contrast, the example "I am sorry, but you don't have any legal capacity to issue orders" starts with an apology, which softens the subsequent statement.

The response "Hello brother! You have a rude style. I am not allowing you" begins with a term of address, 'brother', which establishes rapport before delivering criticism. However, the subsequent statements have a critical and authoritative tone. The example "I know you are excited, but you are not the manager. Can you stop asking me please" demonstrates empathetic politeness by acknowledging the feelings of the listener. Although the overall message is a denial of authority, the inclusion of 'please' adds a sense of politeness.

In "Excuse me! Who are you when you talk like that to me? Don't give me orders! My work is not your business.", the phrase 'Excuse me!' is used to gain attention before delivering a critical message. The question challenges the listener's authority indirectly, whereas the subsequent statements are direct and assertive with no further politeness strategies.

4.4.3.ESL responses:

4.4.3.1.Types of semantic formulas:

ESL participants used a total of 103 semantic formulas in this situation. The formula of Remedy was used 28 times with a percentage of 27.1%. The formula of Opener was employed by ESL participants 17 times with a 16.5% and is the second most commonly used semantic formula. The semantic formula of Justification was used by ESL participants 16 times in this situation with a percentage of 15.5%. There were 15 Orientations made by ESL participants which is 14.5% of all semantic formulas. The semantic formula of Closing was used 15 times with a percentage of 14.5%. The semantic formula of Act Statement was employed 12 times with a percentage of 11.6%.

4.4.3.2.Structures of semantic formulas:

For the third complaint scenario, ESL participants used 18 distinct semantic formula structures. These structures comprised combinations of 2, 3, 4, and 5 formulas. Combining two semantic formulas for complete complaint responses, participants employed 5 different structures in 13 responses. For instance, they paired 'Orientation' with 'Remedy' and 'Remedy' with 'Justification'. In constructing responses with three semantic formulas, participants utilized five different structures in 7 responses. Examples included combining 'Remedy' with 'Justification' and 'Closing,' or 'Opener' with 'Remedy' and 'Act Statement'. In responses containing four semantic formulas, participants utilized 7 different structures in 9 responses. For example, they combined 'Opener' with 'Remedy,' 'Justification,' and 'Closing,' or 'Orientation' with 'Act Statement,' 'Justification,' and 'Remedy'. In responses containing 5 semantic formulas, participants utilized one structure in 1 response. They combined 'Opener' with 'Remedy,' 'Orientation,' 'Justification', and 'Closing'. Table 4.20 provides examples of ESL participants' semantic formula structures.

Formulas Structure	Examples
Combination of 2 formulas	It isn't in your authority to give orders like this. + Stop doing that please! As long as it is not your business, + don't do it!
Combination of 3 formulas	Excuse me! + You are disrespecting me. + Don't speak to me in this way! Excuse me! + Do you know that you cannot act like a manager or something. + We need to show some respect to each other.
Combination of 4 formulas	Hi, + I am not trying to be rude + but you are not the manager here. + Please know your place! Excuse me! + I am glad to help you out + but your behavior is unacceptable. + I would like you to talk politely with me.
Combination of 5 formulas	Hey, + have you got a problem with me or something? + I don't accept your rude orders + and you have no right to issue orders. + Don't ask people for doing something in this way! Hi, + I feel recently you have been speaking to me rudely. + I would like to ask you to stop this. + It is really unprofessional. + Thank you!

Table 4.20. ESL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 3 Rude Volunteer)

Similar to previous participant groups, examples show the use of "please" which is a direct marker of politeness and is employed to soften commands or requests. For instance, in "Stop doing that please!" and "Please know your place!", "please" reduces the impact of being too direct and makes it more polite. In contrast, a number of commands without "please" (e.g., "don't do it!") come across as more direct and authoritative. The use of questions is another politeness technique employed for requesting action or expressing ideas indirectly. Rhetorical questions like "have you got a problem with me or something?" convey criticism but do so in a less direct way, which allows the speaker to convey discomfort less directly.

Mitigating language is also present in ESL participants' responses minimizing the impact of potentially negative and critical statements. Examples like "I am not trying to be rude" and "I would like to ask you to stop this" mitigate criticism and requests and make them more polite. Similarly, positive framing, as seen in "I am glad to help you out," which starts with a positive tone before moving into criticism, helps soften the severity of the criticism. In contrast, there are examples with a confrontational tone, such as "You are disrespecting me. + Don't speak to me in this way!" which use direct and confrontational language.

4.4.4. British English responses:

4.4.4.1. Types of semantic formulas:

In this situation, British participants used 127 semantic formulas to express their responses. Among these, the 'Remedy' formula was the most frequently utilized, being used 30 times, accounting for 23.6% of the total. Following, the 'Orientation' formula was second in frequency, used 25 times, constituting 19.6%. The 'Opener' formula was employed 24 times, representing 18.8%, and the 'Closing' formula was utilized 23 times, with a percentage of 18.1%. The 'Justification' formula was employed 19 times, making up 14.9%. Lastly, the 'Act Statement' formula was used 6 times, representing 4.7% of all semantic formulas employed by British participants.

4.4.4.2. Structures of semantic formulas:

British participants made complaints employing a total of 19 distinct semantic formula structures. These structures included combinations of 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 semantic formulas. In responses containing two semantic formulas, 3 distinct structures appeared across 3 responses. For instance, participants mixed 'Remedy' with 'Justification' and 'Orientation' with 'Remedy'. Moving on to three-formula responses, British participants used 5 different structures in 6 responses. Examples included combining 'Opener' with 'Remedy' and 'Justification,' as well as 'Orientation' with 'Remedy' and 'Justification'. In responses of four semantic formulas, 6 different structures were used in 10 responses. Instances of these structures comprised combining 'Opener' with 'Remedy,' 'Justification,' and 'Closing,' as well as 'Orientation' with 'Remedy,' 'Act Statement,' and 'Closing'. For complete complaint responses involving 5 semantic formulas, 4 different structures were found in 6 responses. An example is combining 'Opener' with 'Orientation,' 'Remedy,' 'Justification,' and 'Closing'. Regarding responses involving 6 semantic formulas, one structure was found in 5 responses. It was by combining 'Opener' with 'Orientation,' 'Remedy,' 'Act Statement', 'Justification', and 'Closing'. Table 4.21 presents examples of British semantic formula structures used in this situation.

Formulas Structure	Examples
Combination of 2 formulas	Would you mind maybe not speaking to me like that? + You are not my boss. You're acting extremely unprofessional + and if you carry on this behavior I will have to tell management.
Combination of 3 formulas	Excuse me! + I don't think it's right that you speak to me like that + so just stop it. I don't think it's in your place to act like you're above everyone. + You're not the manager. + Stop being so rude!
Combination of 4 formulas	Excuse me! + I really appreciate the enthusiasm you have for the work + but I just wanted to say that I don't like your tone when you speak to me. + I'd appreciate it if you stop acting like a manager because you aren't. Sorry! + I don't know why you're being so rude to me. + I don't want to have to let a manager know, + but I will if you carry on doing this.
Combination of 5 formulas	Hey, + I appreciate your enthusiasm for the work we do, + but I don't think it's your place. + We are all on the same level. + Could you ease off please? Excuse me! + I would appreciate if you stopped handing out orders. + You're not a manager. + You have no right to behave like this. + Stop!
Combination of 6 formulas	Hey, + I know we don't properly know each other, + but could you stop telling me what to do? + It's not your job to order me around. + You are not my manager. + Thank you!

Table 4.21. British participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 3 Rude Volunteer)

The examples show a mix of soft and hard strategies. There are a number of statements that blend polite language with firm directives. For example, "I appreciate your enthusiasm for the work we do, but I don't think it's your place. We are all on the same level. Could you ease off please?" Starts with positive remarks and concludes with a polite request, keeping it polite while addressing the issue. The balance between directness and indirectness differs as well. Direct statements such as "Stop being so rude!" are more confrontational than indirect ones such as "I

don't think it's in your place to act like you're above everyone." This balance illustrates the blend of being straightforward and lessening potential conflict through indirectness. There are apologies and appreciations that precede critical feedback softening the message, as seen in "Sorry! + I don't know why you're being so rude to me. + I don't want to have to let a manager know, + but I will if you carry on doing this."

4.5. Situation of complaint (A sibling's neglect)

To recap, here is the fourth complaint scenario: 'Imagine that you have two laptops, both in good condition and in good working order. A sibling came to you and told you that their laptop broke down and became unusable. Also, your sibling told you that they would buy a new laptop within three months. Then, your sibling asked you to lend them one of your laptops to use during the next three months and your sibling promised to return it to you when buying a new laptop. You lent your sibling one of your laptops. Three months later, your sibling bought a new laptop and returned yours. Unfortunately, the condition of your laptop was very poor when it was returned, and traces of misuse and neglect were very clear. After that, you wanted to talk to your sibling to express your complaint and resentment about this unacceptable behavior.'

Situation	A sibling's neglect
Speaker's role	Complainer (Sibling)
Hearer's role	Complainee (Sibling)
Ranking of imposition	High R
Social distance	Low D
Power	(S=H)

Table 4.22. Situation of complaint 4 (A sibling's neglect) in the Discourse Completion Task.

Complaint situations 1, 2, and 3 showed different types of complaints settings that differed in several key variables. Situation 1 revolved around a student complaining about another student's mobile phone. The complaint was characterized by a low ranking of imposition which shows that the issue was relatively minor or routine. The social distance between the students was high which indicates that they were not familiar or close. The scenario was set in an educational setting where such interactions would be common. Situation 2, where the complaint was about an annoying neighbor, also involved a low ranking of imposition which reflects that the complaint was about a minor issue. However, the social distance between the neighbors was low that suggests they were familiar with each other and possibly interact regularly. The context was residential where neighbors normally deal with such neighborly issues. Situation 3, where the complaint involved a rude volunteer, introduced a different set of variables compared to the first two situations. In this scenario, the ranking of imposition was high which shows that the complaint was about a significant and serious matter. The social distance between the volunteers was high, similar to Situation 1 (A student's mobile phone), which implies that they were not personally acquainted with each other. The context was a volunteer or professional setting with higher expectations for behavior and professionalism.

Here, situation 4, where the complaint involves a sibling's neglect, introduces a different set of variables compared to the first three situations. In this scenario, the ranking of imposition is high which shows that the complaint is about a significant and serious matter. The social distance between the siblings is low, similar to Situation 2 (Annoying neighbour), which implies that they are personally acquainted with each other in a family setting. The following analysis will show how this scenario of high imposition ranking and low social distance influences participants' complaints compared to other scenarios.

Types of semantic formulas:

Formulas	Frequency			
	Saudi Arabic	EFL	ESL	British English
I. Opener	18	4	15	17
II. Orientation	17	5	11	22
III. Justification	8	20	13	23
IV. Act Statement	0	11	15	5
V. Remedy	28	25	30	30
VI. Closing	0	0	9	18
Total of formulas	71	65	93	115

Table 4.23. Frequency of all groups' semantic formulas (complaint situation 4 A sibling's neglect)

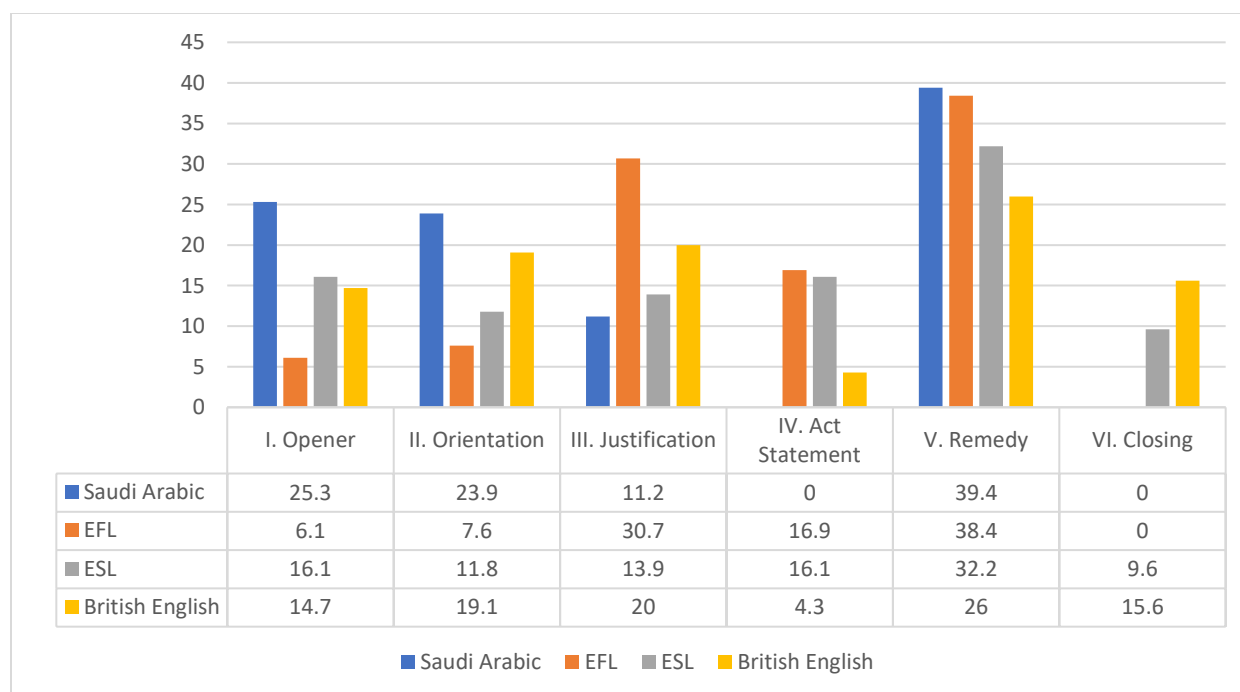


Figure 4.4. Frequency percentages of all groups' semantic formulas (complaint situation 4)

In this scenario, 344 semantic formulations were employed by all participants. The results indicate that the different participant groups employed different amounts of semantic formulas;

British participants utilized a large number of semantic formulas in this scenario, whereas Saudi Arabic and ESL participants employed fewer. With a total of 65, EFL participants used the fewest semantic formulas. The Remedy semantic formula was used prominently across all participant groups. Saudi Arabic participants employed it 28 times, constituting 39.4% of their total semantic formulas. EFL participants showcased less emphasis, using the Remedy formula 25 times, representing 38.4% of their formulas. ESL participants utilized this formula, employing it 30 times, making up 32.2% of their semantic usage. Similarly, British participants used the Remedy formula 30 times, comprising 26% of their total usage.

The Opener formula was also present, with differing degrees of usage. Saudi Arabic participants used it the most, 18 times, accounting for 25.3% of their formulas. EFL participants employed the Opener 4 times, representing 6.1% of their semantic formulas. ESL participants used this formula 15 times, constituting 16.1% of their total usage. British participants showcased a close percentage, employing the Opener formula 17 times, representing 14.7% of their semantic formulas.

Another prominent formula employed by all participant groups is Justification. This formula includes providing reasons or explanations to support a statement or action. The Justification formula was used 8 times by Saudi Arabic participants, accounting for 11.2% of their semantic formulas. In contrast, EFL participants used the Justification formula 20 times, representing 30.7% of their formulas. It seems that EFL participants rely more on Justification to clarify their points, either because they are unable to use other formulas or because they need to ensure understanding. ESL participants employed Justification 13 times, comprising 13.9% of their total usage. British participants utilized the Justification formula 23 times, accounting for 20% of their semantic formulas.

The Act Statement formula appeared with varying prevalence. Saudi Arabic participants did not employ it in their responses. EFL participants used the Act Statement formula 11 times, accounting for 16.9% of their formulas. With a similar percentage, ESL participants employed it 15 times, making up 16.1% of their total usage. British participants employed the Act Statement formula 5 times, representing 4.3% of their semantic formulas.

Orientations were employed to a varying extent as well. Saudi Arabic participants used them 17 times, making up 23.9% of their semantic formulas. EFL participants demonstrated a minor usage with 5 Orientations, representing 7.6% of their formulas. ESL participants employed 11 Orientations, comprising 11.8% of their total usage. British participants used Orientations 22 times, accounting for 19.1% of their semantic formulas.

Similar to previous scenarios, the use of Closings differed significantly across the different participant groups. Saudi Arabic and EFL participants did not use the Closing formula at all which may show a special cultural/linguistic preference for not using closings in their responses. In contrast, ESL participants employed the Closing formula 9 times, representing 9.6% of their formulas. This usage shows a familiarity with this semantic formula. This could possibly be a result of being influenced by higher exposure to English in the UK native context. British participants displayed the highest frequency of using the Closing formula, employing it 18 times which represented 15.6% of their semantic formulas. They are more likely to use closings and expect them in their culture because of this higher percentage. In contrast to the British participants that frequently use Closings, Saudi Arabic and EFL participants do not use Closings, while ESL participants are somewhere in the middle, representing their partial integration into the UK native culture.

The Saudi Arabic complaints reflect a culturally embedded preference for directness and emotional expressiveness, coupled with religious and social appeals that serve as both mitigation and face-saving strategies. The complaints often begin with explicit expressions of dissatisfaction, such as "إيش تسوي فيه كذا؟" (Why do you do that to it?) and "إيش قلة الأدب هذي؟" (What kind of impoliteness is this?). These direct, face-threatening acts (FTAs) indicate a low tolerance for the violation of trust and the emotional frustration resulting from the damaged device. Furthermore, the use of religious expressions, such as "الله يعافيك" (May God heal you) or "إيشهد الله" (I swear to God), acts as a mitigating strategy. By invoking religious references, the speaker appeals to shared cultural values, reducing the force of the complaint while maintaining sincerity and emphasizing moral responsibility.

In addition, Saudi Arabic complaints are often accompanied by social references, employing kinship terms such as "أخوي" (my brother) and "يا بعدي" (my dear) to ensure social cohesion. This indicates the collectivist culture of Saudis where maintaining relationships is valued even in conflict. Saudi Arabic participants also show emotional involvement, in the form of anger and disappointment, e.g., "انا زعلان منك بصراحة" (I am sad because of you, frankly) and "شي ينرفز" (something that makes me angry). The mixture of direct blame with emotional expressions and religious softeners indicates a culturally unique complaint pattern that combines assertiveness with relational factors.

The complaints provided by EFL participants show a limited set of pragmatic strategies, which is indicative of their developing linguistic competence and lack of familiarity with native-like complaint styles. There are many direct and unmitigated responses made by EFL participants, such as "What you did is a bad behavior" and "Your behavior is bad. + I will not give you anything.". These responses do not include hedging or politeness markers, which may seem blunt or impolite to native speakers. A lack of pragmatic competence has probably led to the directness observed, especially when the opportunity to gain awareness and tools to effectively manage such situations were not provided.

Additionally, the EFL complaints tend to be structurally simple and repetitive where they rely on basic patterns such as "What did you do? + Why is my laptop in this condition?". Using a limited number of modifiers, conditional phrases, or discourse markers leads to a lack of pragmatic nuance. There is also little emotional involvement in the complaints with little variation in tone and expression. Unlike Saudi Arabic participants, EFL participants rarely employ intensifiers, emotional exclamations, or idiomatic expressions, which in turn produces complaints that seem transactional and emotionally detached. EFL participants' responses to this situation show their developing pragmatic competence with direct and simple expressions that fail to incorporate the mitigating strategies characteristic of native speakers.

In comparison to EFL participants, ESL complaints used more sophisticated pragmatic strategies, which points to a developing but still better pragmatic competence. ESL participants use both direct and moderately softened complaints, which indicates an emerging awareness of politeness

norms. For instance, responses such as "I am sorry. + But return it as it was before!" include a prefatory apology, which mitigates the face-threatening effects of the next directive. Similar to this, expressions like "I trusted you with it and you let me down. + Have it fixed and return it!" combine emotional disappointment with a request for repair, indicating a desire to attempt at relational management.

Nevertheless, while ESL participants sometimes employ mitigating strategies, they still depend on direct blame and explicit requests for repair. Responses such as "Pay for the damage!" and "You should fix it for me" indicate a transactional tone that prioritizes compensation over relational politeness. Furthermore, ESL participants occasionally pair direct accusations with face-saving strategies, which points to a growing but inconsistent utilization of mitigation. Occasionally using conditionals and face-saving statements, e.g., "I hope you understand me", is one way they attempt to soften complaints, though these strategies are not consistently employed.

An analysis of British English complaints revealed different pragmatic competence, characterized by indirectness, mitigating arguments, and sarcasm. Frequently, British participants make indirect complaints in order to soften the impact of the complaint, while expressing a sense of dissatisfaction at the same time. For instance, the statement "The laptop I let you borrow seems to be a bit broken. + Do you know what happened to it?" employs indirect language and hedging ("seems", "a bit") to mitigate the complaint's directness. In a similar way, the employment of questions in their responses ("Do you know what happened to it?") is a way for the speaker to frame the complaint as a request for clarification rather than a direct accusation, which enables the speaker to express their dissatisfaction without the necessity of being confrontational.

The use of sarcasm and humor is also prevalent in British complaints, which serve as indirect means of conveying frustration. For example, "No wonder your old computer was broken. + You need to learn how to take better care of your things and for others' things." makes use of ironic humor to expose the hearer's carelessness with less confrontation. Furthermore, British participants often utilize softening strategies when requesting compensation, e.g., "Would you mind maybe lending me some money to have it fixed?". The utilization of modals ("would",

"maybe") and tentative phrasing lessens the imposition of the request, which helps to make it more polite and considerate. There is also a sense of empathy evident in the British complaints, exemplified by responses such as "I know it is a bit annoying because you just paid out for a new one". Here, the speaker demonstrates empathy and attempts to mitigate the complaint's force by acknowledging the hearer's potential frustration.

Based upon the analysis, it is evident that complaints strategy differs across the four groups, reflecting distinctive sociocultural norms and pragmatic conventions. Saudi Arabic participants express complaints in a direct and emotionally expressive manner, often employing religious and social references to soften them. EFL participants, conversely, tend to make direct and simplistic complaints with limited mitigation, which is indicative of a limited pragmatic competence. ESL participants exhibit moderate pragmatic awareness with some efforts to mitigate and make emotional appeals, though still direct. British English participants use the most sophisticated strategies of indirectness, politeness, and sarcasm to soften complaints and minimize face-threatening acts. These differences illustrate the influence of sociocultural norms and pragmatic competence on the realization of complaints. Saudi Arabic complaints symbolize a culture that is collectivist in its values, in that emotional expressiveness and religious appeals are valued, whereas British English complaints are characterized by indirectness and tact. A closer look at the EFL and ESL complaints, on the other hand, reveals the challenges non-native speakers face in acquiring pragmatic competence, with the ESL group exhibiting a greater level of mitigation strategies than the EFL group.

The following table presents a detailed breakdown of the structures of semantic formulas used by participants across different groups. It categorizes the responses based on the number of formula combinations employed and reveals differences in the complexity and completeness of responses among Saudi Arabic, EFL, ESL, and British participants.

Structures of semantic formulas:

		1 Formula structure	Combination of 2 formulas	Combination of 3 formulas	Combination of 4 formulas	Combination of 5 formulas	Combination of 6 formulas	Total
Saudi Arabic	Responses	4	6	11	6	3	-	30
	Structures	1	5	5	4	3	-	18
EFL	Responses	1	15	11	3	-	-	30
	Structures	1	6	4	2	-	-	13
ESL	Responses	-	16	8	6	-	-	30
	Structures	-	5	4	4	-	-	13
British	Responses	-	6	8	8	5	3	30
	Structures	-	2	4	6	3	1	16

Table 4.24. All participants' semantic formulas structures results (complaint situation 4 A sibling's neglect)

Saudi Arabic participants used the highest number of semantic formulas structures (18), followed by British participants (16), while EFL and ESL participants employed less semantic formula structures (13 each). British participants used the most diverse range of semantic formulas structures (6) followed by Saudi Arabic participants (5). EFL participants used a lower range of semantic formula structures with 4 different forms of formulas structures while ESL only used 3 semantic formula structures. British participants used a range of structures including combinations of 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 semantic formulas. Saudi Arabic displayed 5 different forms of formulas structures including single formulas and combinations of 2, 3, 4, and 5 semantic formulas. The British participants differed in their combination of 6 formulas that was employed in 3 responses where Saudi Arabic participants differed in employing the single formula structure. Compared to the other participant groups, EFL participants, with 4 formula structures, and ESL participants, with 3 formula structures, exhibited a much narrower range in how they utilized multiple semantic formulas, indicating that they were relatively limited at creating complaint structures. In order to fully understand the data, it is necessary to explain each group in detail after explaining the overall findings.

4.5.1.Saudi Arabic responses:

4.5.1.1.Types of semantic formulas:

The Saudi Arabic participants employed 71 different semantic formulas in all. The most frequently used semantic formula is the Remedy, which was used 28 times (39.4%). As the second most used semantic formula, Opener was employed 18 times (25.3%). There were 17 Orientations made by Saudi Arabic participants, which is 23.9% of all semantic formulas. The semantic formula of Justification was used 8 times (11.2%). Saudi Arabic participants made no use of the semantic formulas of Act Statement and Closing.

4.5.1.2.Structures of semantic formulas:

The Saudi Arabic participants employed 18 distinct semantic formula structures in the fourth complaint scenario. These combinations varied, comprising combinations of 2, 3, 4, and 5 formulas as well as single formula. For individual complaint responses, participants employed the formula 'Remedy' independently, providing a complete complaint response. In instances where two semantic formulas were combined for a complete response, participants employed 5 different structures in 6 responses. For example, they combined 'Remedy' with 'Justification' or 'Opener' with 'Justification'. When formulating responses with three semantic formulas, Saudi Arabic participants used 5 different structures in 11 responses. This involved combinations like 'Opener' with 'Remedy' and 'Justification,' or 'Remedy' with 'Orientation' and 'Justification'. For responses comprising four semantic formulas, Saudi Arabic participants used 4 different structures in 6 responses. For instance, they combined 'Opener' with 'Remedy,' 'Justification,' and 'Orientation'. In cases where a complete response required five semantic formulas, participants utilized 3 structures in 3 responses. This included combining 'Opener' with another 'Opener', 'Justification,' 'Orientation', and 'Remedy'. Table 4.25 provides examples of Saudi Arabic semantic formula structures in this scenario.

Formulas Structure	Examples
Single formula	إذا أخذت شي، رجعه زي ما كان وأفضل! If you take something, return it as it was and better! عطيتك الجهاز بحالة جيدة، المفروض ترجعه زي ما كان. I gave you the device in good condition, you should return it as it was.
Combination of 2 formulas	انا عطيتك الجهاز ما فيه شي. + ليش تسوي فيه كذا؟ I gave you the device and there is nothing in it. + Why do you do that to it? أخوي الله يعافيك! + صلح جهازي بالله My brother may God heal you! + Fix my device, for God's sake
Combination of 3 formulas	ايش قلة الأدب هذي؟ + معطيك وفازع لك واخر شي تجيبه لي خربان! + مالها داعي يشهد الله. What kind of impoliteness is this? + I gave you, I helped you, and the last thing you gave it to me damaged! + There is no need for it, for God's sake. أخوي لو سمحت! + ليش حالة الجهاز كذا؟ + لازم تحرص على أشياء غيرك أكثر من اغراضك! My brother, please! + Why is the condition of the device like this? + You must be more careful about other people's things than your own!
Combination of 4 formulas	يا أخوي ما يصلح الكلام هذا. + طلبت مني اللاب توب واعطيتك إياه وما قلت لك شي. + موضوع إنك تأخذه وتخربه هذا شي مو مقبول. + طريقتك في الاستخدام سيئة جدا. My brother, this is not appropriate. + You asked me for the laptop and I gave it to you and I did not tell you anything. + The fact that you take it and destroy it is unacceptable. + Your way of using it is very bad. هلا أخوي! + كيف امورك؟ + ليش سويت في الجهاز كذا؟ + ما تنعطى شي للأمانة! Hey, brother! + How are things? + Why did you do that to the device? + In all honesty, you don't deserve to be given anything!
Combination of 5 formulas	لو سمحت أخوي! + من الادب ان تعتني بالجهاز اللي اعطيتك اياه. + انا زعلان منك بصراحة. + اللي سويته شي ينفز. + حاول تحل مشكلة الإهمال اللي عندك! Excuse me, brother! + It is polite to take care of the device I gave you. + I am sad because of you, frankly. + What you did is something that makes me angry. + Try to solve the problem of your negligence! كيفك أخوي؟ + بصراحة انا جدا متضايق. + جهاز ما فيه أي مشكلة تخربه ليش؟ + ترضى اخذ جهازك الجديد واخره؟ + زين جهازي لو سمحت! How are you, my brother? + Frankly, I am very upset. + A device with no problem it, why did you destroy it? + Would you be willing to take your new device and destroy it? + Fix my device, please!

Table 4.25. Saudi Arabic participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 4 A sibling's neglect)

4.5.2.EFL responses:

4.5.2.1.Types of semantic formulas:

In this scenario, EFL participants employed a total of 65 semantic formulas to formulate their responses. Among these, the most frequently used formula was 'Remedy,' appearing 25 times, accounting for 38.4% of the total. Next, the 'Justification' formula was the second most commonly used, being used 20 times and representing 30.7%. The 'Act Statement' formula was utilized 11 times, comprising 16.9% of the total. There were 5 Orientations made by EFL participants which is 7.6% of all semantic formulas. The 'Opener' formula was used 4 times, making up 6.1%. The semantic formula of Closing was not used at all by EFL participants.

4.5.2.2.Structures of semantic formulas:

EFL participants employed 13 different semantic formula structures when making complaints. These structures consisted of single formulas and combinations of 2, 3, and 4 formulas. For single complaint responses, the semantic formula 'Remedy' was used individually by EFL participants. When combining two semantic formulas for complete complaint responses, participants used 6 different structures in 15 responses. For instance, they paired 'Remedy' with 'Orientation' and 'Opener' with 'Justification'. In constructing responses with three semantic formulas, EFL participants used 4 different structures in 11 responses. Instances included combining 'Orientation' with 'Act Statement' and 'Remedy,' or 'Opener' with 'Remedy' and 'Justification'. For responses containing four semantic formulas, participants utilized 2 structures in 3 responses. This included combining 'Opener' with 'Remedy,' 'Justification,' and 'Act Statement'. Table 4.26 shows examples of EFL participants' semantic formula structures.

Formulas Structure	Examples
Single formula	What you did is a bad behavior.
Combination of 2 formulas	Sorry brother! + If someone gives you anything, you must return it like when you took it. What did you do? + Why is my laptop in this condition?
Combination of 3 formulas	What happened? + I gave you the laptop in a good condition. + Can you explain to me what happened? Hello brother! + Shame on you! + If someone gives you something, keep it well!
Combination of 4 formulas	Your behavior is bad. + I will not give you anything. + I gave you my laptop in a good condition and you gave it back in very poor condition. + Be careful with others' things! Brother! + What did you do to the laptop? + It is in really bad condition. + You have to fix it.

Table 4.26. EFL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 4 A sibling's neglect)

4.5.3.ESL responses:

4.5.3.1.Types of semantic formulas:

ESL participants used a total of 93 semantic formulas in this situation. The formula of Remedy was used 30 times with a percentage of 32.2%. The formula of Opener was employed by ESL participants 15 times with a 16.1%. The semantic formula of Act Statement was employed 15 times with a percentage of 16.1%. The semantic formula of Justification was used by ESL participants 13 times in this situation with a percentage of 13.9%. There were 11 Orientations made by ESL participants which is 11.8% of all semantic formulas. The semantic formula of Closing was used 9 times with a percentage of 9.6%.

4.5.3.2.Structures of semantic formulas:

ESL participants used 13 distinct semantic formula structures. These structures comprised combinations of 2, 3, and 4 formulas. Combining two semantic formulas for complete complaint

responses, participants employed 5 different structures in 16 responses. For instance, they paired 'Orientation' with 'Remedy' and 'Remedy' with 'Justification'. In constructing responses with three semantic formulas, participants utilized 4 different structures in 8 responses. Examples included combining 'Remedy' with 'Justification' and 'Closing,' or 'Opener' with 'Remedy' and 'Act Statement'. In responses containing four semantic formulas, participants utilized 4 different structures in 6 responses. For example, they combined 'Opener' with 'Remedy,' 'Justification,' and 'Closing,' or 'Orientation' with 'Act Statement,' 'Justification,' and 'Remedy'. Table 4.27 provides examples of ESL participants' semantic formula structures.

Formulas Structure	Examples
Combination of 2 formulas	I am sorry. + But return it as it was before! Why did you do this? + It is my mistake that I gave it to you.
Combination of 3 formulas	I am sorry brother. + But you cannot give me back my laptop in this condition. + Pay for the damage! Hey! + I trusted you with it and you let me down. + Have it fixed and return it!
Combination of 4 formulas	What you did is unacceptable. + You didn't respect my things. + How can I use it now in this bad condition? + Fix it! You should be more careful with my laptop. + What you did is unacceptable. + You should fix it for me. + It is last time to share my things with you.

Table 4.27. ESL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 4 A sibling's neglect)

4.5.4. British English responses:

4.5.4.1. Types of semantic formulas:

In this situation, British participants used 115 semantic formulas to express their responses. Among these, the 'Remedy' formula was the most frequently utilized, being used 30 times, accounting for 26% of the total. Following, the 'justification' formula was second in frequency,

used 23 times, constituting 20%. The 'Orientation' formula was employed 22 times, representing 19.1%, and the 'Closing' formula was utilized 18 times, with a percentage of 15.6%. The 'Opener' formula was employed 17 times, making up 14.7%. Lastly, the 'Act Statement' formula was used 5 times, representing 4.3% of all semantic formulas employed by British participants.

4.5.4.2. Structures of semantic formulas:

British participants made complaints employing a total of 16 distinct semantic formula structures. These structures included combinations of 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 semantic formulas. In responses containing two semantic formulas, 2 distinct structures appeared across 6 responses. For instance, participants mixed 'Remedy' with 'Justification' and 'Orientation' with 'Remedy'. Moving on to three-formula responses, British participants used 4 different structures in 8 responses. Examples included combining 'Opener' with 'Remedy' and 'Justification,' as well as 'Orientation' with 'Remedy' and 'Justification'. In responses of four semantic formulas, 6 different structures were used in 8 responses. Instances of these structures comprised combining 'Opener' with 'Remedy,' 'Justification,' and 'Closing,' as well as 'Orientation' with 'Remedy,' 'Act Statement,' and 'Closing'. For complete complaint responses involving 5 semantic formulas, 3 different structures were found in 5 responses. An example is combining 'Opener' with 'Orientation,' 'Remedy,' 'Justification,' and 'Closing'. Regarding responses involving 6 semantic formulas, one structure was found in 3 responses. It was by combining 'Opener' with 'Orientation,' 'Remedy,' 'Act Statement', 'Justification', and 'Closing'. Table 4.28 presents examples of British semantic formula structures used in this situation.

Formulas Structure	Examples
Combination of 2 formulas	No wonder your old computer was broken. + You need to learn how to take better care of your things and for others' things. I lent it to you as a favor and you just go and destroy it! + I hope you are going to pay me back for the repairs.
Combination of 3 formulas	How the hell have you broken my laptop? + It is not right. + I need that laptop fixed.

	The laptop I let you borrow seems to be a bit broken. + Do you know what happened to it? + Would you mind may be lending me some money to have it fixed?
Combination of 4 formulas	Hey! + Thanks for bringing my laptop back. + but can you be more careful with things in the future please? + It is not in as good condition now as when I gave it to you. Look! + I don't mind lending you things as you treat them with respect. + The situation you have left my laptop in is unacceptable. + I expect you to pay to have this damage repaired.
Combination of 5 formulas	I noticed that the laptop you borrowed is a bit damaged when you gave it back. + Is there anyway you can help pay to replace it if it doesn't work? + I trusted you to take care of it. + I am sorry. + I know it is a bit annoying because you just paid out for a new one. Hey! + I want to thank you for returning my laptop + but for some reason you have returned it in a really poor state. + I don't think is fair when I gave it to you in a good condition. + Could you treat my stuff a bit better?
Combination of 6 formulas	Hey, + What the hell did you do to my laptop? + It was in a good working condition when I gave it to you. + How did you mess it up this bad in three months? + I don't care, I'm going to get it repaired. + You are covering the costs. I am sorry! + but what have you been doing with this? + Don't think it's fair you giving it back to me in such a worse condition than I gave it to you. + I was being kind to let you use it. + I expect you to repair and clean it. + Or you will have to buy me a replacement.

Table 4.28. British participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (complaint situation 4 A sibling's neglect)

4.6.Overall insights

This section discusses and contextualizes the findings presented in Chapter Four through the lens of pragmatic competence, sociocultural norms, and cross-linguistic variation. It aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how complaints are expressed across four participant groups (British English native speakers, Saudi monolingual Arabic speakers, Saudi EFL learners, and Saudi ESL learners) and what these differences indicate in relation to pragmatic development,

especially in EFL and ESL contexts. To this end, the research addressed several core dimensions, including the types and structures of complaints, the influence of address terms, and the roles of social distance and ranking of imposition.

One of the main questions investigated in this study was the extent to which the types of complaints employed differ among British English speakers, Saudi Arabic speakers, Saudi EFL learners, and Saudi ESL learners. The data showed different cultural and pragmatic patterns in how complaints are framed and delivered, each group drawing from different sets of norms and communicative conventions. British English speakers displayed a consistently polite, indirect, and mitigated style of making complaints. Their responses typically included expressions of empathy, the use of hedging devices ("maybe," "would you mind") and apologies, all of which contributed to reduce the face-threatening nature of complaints. This aligns somehow with the British cultural norms that value restraint, politeness, and minimal imposition. Comparatively, Saudi Arabic participants relied significantly on culturally embedded expressions driven by emotional intensity, religious language, and kinship-based address terms. Their complaint strategies employed directness with politeness achieved through invoking shared cultural values. Phrases such as "May Allah make you happy" or "Peace be upon you" softened direct criticism and contextualized the complaint within a framework of respect and communal identity. This approach shows the collectivist nature of Saudi culture, where relationship maintenance is prioritized even during conflict, and communication often aims to strengthen social ties. This contrast closely aligns with results from cross-cultural complaint research. The preference for indirectness and mitigation among British English speakers is consistent with patterns identified in the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project, where English complaints were found to depend heavily on hedging and softening devices (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). Similarly, House and Kasper (1981) noted that English speakers tend to frame complaints as suggestions or indirect requests rather than explicit accusations. Conversely, the Saudi Arabic data showing relatively greater directness combined with relational and religious mitigation is in line with research on Arabic complaints, where direct criticism is frequently embedded within solidarity-building expressions and appeals to shared values (Abdo, 2021). The present findings confirm and

reinforce the argument that directness alone cannot be equated with impoliteness, as mitigation may be culturally encoded through different linguistic resources.

Saudi EFL learners, nevertheless, displayed less pragmatic sophistication in their complaint approach. Their responses were often characterized by bluntness, minimal mitigation, and simplistic syntax. This points to a limited range of pragmatic strategies, likely stemming from reduced exposure to authentic English interaction and insufficient instruction in socio-pragmatic norms. While some learners employed politeness markers such as “please,” they were not always employed appropriately or effectively. When compared to their Saudi Arabic counterparts, EFL learners made few attempts to embed their complaints in culturally relevant or context-sensitive ways. In many cases, their responses bordered on confrontation due to their lack of mitigating expressions, indirectness, or elaboration. On the other hand, Saudi ESL learners, who were living in English-speaking environments, demonstrated a more developed pragmatic competence. Their complaints, while still direct from time to time, were more likely to include softeners, indirectness, and expressions of shared concern (e.g., “Everyone is getting distracted by it”), which indicates an awareness of how to navigate interpersonal relationships through language in L2 contexts. This group’s performance highlights the role of immersion and exposure in developing a deeper understanding of target language norms and expectations. The observed differences between Saudi EFL and ESL participants also support the findings of research concerning pragmatic transfer and developmental progression. Al-Rashidi (2017) found that Saudi EFL learners produce responses that are often characterized by simplicity, bluntness, and limited mitigation.

Another crucial issue investigated in this study was how the structures of complaints differ among the four groups. Structural analysis showed that British English speakers consistently produced the most complex complaints, often combining five or six semantic formulas into a single response. These formulas consisted of openers, orientations, justifications, statements of the act, remedies, and closings, mostly arranged in a structured manner. This structure is used not only to communicate the speaker’s intent but also to guide the hearer’s response and maintain politeness. The frequent use of closings, in particular, led to a sense of communicative completeness and face-sensitive interaction. Saudi Arabic participants also displayed a relatively

high degree of structural richness although in a culturally specific form. Their responses often included multiple semantic formulas, generally using religious and emotional appeals as both orientation and mitigation. Nonetheless, in contrast to the British group, they rarely used closings, which could reflect different cultural expectations regarding how interactions should conclude. For instance, an extended structure involving terms like “My dear brother,” religious blessings, statements of inconvenience, and expressions of goodwill allowed for a rich, culturally relevant way of balancing criticism and respect.

By contrast, the complaint structures of Saudi EFL learners were typically shorter, less elaborate, and less logically sequenced. Many EFL responses contained one or two formulas only, mostly lacking openings or orientations and jumping directly to statements of dissatisfaction. This points to the influence of L1 transfer, where learners may not have adequate L2 resources to match the sociopragmatic complexity expected in English. The relative reduction of such sequencing among EFL participants is consistent with findings that learners often struggle with adjusting complaint structures (Trosborg, 1995). Accordingly, structural complexity may serve as an indicator of pragmatic development rather than merely stylistic variation.

Saudi ESL participants again demonstrated intermediate performance. Their complaints were more complex than those of EFL participants, often involving three to four formulas, and sometimes including mitigators, apologies, or emotional appeals. Still, their use of structure was not as complex as that of native speakers, which suggests that while immersion improves pragmatic awareness, it does not directly result in full native-like complex competence.

It was particularly interesting to see the influence of address terms on complaint construction. Saudi Arabic speakers made extensive utilization of culturally and religiously loaded address terms such as “My heart,” “My brother,” “Oh lover,” and “Longevous,” which were used not only to soften the complaint but also to invoke shared values and establish relational alignment. These address terms served as powerful pragmatic devices that allowed speakers to mitigate criticism while reinforcing group solidarity. They were particularly prominent in high-imposition, high-distance scenarios, where confrontation risk was higher and face-saving was more urgent. Significantly, different terms carried subtle distinctions: “My love” indicated intimacy and absolute friendliness, while “Oh lover” was utilized to show restrained familiarity and often

implied emotional detachment. This complex use of address terms was almost entirely absent in the responses of Saudi EFL participants. ESL participants, meanwhile, sometimes incorporated basic address terms such as “Brother,” suggesting some degree of sociopragmatic sensitivity but lacking the depth and richness found in L1 discourse. Rather than depending on address terms, British participants employed modal verbs, politeness markers, and self-effacing language to achieve relational alignment and politeness.

The final analysis investigated was how social distance and ranking of imposition affect the way complaints are constructed and expressed. The results show that both variables significantly shape the content, tone, and structure of complaints. In situations of high social distance and high imposition, such as complaints to an unfamiliar volunteer acting rudely, British and ESL participants employed indirectness, mitigation, and extended sequences of justification and remedy. The high perceived face-threat required careful linguistic strategies to avoid escalation. Saudi Arabic participants, by contrast, replied with emotional assertiveness but still infused their responses with cultural and religious face-saving strategies. EFL participants, nevertheless, frequently failed to modify their complaints to account for increased social distance and imposition, often using blunt expressions or imperatives without sufficient justification or mitigation. This indicates an underdeveloped capability to evaluate contextual factors and adapt speech acts accordingly, which is a crucial element of pragmatic competence. The difficulty experienced by EFL participants in adjusting complaint strategies across contexts mirrors earlier findings that learners often fail to modify complaints appropriately according to interactions variables (Trosborg, 1995).

In scenarios marked by low distance and low imposition, such as the neighbor complaint scenario, all groups responded with relatively more directness. Nevertheless, only British and ESL speakers consistently employed politeness strategies even in these less face-threatening interactions. Saudi Arabic speakers continued to use affective and religious language to maintain warmth, while EFL participants again struggled to construct appropriately complex responses. Interestingly, in the sibling complaint scenario (low distance, high imposition), the Saudi Arabic participants replied with emotionally charged yet relationally sensitive complaints, combining blame with expressions of disappointment and familial expectation. This shows cultural

assumptions about kinship obligations and emotional openness. British participants in this context were more indirect and often framed as rhetorical questions or subtle hints. ESL participants used both direct and indirect strategies while EFL participants remained direct, emotionally detached, and structurally simplistic, which shows both cultural and linguistic gaps in pragmatic processing.

The results explained in this chapter both confirm and complicate previous complaint research. Consistent with cross-cultural studies (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; House & Kasper, 1981), English speakers in this study showed a clear preference for indirectness and mitigation. Nonetheless, the data suggest that British indirectness was not merely a strategy of avoidance but often involved structured sequencing and strategic elaboration. This indicates a higher degree of pragmatic orchestration than earlier descriptions might imply. Similarly, while Saudi Arabic speakers showed culturally embedded forms of relational politeness, aligning with findings from Saudi-focused studies (Al-Shorman, 2017; Al-Jabali, 2018), the present findings challenge any monolithic characterization of Saudi complaint behaviour as uniformly direct or indirect. Instead, Saudi participants combined criticism with religious, relational, and solidarity-based mitigation. This suggests that directness and politeness operate simultaneously rather than as oppositional categories. This partially reconciles the apparent inconsistencies between Al-Shorman's (2017) findings of greater directness and Al-Jabali's (2018) observations of increased mitigation, pointing to the dynamic influence of contextual and interpersonal variables.

4.7. Summary

In summary, British English speakers displayed pragmatic skills grounded in politeness and indirectness. Saudi Arabic speakers showed culturally rich, emotionally expressive complaints moderated by religious and relational strategies. Saudi EFL learners showed limited pragmatic control and struggled to manage politeness, tone, and sequencing, whereas Saudi ESL learners demonstrated a transitional competence in which they integrated elements of L2 norms with L1-influenced strategies. These results have significant implications for EFL pedagogy and suggest a

need for explicit instruction in pragmatics, more pragmatic educational materials, and more exposure to authentic communicative contexts. Developing learners' sensitivity to sociocultural knowledge and context-specific variation in speech acts will be essential in developing more effective and socially appropriate communication across linguistic and cultural boundaries. The findings reported here provide the first component of the study's overall argument, which will be strengthened through the analyses of apologies and refusals in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter Five: The Speech Act of Apology

5.1.Introduction

Following the analysis and results of complaints in Chapter Four, this chapter analyses the speech act of apology performed by participants and addresses the research questions through the lens of apologies. Results show that British English speakers typically use explicit apology strategies by frequently combining apology formulas with explanations, offers of repair, and mitigation devices. Saudi Arabic participants, in contrast, often used implicit strategies such as appeals to religious or social values, as well as expressions of humility, which are deeply rooted in Arabic sociocultural norms. Saudi EFL participants showed clear evidence of pragmatic weaknesses and Saudi ESL participants, however, demonstrated more developed and contextually appropriate apology strategies, which were aligned closely somehow with British English norms. To some extent, there was a relationship between apology performance and address terms across groups. Saudi Arabic speakers frequently depended on address terms to reinforce humility, respect, or solidarity in their apologies. EFL and ESL participants showed varying degrees of usage in their responses. The contextual variables of social distance and ranking of imposition tend to influence apology strategies as some groups adapted their strategies in response to these factors. Among EFL and ESL, the degree of adaptation varied which shows their cultural backgrounds and levels of pragmatic competence.

Before presenting the results of apology performance, it is necessary to explain how apology responses were segmented, coded, and quantified using the framework developed by Olshtain and Cohen (1983). As previously shown in Chapter Three, apology responses were analyzed using Olshtain and Cohen's (1983) semantic formula framework, which identifies five core apology strategies: Expression of Apology (APOL), Explanation or Account (EXPL), Taking on Responsibility (RESP), Offer of Repair (REPR), and Promise of Forbearance (FORB). Within this framework, each apology response was studied to identify the use of one or more of these semantic formulas.

Coding began with a careful reading of each participant's written response in its entirety to understand its overall pragmatic intention. Each response was then segmented into smaller functional units based on meaning and communicative function rather than grammatical form. Each unit was subsequently assigned to one of the five semantic formula categories based on its primary communicative role. This process can be explained by the following example from a British English participant in Apology Situation 1:

"I'm really sorry. I didn't realize I was blocking your way. Please go ahead."

This response was segmented and coded as follows:

"I'm really sorry.": This segment was classified as an Expression of Apology (APOL) as it explicitly expresses regret and serves as the core apologetic device.

"I didn't realize I was blocking your way.": This segment was coded as Explanation or Account (EXPL) as it provides contextual justification and explains the circumstances surrounding the offence.

"Please go ahead.": This segment was classified as Offer of Repair (REPR) because it attempts to resolve the situation and restore the interactional balance.

This single response therefore consisted of three semantic formulas: APOL, EXPL, and REPR.

Each participant's response was studied in this manner. When a participant used multiple apology components within one response, each component was counted separately. For instance, a response such as "Sorry. It was my fault. I will be more careful next time." was coded as follows:

"Sorry" – Expression of Apology (APOL)

"It was my fault" – Taking on Responsibility (RESP)

"I will be more careful next time" – Promise of Forbearance (FORB)

This response therefore contributed three semantic formulas to the overall frequency count. After all responses were classified, the frequency of each semantic formula category was calculated for each participant group. This task required counting the number of times each formula appeared across the 30 responses produced by each group. For example, Saudi Arabic participants employed the Expression of Apology (APOL) formula 36 times. This number is the total count of all explicit apology expressions such as "sorry," "I apologize," and similar

expressions across the Saudi Arabic participants' responses. Similarly, EFL participants employed the Taking on Responsibility (RESP) formula 20 times. This frequency was obtained by counting all occasions in which participants explicitly accepted blame, such as statements including "it was my fault" or "I made a mistake."

Following the calculation of raw frequencies, percentages were calculated. These percentages were calculated by dividing the frequency of each semantic formula by the total number of formulas produced by that group and multiplying the result by 100. For example, Saudi Arabic participants produced a total of 61 semantic formulas in Situation 1. As 36 of these were Expression of Apology formulas, the percentage was calculated as follows:

36 divided by 61 multiplied by 100 equals 59%.

This points to the relative prominence of this semantic formula within the group's overall apology performance.

Furthermore, the structural design of apology responses was also studied. This included analyzing how many semantic formulas were combined within each individual apology response. For instance, a response such as "Sorry." was classified as a single-formula structure that consists only of APOL. A response such as "Sorry. It was my fault." was classified as a two-formula structure combining APOL and RESP. A more complex response such as "I'm really sorry. I didn't see you there. Please go ahead." was classified as a three-formula structure consisting of APOL, EXPL, and REPR. The number of responses within each structural category was then counted. For instance, Saudi Arabic participants produced nine responses that contained a single semantic formula, thirteen responses consisting of two formulas, six responses consisting of three formulas, and two responses consisting of four formulas. In addition to counting the number of responses, the number of structural forms was also calculated. For example, the following two responses show different structural patterns of APOL with EXPL and APOL with REPR. Although both responses contain two formulas, they represent different structural organizations and were therefore counted as separate structures. Next, results of all apology situations are presented along with comprehensive discussions.

5.2. Situation of apology (Blocking the Aisle)

“Imagine that while you were shopping in an aisle of a shop, a product caught your eye. You picked it up and started reading the details written on it. While you were reading, someone from behind said: Excuse me! You turned around and then you realized that you were blocking the aisle and immediately you wanted to apologize for blocking the aisle.”

Situation	Blocking the Aisle
Speaker's role	Apologizer (Customer)
Hearer's role	Victim (Customer)
Ranking of imposition	Low R
Social distance	High D
Power	(S=H)

Table 5.1. Situation of apology (1) in the Discourse Completion Task.

Types of apologies:

Formulas	Frequency			
	Saudi Arabic	EFL	ESL	British English
I. An expression of apology (APOL)	36	35	31	31

II. Explanation or account (EXPL)	13	3	11	14
III. Taking on responsibility (RESP)	3	20	3	4
IV. Offer of repair (REPR)	9	4	1	8
V. Promise of forbearance (FORB)	0	0	0	0
Total of formulas	61	62	46	57

Table 5.2. Frequency of all groups' semantic formulas (apology situation 1)

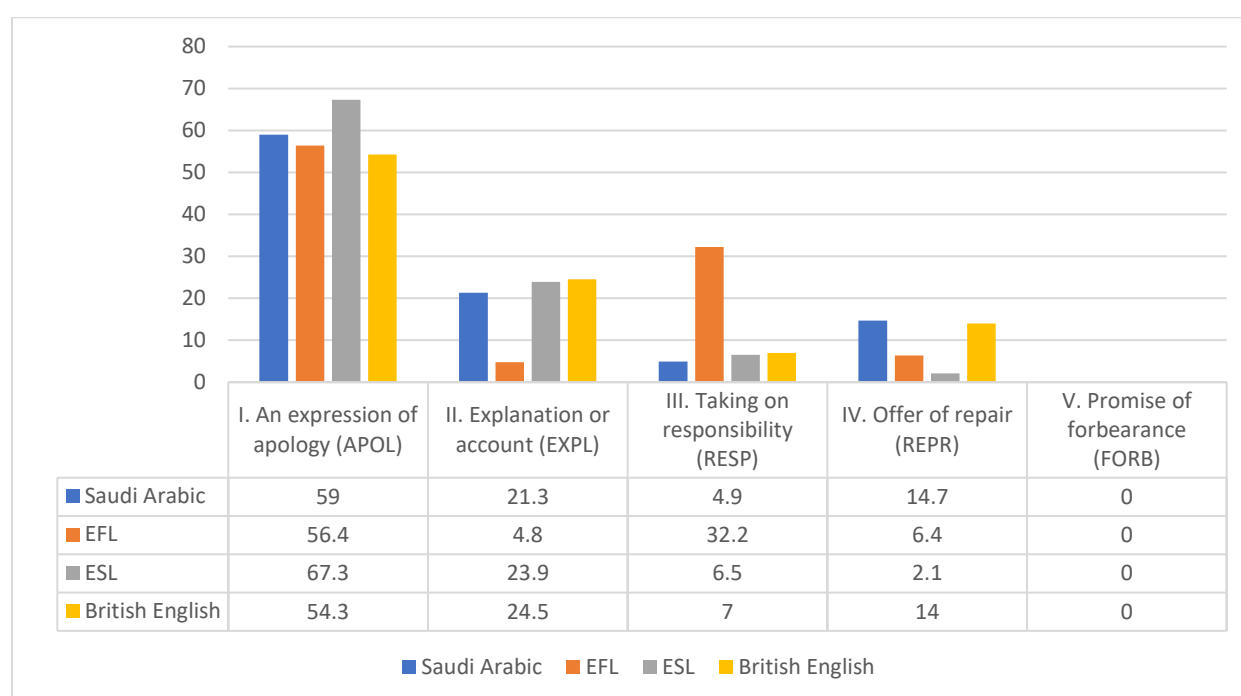


Figure 5.1. Frequency percentages of all groups' semantic formulas (apology situation 1)

There were 226 semantic formulas used by all participants in this situation. Results show differences in the semantic formula usage across the various participant groups, with EFL and Saudi Arabic participants demonstrating a high usage of semantic formulas, while British and ESL participants used less semantic formulas in this situation. EFL participants used the highest number of semantic formulas with a total of 62, followed closely by Saudi Arabic participants who used a total of 61 semantic formulas. The fact that there is only one semantic formula difference

between EFL participants' usage of 62 formulas and Saudi Arabic participants' usage of 61 formulas may indicate that their cultural beliefs on the necessary number of semantic formulas for apologizing in this situation are very similar. British participants used a slightly lower number of semantic formulas with a total of 57. ESL participants used the fewest semantic formulas with a total of 46, indicating that this group, on the one hand, may have encountered more difficulties in using English semantic formulas due to their limited pragmatic competence in English. On the other hand, this may indicate that ESL participants culturally believe that fewer semantic formulas are effective enough for apologizing in this situation taking into account the variables involved.

All four participant groups used the expression of apology (APOL) as the most commonly used semantic formula, indicating the significance of this semantic formula in expressing the speech act of apology. However, there were some variations in the frequency and percentage of its usage among the groups. Saudi Arabic participants used the expression of apology (APOL) semantic formula most frequently, with a total of 36 times and a percentage of 59%. EFL participants used the expression of apology (APOL) semantic formula 35 times with a slightly lower percentage of 56.4%. ESL participants used the expression of apology (APOL) semantic formula 31 times, with the highest percentage of 67.3%. British participants also used the expression of apology (APOL) semantic formula 31 times, but with a slightly lower percentage of 54.3%. When it comes to the usage of the explanation or account (EXPL) semantic formula, there were noticeable differences among the participant groups. Saudi Arabic participants employed this formula the most frequently, utilizing it 13 times, which accounts for 21.3% of their total semantic formula usage. British participants used the explanation or account (EXPL) semantic formula 14 times, representing 24.5% of their total semantic formula usage, which is the highest percentage of all participant groups. ESL participants followed closely behind with 11 uses of the explanation or account (EXPL) semantic formula, accounting for 23.9% of their total semantic formula usage. In contrast, EFL participants used the explanation or account (EXPL) semantic formula the least, with only 3 instances, which represented just 4.8% of their total semantic formula usage.

The semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) was utilized by all participant groups, but to varying degrees. EFL participants employed this formula the most frequently, using it a total

of 20 times, which represents 32.2% of their total semantic formula usage. British participants used the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) 4 times, accounting for 7% of their total semantic formula usage. Among Saudi Arabic participants, the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) was used 3 times, representing just 4.9% of their total semantic formula usage. ESL participants employed the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) 3 times in this situation, representing 6.5% of their total semantic formula usage. While the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) was used to some extent by all participant groups, it was most prevalent among EFL participants, who used it more than the other groups. EFL participants showed a clear difference in the use of the explanation or account (EXPL) semantic formula and the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) as they preferred to take responsibility rather than clarify and explain the situation. Neither Saudi Arabic participants nor British or ESL participants have made this choice. As this choice is inconsistent with any of the other groups, it is suggested that EFL students' English pragmatic competence needs to be developed. In this context, development can be done through increasing their awareness of the importance of the role of explanation or account (EXPL) semantic formula when apologizing. Results showed that relying on the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) when apologizing is not the most effective, at least in similar situations where the ranking of imposition is low and the social distance is high.

The offer of repair (REPR) semantic formula was used by all participant groups in this situation, but there are differences in its frequency of use. British participants and Saudi Arabic participants employed the semantic formula with a similar frequency, with 8 and 9 instances respectively. The offer of repair (REPR) semantic formula accounted for 14% of British participants' total semantic formula usage, and 14.7% of Saudi Arabic participants' total semantic formula usage. In contrast, the offer of repair (REPR) semantic formula was used less frequently among EFL and ESL participants. EFL participants used the semantic formula only 4 times, accounting for 6.4% of their total semantic formula usage. Meanwhile, the offer of repair (REPR) semantic formula was used just once by ESL participants, representing only 2.1% of their total semantic formula usage. The offer of repair (REPR) semantic formula was used by all participant groups, but its frequency of use varied greatly. British participants and Saudi Arabic participants used the semantic formula

with a similar frequency, while EFL participants used it less often. ESL participants used the offer of repair (REPR) semantic formula the least frequently, with only one instance of its use. This suggests that British and Saudi Arabic participants may have placed a higher value on offering repair solutions, while EFL and ESL participants may have lacked the pragmatic competence of using this semantic formula or they may have used alternative semantic formulas to address the situation. The semantic formula of promise of forbearance (FORB) was not employed by any of the participant groups in addressing the first apology situation (Blocking the Aisle). This suggests that the semantic formula of promise of forbearance (FORB) may not be a commonly used formula for expressing the speech act of apology in this context of low ranking of imposition and high social distance. Alternatively, participants may have relied on other semantic formulas to address the situation.

Regarding the content of apologies, Saudi Arabic participants showed uniqueness in their apologies which clearly reflect their culture and religion. On the one hand, Saudi Arabic participants demonstrated unique kindness and respect for the interlocutor by using distinct address terms. They used some kindness-related address terms to convey a sense of love, appreciation, and friendliness in their responses such as (e.g., Sorry my eyes, go ahead.) and (e.g., Sorry my love I did not know that I blocked the aisle.). It is interesting to note that address terms such as my love and my eyes were used by Saudi Arabic participants at a time when social distance was high. Moreover, they used some informal respect-related address terms such as (e.g., I am sorry wolf I did not pay attention.). "Wolf" may be an uncommon or not widely recognized term for addressing someone in some cultures. Due to the symbolic qualities the wolf possesses, such as intelligence, it is very common in Saudi culture to show respect. On the other hand, Saudi Arabic participants employed some unique religious contents in expressing their apologies. They used different forms for supplications derived from the Islamic religion such as (e.g., I am sorry, may Allah make you happy.), (e.g., Sorry! I did not see you. I apologize. Go ahead may Allah keep you safe.), and (e.g., May Allah bless you. Sorry for disrupting your time.). In addition, the act of taking a religious oath was used by Saudi Arabic participants as a content in their apologies such as (e.g., I swear to Allah sorry, excuse us.) and (e.g., I'm sorry longevous! I did not mean it I swear to Allah. I did not notice that I was blocking the aisle.). Taking a religious

oath is a significant and solemn act in Islam, carrying a great deal of spiritual and moral significance. An oath is often taken in Islam to demonstrate loyalty, commitment, or to emphasize a statement's truthfulness. In this context, the speaker invokes the name of Allah (God in Islam) in order to emphasize his or her truthfulness and sincerity. Taking a closer look at the last example, it is interesting to note that there is a use of the word "longevous". "Longevous" in Saudi culture is an adjective that describes something, or someone characterized by longevity or long life. It could be viewed as an address term, however as an address term it does not necessarily represent a definite expectation that the person addressed will enjoy a long life, as much as it represents the religious concept of praying for the person addressed to live a long life. Therefore, it is possible to argue that it is basically a combination of an address term and a prayer, as it is a prayer for longevity formulated in the form of an address term.

Structures of apologies:

		1 Formula structure	Combination of 2 formulas	Combination of 3 formulas	Combination of 4 formulas	Total
Saudi Arabic	Responses	9	13	6	2	30
	Structures	1	4	4	2	11
EFL	Responses	10	10	9	1	30
	Structures	1	2	5	1	9
ESL	Responses	15	14	1	-	30
	Structures	2	4	1	-	7
British	Responses	11	11	8	-	30
	Structures	1	3	5	-	9

Table 5.3. All participants' semantic formulas structures results (apology situation 1)

Findings show that Saudi Arabic participants used the highest number of semantic formula structures (11), followed by EFL and British participants (9 each), and ESL participants used the

lowest number of structures (7). Saudi Arabic participants used the most diverse range of semantic formula structures, utilizing single formulas and combinations of 2, 3, and 4 formulas. EFL participants employed a similar range of structures to Saudi Arabic participants. ESL participants used a lower range of semantic formula structures, primarily single formulas and combinations of 2 and 3 formulas. British participants used a similar range of structures to ESL participants, including single formulas and combinations of two and three semantic formulas.

Results reveal that the Saudi Arabic and EFL participants relied on the expression of apology semantic formula (APOL) as a complete apology response, using it 9 and 10 times respectively. Similarly, the British participants used the expression of apology semantic formula (APOL) 11 times as a complete apology response, which is slightly higher than the number of times used by the Saudi Arabic and EFL participants. The study also found that the ESL participants used both the expression of apology semantic formula (APOL) and the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) 15 times individually as a complete apology response, which is higher than the number of times used by participants from other groups of participants. On the one hand, ESL participants used a variety of structures, with 4 different structures being utilized in 14 responses when combining two semantic formulas to convey a complete apology response. On the other hand, EFL participants had fewer options and used only 2 different structures in 10 responses. Saudi Arabic participants had a similar level of diversity to ESL participants, using 4 different structures in 13 responses. British participants demonstrated a moderate level of diversity by using 3 different structures in 11 responses when combining two semantic formulas to convey a complete apology response. In terms of the structure of 3 semantic formulas used as a complete apology response, results showed that the Saudi Arabic participants utilized 4 different structures across 6 responses, while the EFL and British participants utilized 5 different structures across 9 and 8 responses respectively to convey complete apologies. In contrast, the ESL participants only used 1 structure in 1 response to express a complete apology. In terms of constructing a complete apology response using 4 semantic formulas, the Saudi Arabic participants employed 2 different structures in 2 responses. Meanwhile, the EFL participants used a single structure in one response utilizing 4 semantic formulas to express a complete

apology. Having explained the overall results, a detailed illustration of each group is crucial in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the data.

5.2.1.Saudi Arabic responses:

5.2.1.1.Types of apologies:

The total number of semantic formulas used by Saudi Arabic participants is 61. The most frequently used semantic formula is an expression of apology (APOL), which was used 36 times with a percentage of 59%. As the second most used semantic formula, the explanation or account (EXPL) formula was employed 13 times with a 21.3% percentage. There were 9 offers of repair (REPR) made by Saudi Arabic participants which is 14.7% of all semantic formulas. The semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) was used 3 times with a percentage of 4.9%. Saudi Arabic participants did not employ the semantic formula of promise of forbearance (FORB) at all in responding to this situation.

5.2.1.2.Structures of apologies:

Saudi Arabic participants used a total of 11 semantic formulas structures in the first situation of apology. A variety of semantic formulas structures were employed, including single formulas and combinations of 2, 3, and 4 formulas. Saudi Arabic participants used the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) 9 times individually as a complete apology response. With regard to the structure of 2 semantic formulas used as a complete apology response, there were 4 different structures used in 13 responses in which two semantic formulas were combined by them to convey complete apology responses. For example, they combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL). As another example, they combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR).

In terms of the structure of 3 semantic formulas used as a complete apology response, the Saudi Arabic participants used 4 different structures in 6 responses in which they combined 3 different

semantic formulas in order to express complete apologies for this situation. For example, they combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL) and the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR). As another example, the Saudi Arabic participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) and the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL). When it comes to the 4 semantic formulas combined to construct a complete apology response, they used 2 different structures in 2 responses in which they combined 4 different semantic formulas in order to express complete apologies for this situation. For example, they combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL), the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR), and another semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL). Table 5.4 shows examples of semantic formula structures used by Saudi Arabic participants in this situation.

Formulas Structure	Example
Single formula	Sorry! اسف!
Combination of 2 formulas	Sorry! + I made you late. معليش! + اخرتك.
Combination of 3 formulas	Excuse and forgiveness! + I was reading and did not pay attention to the aisle. + Sorry! العذر والسموحه! + كنت اقرأ وما انتبهت للممر. + اسف!
Combination of 4 formulas	Sorry! + I did not see you. + I apologize. + Go ahead may Allah keep you safe! اسف! + ماشفتك. + اعتذر منك. + عدي الله يحفظك!

Table 5.4. Saudi Arabic participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 1)

5.2.2.EFL responses:

5.2.2.1.Types of apologies:

EFL participants used a total of 62 semantic formulas in this situation. The most commonly used semantic formula is an expression of apology (APOL) which was used 35 times with a percentage of 56.4%. The second most commonly used semantic formula is the taking on responsibility (RESP) formula, which was employed 20 times with a 32.2% percentage. The semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR) was used by EFL participants 4 times in this situation with a percentage of 6.4%. The semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL) was used 3 times with a percentage of 4.8%. No EFL participants employed the semantic formula of promise of forbearance (FORB) in response to this situation.

5.2.2.2.Structures of apologies:

EFL participants used a total of 9 semantic formulas. The apologies were expressed using a variety of semantic formulas structures, including single formulas and combinations of 2, 3, and 4 formulas. EFL participants used the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) 10 times individually as a complete apology response. In terms of the structure of 2 semantic formulas combined to convey complete apology responses, there were 2 different structures used in 10 responses in which 2 semantic formulas were combined by EFL participants to convey complete apology responses. For instance, they combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP). Similarly, EFL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR).

Regarding the structure of 3 semantic formulas used as a complete apology response, the EFL participants used 5 different structures in 9 responses in which they combined 3 different semantic formulas in order to express complete apologies for this situation. For example, the EFL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic

formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) and the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR). In another example, the EFL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL) and the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP). In terms of the structure of 4 semantic formulas combined to express a complete apology response, the EFL participants used 1 structure in 1 response in which they combined 4 different semantic formulas in order to express a complete apology for this situation. In this response of 4 semantic formulas, the EFL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP), the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL), and another semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL). Table 5.5 shows examples of semantic formula structures used by EFL participants in this situation.

Formulas Structure	Example
Single formula	I apologize.
Combination of 2 formulas	Sorry! + I didn't mean to block the aisle.
Combination of 3 formulas	I'm really sorry. + I didn't notice you. + Please, forgive me!
Combination of 4 formulas	I am sorry for that. + I didn't know. + I was focusing on the product. + My apology!

Table 5.5. EFL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 1)

5.2.3.ESL responses:

5.2.3.1.Types of apologies:

ESL participants used a total of 46 semantic formulas in this situation. The expression of apology (APOL) semantic formula was mentioned 31 times with a percentage of 67.3%. The explanation or account (EXPL) semantic formula was employed by ESL participants 11 times with a 23.9%

percentage and is the second most commonly used semantic formula. The semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) was used by ESL participants 3 times in this situation with a percentage of 6.5%. The semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR) was employed once with a percentage of 2.1%. There was no mention of the semantic formula of promise of forbearance (FORB) in the ESL responses to this situation.

5.2.3.2. Structures of apologies:

ESL participants used a total of 7 semantic formulas structures in the first situation of apology. Multiple semantic formulas structures were used, including single formulas as well as combinations of 2 and 3 formulas. ESL participants used the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) and the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) 15 times individually as a complete apology response. Using 2 semantic formulas to convey a complete apology response, there were 4 different structures used in 14 responses in which 2 semantic formulas were combined by ESL participants to convey complete apology responses. As an example, the ESL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL). In another example, they combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR).

In terms of the structure of 3 semantic formulas used as a complete apology response, the ESL participants used 1 structure in 1 response in which they combined 3 different semantic formulas in order to express a complete apology for this situation. In this response of 3 semantic formulas, the ESL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL) and another semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL). Table 5.6 shows examples of semantic formula structures used by ESL participants in this situation.

Formulas Structure	Example
Single formula	My bad!
Combination of 2 formulas	Sorry! + I did not see you.
Combination of 3 formulas	Sorry! + I was reading. + Sorry for blocking the aisle!

Table 5.6. ESL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 1)

5.2.4. British English responses:

5.2.4.1. Types of apologies:

A total of 57 semantic formulas were used by British participants in this situation. The expression of apology (APOL) semantic formula was used 31 times with a percentage of 54.3%. As the second most commonly employed semantic formula, explanation or account (EXPL) semantic formula was used by British participants 14 times, with a 24.5% percentage. With a percentage of 7%, British participants used the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) 4 times. Among the semantic formulas used, the offer of repair (REPR) semantic formula appeared 8 times with a 14% percentage. In line with the other groups, the British participants did not employ the semantic formula of promise of forbearance (FORB) in their responses to this situation.

5.2.4.2. Structures of apologies:

British participants used a total of 9 semantic formulas structures. Apologies were expressed using a single semantic formula as well as combinations of two and three semantic formulas. British participants used the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) 11 times in total as a complete apology response. For the structure of 2 semantic formulas combined as a complete apology response, there were 3 different structures used in 11 responses in which two semantic formulas were combined by British participants to deliver complete apology responses. For instance, the British participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL). As another example, they

combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR).

In terms of the structure of 3 semantic formulas used as a complete apology response, British participants used 5 different structures in 8 responses in which they combined 3 different semantic formulas in order to express complete apologies. As an example, they combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL) and the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR). Additionally, they combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL) and the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP). Table 5.7 shows examples of semantic formula structures used by British participants in this situation.

Formulas Structure	Example
Single formula	Oh, sorry!
Combination of 2 formulas	Oh, I'm sorry. + My bad!
Combination of 3 formulas	Sorry! + I didn't realize I was in the way. + In my own little world!

Table 5.7. British participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 1)

5.3.Situation of apology (Shifts Swapping)

"Imagine that you have volunteered to work in a voluntary organization through which many humanitarian activities are organized. This volunteering organization distributes working hours to all volunteers. One of the team members (represented by the letter A), who you have previously volunteered with and have a good friendship with, asked you if it is possible to swap shifts so that you cover A's shift hours on Tuesday, and A covers your shift hours on Thursday. You said yes and it was agreed. Unfortunately, you forgot and did not cover A's hours on Tuesday. This put A in an awkward position with the management of the organization. You wanted to talk to A to apologize for what happened."

Situation	Shifts Swapping
Speaker's role	Apologizer (Volunteer)
Hearer's role	Victim (Volunteer)
Ranking of imposition	High R
Social distance	Low D
Power	(S=H)

Table 5.8. Situation of apology (2) in the Discourse Completion Task.

Types of apologies:

Formulas	Frequency			
	Saudi Arabic	EFL	ESL	British English
I. An expression of apology (APOL)	32	30	34	36
II. Explanation or account (EXPL)	22	22	14	23
III. Taking on responsibility (RESP)	6	10	11	22
IV. Offer of repair (REPR)	19	19	17	26
V. Promise of forbearance (FORB)	0	0	2	3
Total of formulas	79	81	78	110

Table 5.9. Frequency of all groups' semantic formulas (apology situation 2)

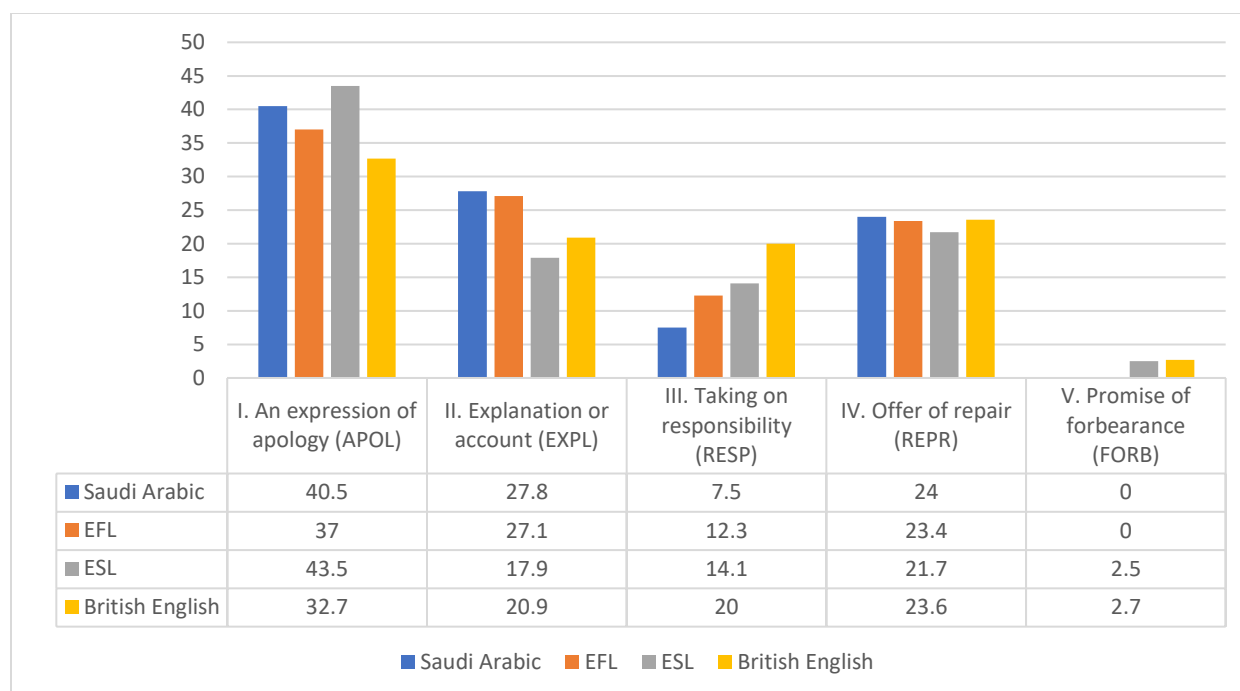


Figure 5.2. Frequency percentages of all groups' semantic formulas (apology situation 2)

The total number of semantic formulas employed by all participants in this situation is 348. Regarding the utilization of semantic formulas by participant groups in this situation, the British participants employed the highest number with 110 semantic formulas used. The EFL participants came in second with 81 semantic formulas used, while the Saudi Arabic participants and the ESL participants utilized 79 and 78 semantic formulas respectively. Saudi Arabic participants used the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) 32 times, accounting for 40.5% of their apologies. EFL participants used the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) 30 times, representing 37% of their apologies. ESL participants employed the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) 34 times, which accounted for the highest percentage of the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) usage at 43.5%. British participants used the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) 36 times, but this only represented 32.7% of their apologies, indicating a lower frequency of usage compared to the other groups. Regarding the explanation or account (EXPL) semantic formula, results showed variations in the frequency of its usage among the different groups of participants. On the one hand, Saudi Arabic participants used the explanation or account (EXPL) semantic formula 22 times, representing 27.8%

of their semantic formulas. EFL participants used the explanation or account (EXPL) semantic formula 22 times as well, but with a slightly lower percentage of 27.1%. On the other hand, ESL participants offered only 14 explanation or account (EXPL) semantic formulas, which accounted for 17.9% of all semantic formulas employed. However, British participants used the explanation or account (EXPL) semantic formula more frequently than the other groups, presenting a total of 23 semantic formulas of explanation or account (EXPL) which represents 20.9% percentage.

Both Saudi Arabic and EFL participants offered 19 semantic formulas of offer of repair (REPR) each, representing 24% and 23.4% of their total semantic formulas, respectively. ESL participants used the offer of repair (REPR) semantic formula 17 times, which accounted for 21.7% of their total semantic formulas. British participants employed the offer of repair (REPR) semantic formula the most frequently among the four groups, presenting a total of 26 offer of repair (REPR) semantic formulas with a percentage of 23.6%. In this situation, the Saudi Arabic participants used the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) 6 times, accounting for 7.5% of their total semantic formulas. EFL participants used the same semantic formula 10 times, representing a higher percentage of 12.3%. The use of the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) by ESL participants was even higher, with a total of 11 instances and a percentage of 14.1%. Meanwhile, British participants used the same semantic formula in their responses the most, with a total of 22 appearances and 20% percentage. In response to the second apology situation (Shift Swapping), neither Saudi Arabic nor EFL participants used the semantic formula of promise of forbearance (FORB). In contrast, the ESL participants employed this semantic formula twice (2.5%) in their responses. The use of the semantic formula of promise of forbearance (FORB) was slightly higher in the responses of British participants, with a total of 3 instances and a percentage of 2.7%.

In this scenario, results indicated a clear cross-cultural difference, as British participants used higher semantic formulas than those with Saudi cultural backgrounds. British participants used higher semantic formulas in all semantic formulas, not just overall. It is possible that British participants used more semantic formulas because their culture gives more attention to the variables of high imposition ranking and low social distance. It could be argued that these variables were considered differently by participants from a Saudi cultural background. Based on

this interpretation, it is suggested to develop Saudi English learners' pragmatic competence by providing them with the necessary structures. It is also suggested to make them aware of the significance of taking these variables into account in order to improve the effectiveness of their intercultural communication competence. However, a more comprehensive view of this interpretation will be presented in the fourth section of this chapter.

It is noteworthy that Saudi Arabic participants reflected their culture and religion clearly in the content of their apologies to this situation. In a similar manner to the first apology scenario, Saudi Arabic participants conveyed kindness and respect for the interlocutor by using distinct address terms. Their responses displayed love, appreciation, and friendliness through kindness-related address terms such as (e.g., Forgive me my friend, I swear to Allah I forgot.) and (e.g., I am sorry dear. I swear to Allah I forgot, and your wish is my command.). Additionally, there are some informal terms they used to address the interlocutor to show their respect such as (e.g., I swear to Allah I am sorry victorious beard, and your right is on me. I just forgot, what happened to you is my responsibility. I just forgot.). Some cultures may not recognize the term "victorious beard" as an appropriate term to address someone. In Saudi Arabia, when people want to praise someone for the goodness he showed or for what he did, they say about him that he is a *lehiyah ghanimah* "victorious beard". "Victorious" here means "a gainer of all that is honorable and praiseworthy". Among ancient tribes, the beard symbolized a moral element, not just masculinity, and was one of the few symbols that represented all of a man's features.

In addition to religious oaths shown in previous examples, a unique religious content was used by Saudi Arabic participants to apologize in response to this situation such as (e.g., I deeply apologize to you, and I know that my apology does not solve the problem, but I hope you understand that it was not my intent, I just forgot. Glorified He who never forgets.). "Glorified He who never forgets" is often used by Saudis when they make mistakes or forget important things. In other words, only God Almighty remembers anything since He created everything and is its ruler. In all matters, he cannot forget anything and he cannot make mistakes, but it is human nature that does not reach a single part of the perfection in which God Almighty exists, and therefore when a person forgets or commits any type of error, this is because she/he is human and humans make mistakes. Furthermore, Saudi Arabic participants linked their expressions of

Offer of repair (REPR) to God's will, such as (e.g., I am sorry that I forgot to cover you and what happened is nothing but good, I will cover your other working hours, and God willing, I will not forget.). As seen in this example, the apology also has the phrase "what happened is nothing but good". In the Islamic religion, belief in fate and destiny is considered an important matter that requires Muslims to accept whatever happens, even if they believe that what happened is negative or may have negative consequences. They are supposed to accept what happened because it is from God, and He is the only one who knows where good lies even if it appears negative. This phrase serves as a reminder to the listener when used in such a context that while we may be committed and willing to do what is right, we still don't know what is right, and what we think is wrong in fact could be right and good that we do not realize, so we must accept what God has commanded to occur and be satisfied with it. In addition, the Saudi Arabic participants apologized to God for what they did such as (e.g., The forgiveness is from Allah, then from you, I got busy today and forgot to cover you, but I will make amends. If you want me to work next week for you, I will.). In Saudi Arabia, this phrase is widely used to apologize and express embarrassment. In light of how serious a mistake is, it is necessary to apologize first to God and then to the person affected by it.

Structures of apologies:

		Single formula	Combination of 2 formulas	Combination of 3 formulas	Combination of 4 formulas	Combination of 5 formulas	Total
Saudi Arabic	Responses	3	13	8	4	2	30
	Structures	3	3	3	3	2	14
EFL	Responses	1	8	20	1	-	30
	Structures	1	5	6	1	-	13
ESL	Responses	4	9	11	6	-	30
	Structures	1	3	6	4	-	14
British	Responses	-	2	12	10	6	30
	Structures	-	2	4	3	2	11

Table 5.10. All participants' semantic formulas structures results (apology situation 2)

Results show that the Saudi Arabic participants used the highest number of semantic formula structures with a total of 14 structures, accompanied by the ESL participants who also used 14 structures. The EFL participants employed 13 semantic formula structures and the British participants used the lowest number of structures with only 11 semantic formulas structures employed in their apologies to this situation. All groups of participants utilized various semantic formula structures to express their apologies. The Saudi Arabic participants utilized the widest range of semantic formulas structures, from single formulas to combinations of up to five formulas, to convey their apologies. The EFL participants used a somewhat narrower set of semantic formulas structures, ranging from single formulas to combinations of up to four formulas. Similarly, the ESL participants used a range of single formulas and combinations of up to four formulas. Meanwhile, the British participants did not use single formula structures, instead opting for combinations of 2, 3, 4, and 5 semantic formulas structures to express their apologies in this situation.

The Saudi Arabic participants used the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL), the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL) and the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR) 3 times individually as a complete apology response. The EFL participants used the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) once individually as a complete apology response whereas the ESL participants used the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) four times individually as a complete apology response. In terms of utilizing 2 semantic formulas to form a complete apology response, Saudi Arabic participants employed 3 distinct semantic formulas structures in a total of 13 responses. Meanwhile, EFL participants combined 2 semantic formulas in 8 responses, utilizing 5 different semantic formulas structures to convey complete apologies. ESL participants used 2 semantic formulas to convey complete apologies in 9 responses, utilizing 3 distinct semantic formulas structures. British participants used 2 semantic formulas to form complete apology responses in only 2 instances, employing 2 different semantic formulas structures. The structure of 3 semantic formulas to convey a complete apology response varied among the different participant groups. Saudi Arabic participants employed 3 different structures in 8 responses to apologize for the situation, while EFL participants used 6 different structures in 20 responses to express complete apologies. Similarly, ESL participants

used 6 different structures in 11 responses, while British participants used 4 different semantic formulas structures in 12 responses to convey complete apologies. The utilization of 4 semantic formulas to construct a complete apology response differed among the participant groups. Saudi Arabic participants combined 4 semantic formulas in 4 responses using 3 different structures to express complete apologies for this situation. However, EFL participants only used 1 structure in 1 response combining 4 semantic formulas for a complete apology. Meanwhile, ESL participants employed 4 different structures in 6 responses whereas British participants used 3 different structures in 10 responses combining 4 semantic formulas to express complete apologies for this situation. Two participant groups were observed to utilize 5 semantic formulas to form a complete apology response. The Saudi Arabic participants used 2 different semantic formulas structures in 2 responses, combining 5 semantic formulas. On the other hand, the British participants utilized 5 semantic formulas in 6 responses, employing 2 different semantic formulas structures to convey complete apologies for the situation. Having explained the overall results, a detailed illustration of each group is crucial in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the data.

5.3.1.Saudi Arabic responses:

5.3.1.1.Types of apologies:

Saudi Arabic participants in this situation used 79 semantic formulas in total. The semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) is the most frequently used semantic formula where it was used 32 times with a percentage of 40.5%. The second most commonly used semantic formula is the explanation or account (EXPL) formula which was used 22 times with a 27.8% percentage. A total of 19 offers of repair (REPR) were made by Saudi Arabic participants in this situation, representing 24% of the total sum of semantic formulas. The semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) was used 6 times with a percentage of 7.5%. The semantic formula of promise of forbearance (FORB) was not used at all as a response to this situation.

5.3.1.2. Structures of apologies:

Saudi Arabic participants used a total of 14 semantic formulas structures. A variety of semantic formulas structures were employed to convey apologies, including single formulas and combinations of 2, 3, 4, and 5 formulas. Saudi Arabic participants used the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL), the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL) and the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR) 3 times individually as a complete apology response. With regard to the structure of 2 semantic formulas used as a complete apology response, there were 3 different structures used in 13 responses in which two semantic formulas were combined by Saudi Arabic participants to convey complete apology responses. For example, they combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL). As another example, they combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR).

In terms of the structure of 3 semantic formulas used as a complete apology response, the Saudi Arabic participants used 3 different structures in 8 responses in which they combined 3 different semantic formulas in order to express complete apologies for this situation. For example, they combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL) and the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR). As another example, the Saudi Arabic participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) and the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL). When it comes to the 4 semantic formulas combined to construct a complete apology response, the Saudi Arabic participants used 3 different structures in 4 responses in which they combined 4 different semantic formulas in order to express complete apologies for this situation. For example, the Saudi Arabic participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL), the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR), and another semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL). In another example, the Saudi Arabic participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP), the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL), and another semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP).

Regarding the structure of 5 semantic formulas used as a complete apology response, there were 2 different structures used in 2 responses in which 5 semantic formulas were combined by Saudi Arabic participants to convey complete apology responses. For example, the Saudi Arabic participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL), the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP), another semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL), and the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR). As another example, the Saudi Arabic participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR), the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL), the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) and another semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL). Table 5.11 shows examples of semantic formula structures used by Saudi Arabic participants in this situation.

Formulas Structure	Example
Single formula	Sorry! اسف!
Combination of 2 formulas	I am sorry. + I will make amends. معليش. + ابشر بالعوض
Combination of 3 formulas	I am sorry. + I forgot the date we agreed on, + but next Thursday I will work on your behalf to compensate you. اسف + نسيت الموعد حقنا + لكن الخميس الجاي بشتغل عنك تعويض
Combination of 4 formulas	I offer you my apologies. + I forgot the appointment, + but I will make it up to you next time, + please accept my apologies! اقدم لك اعتذاراتي + نسيت الموعد، + بس بعوضك المرة الجاية، + تكفى اقبل اعتذاري
Combination of 5 formulas	Sorry about that! + I forgot + but this is my fault, + forgive me + and I will make it up to you in the coming hours.

	معلش! + نسييت + بس انها غلطتي، + سامحني + وبعوضك في الساعات الجاية
--	--

Table 5.11. Saudi Arabic participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 2)

5.3.2.EFL responses:

5.3.2.1.Types of apologies:

A total of 81 semantic formulas were used by EFL participants in this situation. The semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) is the most commonly used semantic formula where it was employed 30 times with a percentage of 37%. The explanation or account (EXPL) semantic formula was used 22 times with a 27.1% percentage, making it the second most commonly used semantic formula. There were 19 repairs offered by EFL participants in this situation, representing 23.4% of all semantic formulas. The semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) was used 10 times with a percentage of 12.3%. EFL participants did not employ the semantic formula of promise of forbearance (FORB) when responding to this situation.

5.3.2.2.Structures of apologies:

EFL participants employed a total of 13 semantic formulas structures in the second situation of apology. Various semantic formulas structures were used to express apologies, including single formulas and combinations of 2, 3, and 4 formulas. EFL participants used the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) once individually as a complete apology response. For the structure of 2 semantic formulas combined to convey a complete apology response, there were 5 different structures used in 8 responses in which two semantic formulas were combined by EFL participants to convey complete apology responses. For instance, the EFL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP). Similarly, they combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR).

Regarding the structure of 3 semantic formulas used as a complete apology response, the EFL participants used 6 different structures in 20 responses in which they combined 3 different

semantic formulas in order to express complete apologies for this situation. For instance, the EFL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL) and the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR). As another example, the EFL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) and the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR). For the 4 semantic formulas that were combined to construct a complete apology response, the EFL participants used 1 structure in 1 response in which they combined 4 different semantic formulas in order to express a complete apology for this situation. In this response of 4 semantic formulas, the EFL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL), another semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL), and the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR). Table 5.12 shows examples of semantic formula structures used by EFL participants in this situation.

Formulas Structure	Example
Single formula	It's my mistake.
Combination of 2 formulas	It is my fault bro, + I will try to handle it.
Combination of 3 formulas	I apologize. + I forgot to cover you in your shift. + I am sorry.
Combination of 4 formulas	I am sorry I didn't cover on Tuesday. + I forgot. + I apologize to you + and I accept any consequences.

Table 5.12. EFL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 2)

5.3.3.ESL responses:

5.3.3.1.Types of apologies:

ESL participants used a total of 78 semantic formulas in this situation. The most frequently used semantic formula is the expression of apology (APOL) which was employed 34 times with a percentage of 43.5%. As the second most commonly used semantic formula, the offer of repair (REPR) was used 17 times with a 21.7% percentage. In this situation, 14 explanations (EXPL) were offered by ESL participants, representing 17.9% of all semantic formulas. The semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) was used 11 times with a percentage of 14.1%. The semantic formula of promise of forbearance (FORB) was employed by ESL participants twice (2.5%) in responding to this situation.

5.3.3.2. Structures of apologies:

ESL participants used a total of 14 semantic formulas structures. Several semantic formulas structures were used to express apologies in this scenario, including single formulas and combinations of 2, 3, and 4 formulas. ESL participants used the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) four times individually as a complete apology response. Considering the structure of two semantic formulas used to convey a complete apology response, there were 3 different structures used in 9 responses in which two semantic formulas were combined by ESL participants to convey complete apology responses. For example, the ESL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL). As another example, the ESL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR).

Regarding the structure of 3 semantic formulas used as a complete apology response, the ESL participants used 6 different structures in 11 responses in which they combined 3 different semantic formulas in order to express complete apologies for this situation. For instance, the ESL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL) and the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR). Also, the ESL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) and the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR). As for the 4 semantic formulas combined to construct a complete apology response, the ESL participants used 4 different structures in 6 responses in which they combined 4 different

semantic formulas in order to express complete apologies for this situation. For example, the ESL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL), the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR), and the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP). As another example, they combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL), the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP), and another semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL). Table 5.13 shows examples of semantic formula structures used by ESL participants in this situation.

Formulas Structure	Example
Single formula	I am sorry about that.
Combination of 2 formulas	I am really sorry for doing that. + Let me speak to the management to help.
Combination of 3 formulas	I am really sorry for missing the shift. + I completely forgot. + I am really sorry for that.
Combination of 4 formulas	Sorry for the misunderstanding! + Please, forgive me + and I can speak to the manager and clear the situation. + I take the responsibility.

Table 5.13. ESL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 2)

5.3.4. British English responses:

5.3.4.1. Types of apologies:

The total number of semantic formulas employed by British participants in this situation is 110. The expression of apology (APOL) is the most frequently used semantic formula. It was employed by British participants 36 times with a percentage of 32.7%. The offer of repair (REPR) is the second most commonly used semantic formula. It was employed by British participants 26 times with a percentage of 23.6%. A total of 23 explanation or account (EXPL) semantic formulas were

presented by British participants in this situation which represents 20.9% percentage. The semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) appeared 22 times with a 20% percentage. British participants used the semantic formula of promise of forbearance (FORB) 3 times with a percentage of 2.7% in responding to this situation.

5.3.4.2. Structures of apologies:

British participants used a total of 11 semantic formulas structures in the second situation of apology. A variety of semantic formulas structures were employed to convey apologies in this situation, including combinations of 2, 3, 4, and 5 semantic formulas. Regarding the structure of 2 semantic formulas used as a complete apology response, there were 2 different structures used in 2 responses in which two semantic formulas were combined by British participants to convey complete apology responses. For example, the British participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL). As another example, the British participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR).

In terms of the structure of 3 semantic formulas used as a complete apology response, the British participants used 4 different structures in 12 responses in which they combined 3 different semantic formulas in order to express complete apologies for this situation. For example, they combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL) and the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR). As another example, the British participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) and the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL). When it comes to the 4 semantic formulas combined to construct a complete apology response, the British participants used 3 different structures in 10 responses in which they combined 4 different semantic formulas in order to express complete apologies for this situation. For example, the British participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL), the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR), and the semantic formula of promise of forbearance (FORB). In another example, they combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the

semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP), the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR), and another semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL).

Regarding the structure of 5 semantic formulas used as a complete apology response, there were 2 different structures used in 6 responses in which 5 semantic formulas were combined by British participants to convey complete apology responses. For example, the British participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL), the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR), the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP), and another semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL). As another example, the British participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL), the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR), the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) and the semantic formula of promise of forbearance (FORB). Table 5.14 shows examples of semantic formula structures used by British participants in this situation.

Formulas Structure	Example
Combination of 2 formulas	Oh, my goodness! I'm so sorry + I just completely forgot.
Combination of 3 formulas	I'm so sorry for letting you down and putting you in an uncomfortable position. + I have no excuse + but hope I can regain your trust.
Combination of 4 formulas	I'm so sorry about Tuesday. + It completely slipped my mind. + I know it is completely my fault + and I'll try to make it up to you with another shift.
Combination of 5 formulas	I am so sorry I didn't work your hours. + I completely forgot. + Is there another shift I can do to make it up to you or do you want me to talk to the management? + Blame me, + I am so sorry again.

Table 5.14. British participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 2)

5.4. Situation of apology (Coffee Cup Falling on the Ground)

“Imagine that while you were in a shopping center, you bought a cup of coffee and then you started shopping holding that cup. Unfortunately, the cup of coffee fell to the floor and scattered on the floor and on a customer who was next to you at that time. The customer's clothes got wet with your coffee and you wanted to apologize for this unintended event.”

Situation	Coffee cup falling on the ground
Speaker's role	Apologizer (Customer)
Hearer's role	Victim (Customer)
Ranking of imposition	High R
Social distance	High D
Power	(S=H)

Table 5.15. Situation of apology (3) in the Discourse Completion Task.

Types of apologies:

Formulas	Frequency			
	Saudi Arabic	EFL	ESL	British English
I. An expression of apology (APOL)	36	39	40	44
II. Explanation or account (EXPL)	28	10	24	31

III. Taking on responsibility (RESP)	11	33	14	16
IV. Offer of repair (REPR)	17	25	21	29
V. Promise of forbearance (FORB)	0	0	0	0
Total of formulas	92	107	99	120

Table 5.16. Frequency of all groups' semantic formulas (apology situation 3)

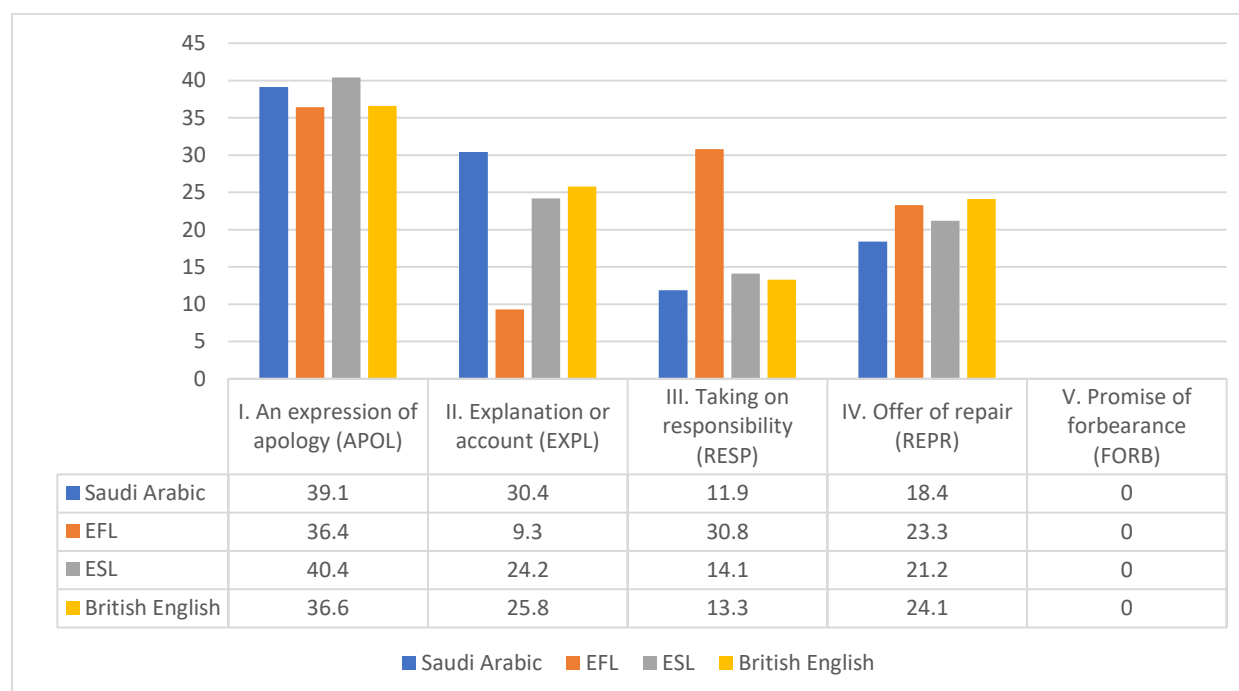


Figure 5.3. Frequency percentages of all groups' semantic formulas (apology situation 3)

The total number of semantic formulas employed by all participants in this situation is 418. Regarding the utilization of semantic formulas by participant groups in this situation, the British participants employed the highest number with 120 semantic formulas used. The EFL participants came in second with 107 semantic formulas used, while the ESL and Saudi Arabic participants utilized 99 and 92 semantic formulas respectively. Regarding the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL), Saudi Arabic participants utilized this semantic formula 36 times, constituting 39.1% of their total usage. Similarly, EFL participants demonstrated a reliance on the expression

of apology (APOL), employing it 39 times, which accounted for 36.4% of their overall usage. ESL participants also leaned heavily on the expression of apology (APOL), using it 40 times, representing 40.4% of their semantic formula usage. British participants, too, used the expression of apology (APOL) as their most frequently employed semantic formula as it was employed by British participants 44 times with a percentage of 36.6%. With regard to the "explanation or account" (EXPL) semantic formula, Saudi Arabic participants demonstrate a high degree of reliance on this formula, incorporating it into their responses a total of 28 times, representing a 30.4% of their overall employment of semantic formulas. Conversely, EFL participants exhibit a less frequent use of the "explanation or account" (EXPL) formula, employing it on only 10 occasions, constituting a comparatively modest 9.3% of their semantic formulas list. In contrast, ESL participants provided 24 explanations (EXPL), making up 24.2% of all their semantic formulas and British participants offered a total of 31 explanations or accounts (EXPL), representing 25.8% of their responses.

In this situation, there were a total of 17 repair offers (REPR) made by Saudi Arabic participants, which accounted for 18.4% of all semantic formulas. EFL participants offered 25 repairs, representing 23.3% of all semantic formulas. ESL participants used the offer of repair (REPR) 21 times, comprising 21.2% of their responses. Among the participants, British participants used the offer of repair (REPR) the most frequently, with 29 instances, making up 24.1% of their responses. The usage of the semantic formula "taking on responsibility" (RESP) varied among different participant groups. EFL participants used it the most, employing it 33 times, which accounted for 30.8% of their responses. ESL participants used it 14 times, making up 14.1% of their responses. Saudi Arabic participants used this formula 11 times, representing 11.9% of their responses. British participants used it 16 times, with a percentage of 13.3%. The semantic formula of promise of forbearance (FORB) was not employed by any of the participant groups in addressing the third situation of apology. Results in this situation show some cross-cultural differences, with British participants using more semantic formulas than Saudi individuals. The semantic formulas used by British participants were greater across the board, not just overall. It's probable that British participants employed more semantic formulas since high imposition ranking and high social distance are more valued in their culture. It could be claimed that participants with a Saudi

cultural background viewed these variables differently. This outcome is particularly noteworthy given the second apology situation's similarity. It is suggested that, in light of this interpretation, it may be necessary to help Saudi English learners improve their pragmatic competence by giving them access to the required structures. Additionally, it is advised to teach them how important it is to consider these factors in order to enhance their intercultural communication skills. However, taking into account how the social distance between apology situations 2 and 3 differs, the fourth section in this chapter will provide a more in-depth discussion of this point of view.

Saudi Arabic participants explicitly represented their culture and religion in their apologies in this scenario. The Saudi Arabic participants used distinct address terms to convey kindness and respect for the interlocutor, as they did in the first and second apology scenarios. Kindness-related address terms displayed their love, appreciation, and friendliness such as (e.g., Sorry, brother, it was by mistake.). In addition, there are some formal terms they used to address the interlocutor to show their respect such as (e.g., It was by mistake, sheikh). 'Sheikh' refers to a top Arab leader, family head, or other influential person within a Muslim group. In Saudi Arabia, it is often used to praise someone or to refer to someone with great status and importance. Saudi Arabic participants also used some culturally distinctive phrases to express their embarrassment and responsibility for what they did such as (e.g., Wipe it on my face!). The culture of generosity, which is part of the Saudi heritage, also appeared in the apologies of the Saudi Arabic participants such as (e.g., I'm sorry, I swear to Allah, I didn't mean it. My jacket is yours. I swear to Allah, it won't come back. I'm sorry, I swear to Allah, I didn't know.). In this example, the speaker offered his own jacket as compensation for the listener's clothes damage. The culture of generosity in Saudi Arabia does not prefer taking an opinion when offering a gift or compensation for something because the listener is also expected to be generous and avoid being opportunistic. This requires imposing acceptance of the gift rather than accepting its rejection or return, which requires sharper language as seen in the phrase 'it won't come back'. In addition to religious oaths shown in previous examples, some religious content was used by Saudi Arabic participants to apologize in response to this situation such as (e.g., I did not intend to drop the cup on you. Evil has fallen, God willing. Good has happened, and I am sorry, my dear brother.). This kind of religious content is somehow similar to the apologies discussed in the second apology scenario.

In this example, the listener is reminded that we may be willing to do what is right, but we do not yet know what is right, and what appears wrong could actually be right and good to us, therefore we must accept what God wishes to happen.

Saudi Arabic participants show a strong tendency to use positive politeness strategies, expressing solidarity and respect in their apologies. Expressions such as "Wipe it on my face!" and "I apologize, brother, for the situation" demonstrate their efforts to maintain positive face and building a sense of shared responsibility. In addition, the use of religious expressions, such as "I swear to Allah I didn't mean it," aligns with their cultural norms and underscores the significance of religion and sincerity in their apologies. In contrast, EFL participants tend to use formal language and expressions of regret to minimize imposition in their apologies. Their phrases reflect their tendency to maintain a negative face and respect the victim. They may not convey the sense of warmth and familiarity seen in other groups, but their apologies nevertheless convey remorse and an intention to repair the situation. ESL participants maintain a balance between positive and negative politeness in their apologies, expressing empathy while remaining respectful. Their apologies, such as "I am so sorry. That was a complete accident" and "Let me clean your clothes. I really apologize," demonstrate a willingness to take responsibility as well as an acknowledgement of the victim's rights. Similarly to ESL participants, British participants apologized using a mix of positive and negative politeness strategies. They demonstrate humility and a desire to minimize imposition while expressing empathy and solidarity.

Structures of apologies:

		1 Formula structure	Combination of 2 formulas	Combination of 3 formulas	Combination of 4 formulas	Combination of 5 formulas	Total
Saudi Arabic	Responses	2	14	9	5	-	30
	Structures	1	4	7	3	-	15
EFL	Responses	6	11	12	1	-	30

	Structures	2	5	6	1	-	14
ESL	Responses	9	15	3	3	-	30
	Structures	2	3	5	3	-	15
British	Responses	-	2	11	7	10	30
	Structures	-	2	4	3	2	11

Table 5.17. All participants' semantic formulas structures results (apology situation 3)

Results show that the Saudi Arabic participants employed a total of 15 semantic formula structures to convey their apologies. These structures exhibited a diversity that included single formulas as well as combinations of 2, 3, and 4 formulas. The "offer of repair" (REPR) was used twice as a standalone apology response. In the scope of two-formula structures, four distinct combinations surfaced, such as "APOL" + "EXPL" and "APOL" + "REPR." The complexity deepened in three-formula structures, where they embraced seven different combinations, including "APOL" + "EXPL" + "REPR" and "APOL" + "RESP" + "EXPL." Furthermore, their four-formula structures revealed three different combinations, exemplified by "APOL" + "EXPL" + "REPR" + "APOL." Turning to EFL participants, they also demonstrated a comprehensive display of apology structures where they employed 14 distinct semantic formula structures. These structures encompassed single formulas and combinations of 2, 3, and 4 formulas. Both the "offer of repair" (REPR) and "taking on responsibility" (RESP) were employed six times as standalone apology responses. Within their two-formula structures, they employed five different combinations, such as "APOL" + "RESP" and "APOL" + "REPR,". In their three-formula structures, they expressed six different combinations, including "APOL" + "EXPL" + "REPR" and "APOL" + "RESP" + "REPR," and their four-formula structures unveiled a single combination, "APOL" + "EXPL" + "REPR" + "APOL,".

Shifting the focus to ESL participants, they showcased a similar number of apology structures, employing a total of 15 semantic formula structures. These structures, like those of their Saudi Arabic counterparts, spanned single formulas and combinations of 2, 3, and 4 formulas. Both the "offer of repair" (REPR) and "taking on responsibility" (RESP) appeared as standalone apology responses, utilized nine times. Within their two-formula structures, they employed three

different combinations, such as "APOL" + "EXPL" and "APOL" + "REPR." In three-formula structures, they employed five different combinations, including "APOL" + "EXPL" + "REPR" and "APOL" + "RESP" + "REPR,". Furthermore, their four-formula structures presented three different combinations, such as "APOL" + "EXPL" + "REPR" + "RESP,". Finally, British participants brought their own unique flavor to apology structures by utilizing 11 distinct semantic formula structures. These structures featured combinations of 2, 3, 4, and even 5 semantic formulas, distinguishing their approach from the other groups. In their two-formula structures, they employed two different combinations, such as "APOL" + "EXPL" and "APOL" + "REPR,". In three-formula structures, they expressed four different combinations, including "APOL" + "EXPL" + "REPR" and "APOL" + "RESP" + "EXPL,". What set them apart was their use of five-formula structures, featuring two different combinations, such as "APOL" + "EXPL" + "REPR" + "RESP" + "APOL" and "APOL" + "EXPL" + "REPR" + "RESP" + "FORB." This complexity demonstrated a unique, multifaceted apology structure among British participants. Having explained the overall results, a detailed illustration of each group is crucial in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the data.

5.4.1.Saudi Arabic responses:

5.4.1.1.Types of apologies:

Saudi Arabic participants in this situation used 92 semantic formulas in total. The semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) is the most frequently used semantic formula where it was used 36 times with a percentage of 39.1%. The second most commonly used semantic formula is the explanation or account (EXPL) formula which was used 28 times with a 30.4%. A total of 17 offers of repair (REPR) were made by Saudi Arabic participants in this situation, representing 18.4% of the total sum of semantic formulas. The semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) was used 11 times with a percentage of 11.9%. The semantic formula of promise of forbearance (FORB) was not used at all as a response to this situation.

5.4.1.2. Structures of apologies:

Saudi Arabic participants used a total of 15 semantic formulas structures in the third situation of apology. A variety of semantic formulas structures were employed to convey apologies, including single formulas and combinations of 2, 3, and 4 formulas. The Saudi Arabic participants used the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR) 2 times individually as a complete apology response. With regard to the structure of 2 semantic formulas used as a complete apology response, there were 4 different structures used in 14 responses in which two semantic formulas were combined by Saudi Arabic participants to convey complete apology responses. For example, the Saudi Arabic participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL). As another example, they combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR).

In terms of the structure of 3 semantic formulas used as a complete apology response, the Saudi Arabic participants used 7 different structures in 9 responses in which they combined 3 different semantic formulas in order to express complete apologies for this situation. For example, the Saudi Arabic participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL) and the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR). As another example, they combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) and the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL). When it comes to the 4 semantic formulas combined to construct a complete apology response, the Saudi Arabic participants used 3 different structures in 5 responses in which they combined 4 different semantic formulas in order to express complete apologies for this situation. For example, the Saudi Arabic participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL), the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR), and another semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL). In another example, they combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP), the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL), and another semantic formula of taking on

responsibility (RESP). Table 5.18 shows examples of semantic formula structures used by Saudi Arabic participants in this situation.

Formulas Structure	Example
Single formula	Wipe it on my face! امسحها في وجهي!
Combination of 2 formulas	I apologize, brother, for the situation. + It fell inadvertently. اسف، اخوي، على اللي صار + طاح بدون قصد
Combination of 3 formulas	I am sorry. + I did not mean to, + but I am ready to clean your clothes. اسف. + ماقصدتها، + لكن مستعد انظف ملابسك
Combination of 4 formulas	I am sorry, my dear. + I swear to Allah I didn't mean it. + I will make amends. + Please accept my apology. اسف ياغالي. + اقسم بالله ماقصدتها. + ابشر بالعوض. + تكفي اقبل عذري.

Table 5.18. Saudi Arabic participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 3)

5.4.2.EFL responses:

5.4.2.1.Types of apologies:

A total of 107 semantic formulas were used by EFL participants in this situation. The semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) is the most commonly used semantic formula where it was employed 39 times with a percentage of 36.4%. The semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) was used 33 times with a percentage of 30.8%. There were 25 repairs offered by EFL participants in this situation, representing 23.3% of all semantic formulas. The explanation or account (EXPL) semantic formula was used 10 times with a 9.3%, making it the

fourth most commonly used semantic formula. EFL participants did not employ the semantic formula of promise of forbearance (FORB) when responding to this situation.

5.4.2.2. Structures of apologies:

The EFL participants employed a total of 14 semantic formulas structures in the third situation of apology. Various semantic formulas structures were used in this situation to express apologies, including single formulas and combinations of 2, 3, and 4 formulas. The EFL participants used the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR) and the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) 6 times individually as a complete apology response. For the structure of 2 semantic formulas combined to convey a complete apology response, there were 5 different structures used in 11 responses in which two semantic formulas were combined by EFL participants to convey complete apology responses. For instance, the EFL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP). Similarly, the EFL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR).

Regarding the structure of 3 semantic formulas used as a complete apology response, the EFL participants used 6 different structures in 12 responses in which they combined 3 different semantic formulas in order to express complete apologies for this situation. For instance, they combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL) and the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR). As another example, the EFL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) and the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR). For the 4 semantic formulas that were combined to construct a complete apology response, the EFL participants used 1 structure in 1 response in which they combined 4 different semantic formulas in order to express a complete apology for this situation. In this response of 4 semantic formulas, the EFL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL), another semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL), and the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR). Table 5.19 shows examples of semantic formula structures used by EFL participants in this situation.

Formulas Structure	Example
Single formula	I am very sorry for what happened!
Combination of 2 formulas	I am sorry about that. + I will buy you new clothes.
Combination of 3 formulas	Oh no! I am sorry. + This is my mistake. + Let me give you tissues.
Combination of 4 formulas	I am so sorry, sir. + It was an accident. + I really apologize. + Let me clean it for you.

Table 5.19. EFL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 3)

5.4.3.ESL responses:

5.4.3.1.Types of apologies:

ESL participants used a total of 99 semantic formulas in this situation. The most frequently used semantic formula is the expression of apology (APOL) which was employed 40 times with a percentage of 40.4%. In this situation, 24 explanations (EXPL) were offered by ESL participants, representing 24.2% of all semantic formulas. As the third most commonly used semantic formula, the offer of repair (REPR) was used 21 times with a 21.2%. The semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) was used 14 times with a percentage of 14.1%. The semantic formula of promise of forbearance (FORB) was not employed by ESL participants in responding to this situation.

5.4.3.2.Structures of apologies:

ESL participants used a total of 15 semantic formulas structures in the third apology situation. Several semantic formulas structures were used to express apologies in this scenario, including single formulas and combinations of 2, 3, and 4 formulas. The ESL participants used the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR) and the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) 9 times individually as a complete apology response. Considering the structure of two semantic

formulas used to convey a complete apology response, there were 3 different structures used in 15 responses in which two semantic formulas were combined by ESL participants to convey complete apology responses. For example, they combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL). As another example, the ESL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR).

Regarding the structure of 3 semantic formulas used as a complete apology response, the ESL participants used 5 different structures in 3 responses in which they combined 3 different semantic formulas in order to express complete apologies for this situation. For instance, the ESL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL) and the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR). Also, the ESL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) and the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR). As for the 4 semantic formulas combined to construct a complete apology response, the ESL participants used 3 different structures in 3 responses in which they combined 4 different semantic formulas in order to express complete apologies for this situation. For example, the ESL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL), the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR), and the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP). As another example, they combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL), the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP), and another semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL). Table 5.20 shows examples of semantic formula structures used by ESL participants in this situation.

Formulas Structure	Example
Single formula	Please let me help you cleaning that.
Combination of 2 formulas	I am so sorry. That was a complete accident.

Combination of 3 formulas	I apologize to you. + It was by mistake. + Please tell me what you want me to do.
Combination of 4 formulas	I am really sorry. + It wasn't on purpose. + Let me clean your clothes. + I really apologize.

Table 5.20. ESL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 3)

5.4.4. British English responses:

5.4.4.1. Types of apologies:

The total number of semantic formulas employed by British participants in this situation is 120. The expression of apology (APOL) is the most frequently used semantic formula. It was employed by British participants 44 times with a percentage of 36.6%. A total of 31 explanation or account (EXPL) semantic formulas were presented by British participants in this situation which represents 25.8%. The offer of repair (REPR) is the third most commonly used semantic formula. It was employed by British participants 29 times with a percentage of 24.1%. The semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) appeared 16 times with a 13.3%. British participants did not use the semantic formula of promise of forbearance (FORB) in responding to this situation.

5.4.4.2. Structures of apologies:

British participants used a total of 11 semantic formulas structures in the third situation of apology. A variety of semantic formulas structures were employed to convey apologies in this situation, including combinations of 2, 3, 4, and 5 semantic formulas. Regarding the structure of 2 semantic formulas used as a complete apology response, there were 2 different structures used in 2 responses in which two semantic formulas were combined by British participants to convey complete apology responses. For example, the British participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL). As another example, they combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR).

In terms of the structure of 3 semantic formulas used as a complete apology response, the British participants used 4 different structures in 11 responses in which they combined 3 different semantic formulas in order to express complete apologies for this situation. For example, the British participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL) and the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR). As another example, the British participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) and the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL).

When it comes to the 4 semantic formulas combined to construct a complete apology response, the British participants used 3 different structures in 7 responses in which they combined 4 different semantic formulas in order to express complete apologies for this situation. For example, they combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL), the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR), and the semantic formula of promise of forbearance (FORB). In another example, the British participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP), the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR), and another semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL).

Regarding the structure of 5 semantic formulas used as a complete apology response, there were 2 different structures used in 10 responses in which 5 semantic formulas were combined by British participants to convey complete apology responses. For example, the British participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL), the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR), the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP), and another semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL). As another example, they combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL), the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR), the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) and the semantic formula of promise of forbearance (FORB). Table 5.21 shows examples of semantic formula structures used by British participants in this situation.

Formulas Structure	Example
Combination of 2 formulas	Oh my God! I am so sorry. + Is there anything at all I can do?
Combination of 3 formulas	I am so sorry. + It was an accident. + Do you need any tissues?
Combination of 4 formulas	Oh! I am so sorry + I didn't mean to. + I'll find you some tissues. + I am so sorry about that.
Combination of 5 formulas	Oh my God sorry! + It slipped by accident + Can I help you clean up? + I am so stupid. + I am so sorry.

Table 5.21. British participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 3)

5.5.Situation of apology (Returning a Book)

" Imagine that you borrowed a book from your sibling and (even though your sibling does not need the book) you promised to return the book in a week. Unfortunately, you forgot to return the book on time. So, you go to your brother to return the book and to apologize for this unintended delay."

Situation	Returning a Book
Speaker's role	Apologizer (Sibling)
Hearer's role	Victim (Sibling)
Ranking of imposition	Low R
Social distance	Low D
Power	(S=H)

Table 5.22. Situation of apology (4) in the Discourse Completion Task.

Types of apologies:

Formulas	Frequency			
	Saudi Arabic	EFL	ESL	British English
I. An expression of apology (APOL)	31	33	32	31
II. Explanation or account (EXPL)	13	5	10	11
III. Taking on responsibility (RESP)	5	16	6	2
IV. Offer of repair (REPR)	7	5	4	6
V. Promise of forbearance (FORB)	0	0	2	5
Total of formulas	56	59	54	55

Table 5.23. Frequency of all groups' semantic formulas (apology situation 4)

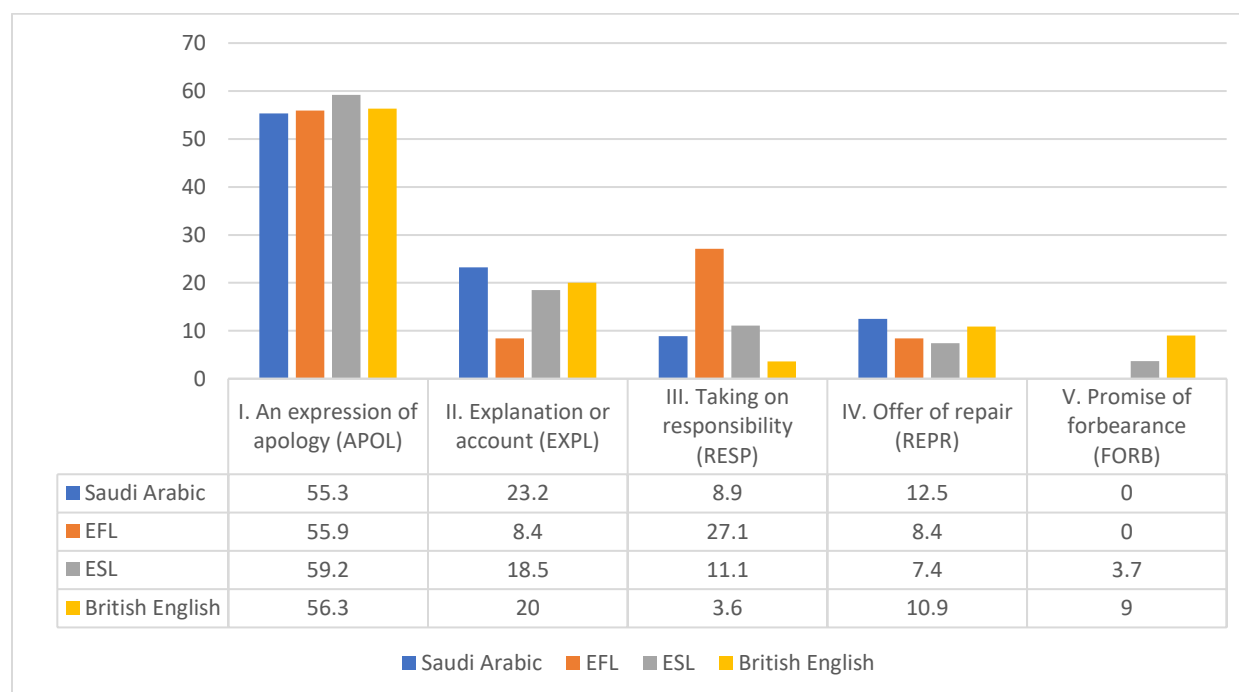


Figure 5.4. Frequency percentages of all groups' semantic formulas (apology situation 4)

In summarizing the apology semantic formulas employed when returning a book, the Saudi Arabic participants utilized a total of 56 semantic formulas, with the predominant semantic formula being the expression of apology (APOL) at 55.3%. In contrast, they made minimal use of taking on responsibility (RESP) at 8.9% and did not employ the promise of forbearance (FORB) at all. EFL participants employed 59 semantic formulas, with the primary approach being the expression of apology (APOL) at 55.9%, followed by taking on responsibility (RESP) at 27.1%. Similar to the Saudi Arabic group, EFL participants did not utilize the promise of forbearance (FORB). ESL participants utilized 54 semantic formulas, with the expression of apology (APOL) being the most prominent at 59.2%, followed by explanation or account (EXPL) at 18.5%. Taking on responsibility (RESP) accounted for 11.1% of their responses, while the promise of forbearance (FORB) was employed in 3.7%. British participants employed 55 semantic formulas, with the expression of apology (APOL) as the leading strategy at 56.3%, followed by explanation or account (EXPL) at 20%. They also made more frequent use of the offer of repair (REPR) at 10.9% and the promise of forbearance (FORB) at 9% but taking on responsibility (RESP) was relatively rare at 3.6%. In summary, while the expression of apology (APOL) was consistently the most common semantic formula among all groups, there were variations in the use of other semantic formulas, such as taking on responsibility (RESP), explanation or account (EXPL), offer of repair (REPR), and promise of forbearance (FORB), indicating some cultural and linguistic differences in the apology responses of participant groups. The semantic formula of promise of forbearance (FORB) was only used by participants from the United Kingdom (ESL and British). The British participants employed this semantic formula, precisely, more than twice as frequently as ESL participants. This indicates that in some situations, the culture of the British participants uses this semantic formula as part of an apology. The use of the semantic formula of promise of forbearance (FORB) by the ESL participants may be influenced by British culture as a result of their closeness and their regular exposure to it. What supports this interpretation is that the participants in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Saudi Arabic and EFL) did not use this semantic formula at all. Focusing and working on developing this semantic formula may contribute to increasing the intercultural awareness and effectiveness of EFL apologies in intercultural

communication. Furthermore, it is possible to notice a difference in the level of EFL participants' use of the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP), which is much higher than the rest of the groups. The semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL), which the EFL utilized less than the other groups, was negatively impacted by the heavy usage of the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP). Based on the content of their responses, it is possible to differentiate between the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL) style and the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) style. Language proficiency, which is concerned with the capacity to produce linguistic material that explains, is distinct from language proficiency that is concerned with the capacity to produce linguistic content that bears responsibility. While the linguistic content of responsibility can be accomplished using a small number of linguistic expressions that can be used and repeated in most situations, regardless of the variables in each situation, the linguistic content of explanation requires a large number of linguistic expressions that vary depending on the situation and variables. Their limited use may indicate a weakness in their pragmatic competence of performing an apology. This is supported not only by the fact that they did not apologize in a manner similar to the British participants but also by the fact that they did not apologize in a manner similar to Saudi Arabic or ESL participants. Whether or not this interpretation can be applied to other contexts depends on their performance in other situations, which will be discussed further in the fourth section of this chapter.

Similar to previous apology scenarios, Saudi Arabic participants contents of apologies reflected their culture and religion and showed kindness and respect for the interlocutor by using some address terms such as (e.g., Sorry brother! I forgot to return it back.), (e.g., I swear to Allah my friend. Time flies and I just forgot.), (e.g., Forgive me Sheikh! I forgot it with me.), and (e.g., My heart! I forgot to return the book to you. Here it is.) emphasizing interpersonal relationships and demonstrating solidarity within their cultural context.

To summarize, EFL participants, while relying heavily on the expression of apology, have a tendency to take the responsibility. Similarly, ESL participants give priority to the expression of apology but also used elements of explanation or account (EXPL) and taking on responsibility (RESP) less frequently. British participants, in addition to utilizing the expression of apology, make

more frequent use of the offer of repair (REPR) and the promise of forbearance (FORB). In comparison with other groups, EFL participants use the semantic formula of explanation or account less frequently. Their inability to provide detailed explanations or justifications for their actions may be indicative of a lack of pragmatic competence in explaining their apology. The semantic formula of taking responsibility is employed more frequently by EFL participants compared to other groups. Taking responsibility is a crucial aspect of apologizing, but overemphasizing this content may signal a tendency to a limited range of linguistic expressions and choices. Moreover, EFL participants' apologies differ from those of other groups in terms of semantic formulas, particularly when compared with those of British participants. While British participants use a wider range of semantic formulas, including the promise of forbearance (FORB) and offer of repair (REPR), EFL participants tend to concentrate primarily on the expression of apology (APOL) and taking on responsibility (RESP). It is possible that this variation in semantic formulas is due to a lack of pragmatic competence. This interpretation of EFL participants' pragmatic competence as potentially weaker stems from comparisons with other participant groups and observations of the linguistic preferences they made in this apology scenario.

Structures of apologies:

		1 Formula structure	Combination of 2 formulas	Combination of 3 formulas	Total
Saudi Arabic	Responses	7	18	5	30
	Structures	1	4	5	10
EFL	Responses	16	7	7	30
	Structures	1	2	4	7
ESL	Responses	17	10	3	30
	Structures	1	5	3	9
British	Responses	4	23	3	30
	Structures	1	4	3	8

Table 5.24. All participants' semantic formulas structures results (apology situation 4)

The Saudi Arabic participants utilized a total of 10 unique semantic formula structures. These encompassed both individual uses, where the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) was employed 7 times as a standalone apology response, as well as combinations of 2 and 3 formulas. In the case of the latter, Saudi Arabic participants utilized five distinct structures, such as combining APOL with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL) and with the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR). EFL participants exhibited a preference for the APOL semantic formula, employing it individually 16 times as a comprehensive apology response in this situation. When using 2 semantic formulas in their apologies, they employed two different structures, combining APOL with either the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) or with the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR). Furthermore, for complete apologies structured with 3 semantic formulas, EFL participants utilized four different combinations, such as merging APOL with RESP and REPR, or APOL with EXPL and RESP. Regarding the ESL participants' approach of structuring semantic formulas for apologies, they employed a total of 9 distinct structures. Much like the previous group, they utilized the APOL semantic formula individually 17 times. In instances where 2 formulas were combined to form a complete apology response, ESL participants utilized five different structures, including the combination of APOL with EXPL or RESP. Additionally, they produced 3 semantic formula responses, one of which involved combining APOL with RESP and another APOL. Finally, when considering the British participants' method of structuring semantic formulas for conveying apologies, they employed a total of 8 structures. Utilizing APOL as an individual response only 4 times, they leaned heavily towards employing 2 semantic formulas to construct comprehensive apology responses. This yielded 4 different structures in 23 responses, such as merging APOL with EXPL or RESP. In the case of utilizing 3 semantic formulas, British participants utilized 3 structures, such as combining APOL with EXPL and REPR or APOL with EXPL and RESP. Having explained the overall results, a detailed illustration of each group is crucial in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the data.

5.5.1.Saudi Arabic responses:

5.5.1.1.Types of apologies:

The total number of semantic formulas used by Saudi Arabic participants in this situation is 56. The most frequently used semantic formula is an expression of apology (APOL), which was used 31 times with a percentage of 55.3%. As the second most used semantic formula, the explanation or account (EXPL) formula was employed 13 times with 23.2%. There were 7 offers of repair (REPR) made by Saudi Arabic participants in this situation which is 12.5% of all semantic formulas. The semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) was used 5 times with a percentage of 8.9%. Saudi Arabic participants did not employ the semantic formula of promise of forbearance (FORB) at all in responding to this situation.

5.5.1.2.Structures of apologies:

Saudi Arabic participants used a total of 10 semantic formulas structures in the fourth situation of apology. A variety of semantic formulas structures were employed to express apologies in this situation, including single formulas and combinations of 2, and 3 formulas. Saudi Arabic participants used the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) 7 times individually as a complete apology response. With regard to the structure of 2 semantic formulas used as a complete apology response, there were 4 different structures used in 18 responses in which two semantic formulas were combined by Saudi Arabic participants to convey complete apology responses. For example, the Saudi Arabic participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL). As another example, the Saudi Arabic participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR). In terms of the structure of 3 semantic formulas used as a complete apology response, the Saudi Arabic participants used 5 different structures in 5 responses in which they combined 3 different semantic formulas in order to express complete apologies for this situation. For example, the Saudi Arabic participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL) and the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR). As another

example, the Saudi Arabic participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) and the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL). Table 5.25 shows examples of semantic formula structures used by Saudi Arabic participants in this situation.

Formulas Structure	Example
Single formula	I am Sorry. معليش.
Combination of 2 formulas	I apologize. + I really forgot it. اعتذر. + صدق نسيت.
Combination of 3 formulas	I am sorry. + I forgot to return the book. + Your wish is my command. اسف. + نسيت ارجع الكتاب. + ابشر باللي تامر عليه.

Table 5.25. Saudi Arabic participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 4)

5.5.2.EFL responses:

5.5.2.1.Types of apologies:

EFL participants used a total of 59 semantic formulas in this situation. The most commonly used semantic formula is an expression of apology (APOL) which was used 33 times with a percentage of 55.9%. The second most commonly used semantic formula is the taking on responsibility (RESP) formula, which was employed 16 times with 27.1%. The semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR) and the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL) were used by EFL participants 5 times each in this situation with a percentage of 8.4% each. No EFL participants employed the semantic formula of promise of forbearance (FORB) in response to this situation.

5.5.2.2. Structures of apologies:

EFL participants used a total of 7 semantic formulas structures in the fourth situation of apology. The apologies were expressed using a variety of semantic formulas structures, including single formulas and combinations of 2, and 3 formulas. EFL participants used the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) 16 times individually as a complete apology response. In terms of the structure of 2 semantic formulas combined by EFL participants to convey complete apology responses, there were 2 different structures used in 7 responses in which 2 semantic formulas were combined by EFL participants to convey complete apology responses. For instance, the EFL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP). Similarly, the EFL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR). Regarding the structure of 3 semantic formulas used as a complete apology response, the EFL participants used 4 different structures in 7 responses in which they combined 3 different semantic formulas in order to express complete apologies for this situation. For example, the EFL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) and the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR). In another example, the EFL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL) and the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP). Table 5.26 shows examples of semantic formula structures used by EFL participants in this situation.

Formulas Structure	Example
Single formula	Sorry for the delay!
Combination of 2 formulas	My apologies! + I am buying another book for you.
Combination of 3 formulas	Forgive me! + I forgot to give it back, + count it on me!

Table 5.26. EFL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 4)

5.5.3.ESL responses:

5.5.3.1.Types of apologies:

ESL participants used a total of 54 semantic formulas in this situation. The expression of apology (APOL) semantic formula was mentioned 32 times with a percentage of 59.2%. The explanation or account (EXPL) semantic formula was employed by ESL participants 10 times with 18.5% as the second most commonly used semantic formula. The semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) was used by ESL participants 6 times in this situation with a percentage of 11.1%. The semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR) was employed 4 times with a percentage of 7.4%. Finally, the semantic formula of promise of forbearance (FORB) was used by ESL participants 2 times in this situation with a percentage of 3.7%.

5.5.3.2.Structures of apologies:

ESL participants used a total of 9 semantic formulas structures in the fourth situation of apology. Multiple semantic formulas structures were used, including single formulas as well as combinations of 2 and 3 formulas. ESL participants used the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) 17 times individually as a complete apology response. Using 2 semantic formulas to convey a complete apology response, there were 5 different structures used in 10 responses in which 2 semantic formulas were combined by ESL participants to convey complete apology responses. As an example, the ESL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL). In another example, the ESL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP). In terms of the structure of 3 semantic formulas used as a complete apology response, the ESL participants used 3 structures in 3 responses in which they combined 3 different semantic formulas in order to express a complete apology for this situation. As an example, the ESL participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) and another semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL). Table 5.27 shows examples of semantic formula structures used by ESL participants in this situation.

Formulas Structure	Example
Single formula	Sorry for being late!
Combination of 2 formulas	I am sorry for your book. + That was wrong of me.
Combination of 3 formulas	I apologize for giving it late. + Your right is on me. + I am so sorry.

Table 5.27. ESL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 4)

5.5.4. British English responses:

5.5.4.1. Types of apologies:

A total of 55 semantic formulas were used by British participants in this situation. The expression of apology (APOL) semantic formula was used 31 times with a percentage of 56.3%. As the second most commonly employed semantic formula, explanation or account (EXPL) semantic formula was used by British participants 11 times, with 20%. Among the semantic formulas used, the offer of repair (REPR) semantic formula appeared 6 times with 10.9%. The semantic formula of promise of forbearance (FORB) was used by British participants 5 times in this situation with a percentage of 9%. With a percentage of 3.6%, British participants used the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP) 2 times.

5.5.4.2. Structures of apologies:

British participants used a total of 8 semantic formulas structures in the fourth apology situation. Apologies were expressed using a single semantic formula as well as combinations of two and three semantic formulas. British participants used the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) 4 times in total as a complete apology response. For the structure of 2 semantic formulas combined as a complete apology response, there were 4 different structures used in 23 responses in which two semantic formulas were combined by British participants to deliver complete apology responses. For instance, the British participants combined the semantic

formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL). As another example, the British participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP). In terms of the structure of 3 semantic formulas used as a complete apology response, the British participants used 3 different structures in 3 responses in which they combined 3 different semantic formulas in order to express complete apologies for this situation. As an example, the British participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL) and the semantic formula of offer of repair (REPR). Additionally, the British participants combined the semantic formula of expression of apology (APOL) with the semantic formula of explanation or account (EXPL) and the semantic formula of taking on responsibility (RESP). Table 5.28 shows examples of semantic formula structures used by British participants in this situation.

Formulas Structure	Example
Single formula	Sorry about that!
Combination of 2 formulas	I am sorry. + I forgot I had it.
Combination of 3 formulas	I am sorry. + I completely forgot to give this back. + here is the book.

Table 5.28. British participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (apology situation 4)

5.6.Overall insights

In this study, a key objective was to examine how the types of apologies used by the four participant groups differ from one another. The findings consistently revealed that British English speakers employed a broader and more pragmatically complex set of apology strategies than the other groups. Their replies featured not only expressions of apology but also the significant use of explanation or account (EXPL), offer of repair (REPR), and the relatively unique inclusion of the promise of forbearance (FORB), especially in high-imposition contexts. This wide-ranging usage

shows a pragmatic approach where different semantic formulas are combined to acknowledge the offense, mitigate face-threats, and allow social repair. British speakers' employment of mitigation strategies and the frequent combination of explanation, responsibility, and repair strategies emphasizes the value of sincerity, accountability, and restoration in British cultural understandings of apology. This pattern closely aligns with cross-cultural findings that English apologies frequently combine expressions of regret with explanations and offers of repair. Olshtain and Cohen (1983) identified such combinations as central components of apology realization in English.

Saudi Arabic participants leaned heavily on the expression of apology (APOL) while supplementing it with unique religious and culturally rooted content. Their apologies often showed spiritual humility, utilizing religious supplications such as "May Allah make you happy," or emphasizing personal accountability through oaths like "I swear to Allah." These expressions served not only as markers of sincerity but also as culturally meaningful forms of mitigation. The tendency to employ such religious language represents a spiritual conceptualization of error and forgiveness that is deeply rooted in Saudi sociocultural norms. The strong presence of religious expressions and relational address terms in the Saudi Arabic data matches findings from Arabic apology studies. Bataineh and Bataineh (2006) found that Jordanian Arabic speakers frequently combine repeated regret, elaborate explanation, and appeals to God in order to intensify sincerity and relational repair. Similarly, Al-Laheebi and Sori Ya'Allah (2014) observed that Saudi speakers often mitigate responsibility through indirect strategies while embedding apologies within broader relational frameworks. This study extends these observations by showing how religious supplication and culturally specific address terms serve not merely as intensifiers, but as culturally meaningful resources for negotiating accountability and solidarity. Moreover, culturally specific address terms such as "my eyes," "my love," and "victorious beard" highlighted the social dimension of apologies, framing them as acts of relational maintenance rather than merely transactional or corrective speech acts.

Interestingly, Saudi EFL learners diverged from both their native cultural norms and the target L2 norms. They showed an over-reliance on the semantic formula of taking responsibility (RESP), often to the exclusion of explanation or elaboration. While acknowledging fault is a crucial

component of apology, its overuse in the absence of contextualization (EXPL) may point to a pragmatic limitation. Responsibility was often asserted through formulaic expressions such as “It’s my fault” or “Count it on me,” with little variation or adaptation across situations. This indicates that EFL participants may have internalized basic apology templates without the deeper sociopragmatic awareness required to modify responses according to variables such as the severity of the offense or social distance. This pattern contrasts with that of both Saudi ESL participants and British participants, who distributed their use of semantic formulas more flexibly and appropriately. This overreliance on responsibility formulas among EFL participants is consistent with patterns widely documented in interlanguage pragmatics. Hussein and Hammouri (1998) observed that Jordanian EFL learners frequently overused explicit apology formulas while ineffectively using offers of repair, a pattern attributed to limited sociopragmatic awareness. Similarly, Qari (2017) found that Saudi EFL learners showed pragmatic transfer and difficulty adjusting apology strategies to contextual variables. Thus, the present findings provide further empirical support for the argument that pragmatic competence does not develop automatically alongside grammatical proficiency (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001), and that learners may acquire formulaic knowledge without mastering contextual adaptability.

Saudi ESL participants, probably due to their immersion in English-speaking environments, displayed intermediary pragmatic competence. Their responses somehow balanced expressions of regret, explanation, and repair strategies, indicating a growing awareness of how to perform apologies in a more diverse way. Nevertheless, similar to their EFL counterparts, they occasionally underutilized more context-sensitive formulas such as FORB and sometimes overly relied on APOL and RESP. However, their ability to integrate more semantic formulas into their responses, especially in high-imposition situations, shows developmental progress and illustrates the benefits of authentic exposure. The intermediary performance of Saudi ESL participants supports research on the developmental impact of immersion. Félix-Brasdefer (2007) revealed that ESL learners tend to produce more target-like combinations of apology strategies than their EFL counterparts, while Bella (2012) showed gradual movement toward L2 norms with increased exposure. The more balanced distribution of formulas found in the present ESL group supports

these findings and suggests that authentic interactional experience facilitates the integration of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge, as proposed by Rose and Kasper (2001).

Associated with differences in formula use is the matter of apology structure. British English speakers again stood out as the most pragmatically complex as they frequently used structurally elaborate apologies combining four or even five formulas in a single response. These sequences often occurred in a logical progression of: apology expression, acknowledgment of fault, explanation, offer of repair, and, where appropriate, a promise of future restraint. This formulaic complexity represents a communicative style that values clarity, responsibility, and restoration, especially in high-imposition contexts involving damaging someone's clothing or missing a scheduled commitment. Saudi Arabic participants also displayed a significant degree of structural complexity, though this was shaped by culturally specific sequencing rather than conformity to L2 norms. Their structures often started with expressions of remorse and religious framing, moved through responsibility or mitigation, and ended with offers of repair embedded in culturally coded generosity (e.g., offering one's jacket as compensation).

Comparatively, Saudi EFL participants consistently used simpler structures. Their apologies tended to comprise one or two formulas and did not include the layered sequencing necessary to fully address the social and interpersonal dynamics of the scenario. This was particularly evident in situations that required a complex response, such as missing a shift or spilling coffee on a stranger. Their structural limitations reveal a pragmatic gap that may stem from a lack of exposure to authentic L2 models or insufficient instruction on the use of complex speech acts. Saudi ESL participants produced more extended and coherent structures than their EFL counterparts but with less variety and consistency than native speakers. Their responses included multiple formulas in logical combinations and some use of hedging or repair, which shows a progress toward more advanced pragmatic competence.

When it comes to the use of address terms in apology expressions as a noteworthy and culturally rich dimension of this study. Among Saudi Arabic speakers, address terms functioned as powerful instruments of politeness, relational alignment, and cultural signaling. Terms like "brother," "my heart," "sheikh," and "my love" were strategically used even in high-distance contexts in a way that humanized the apologizers and conveyed warmth. In religiously related examples, address

terms were occasionally paired with prayers or oaths, e.g., “Longevous, I swear to Allah I did not mean it,” which shows both solidarity and spiritual gravity. These address terms offer more than mitigate offense as they place the apology in a social framework that affirms mutual respect and shared values. Comparatively, British participants did not show a similar use of address terms. They tended to utilize politeness strategies rooted in linguistic form (e.g., modal verbs, softeners, hedges) rather than in direct terms of endearment or kinship. ESL participants sometimes replicated British usage, while EFL participants inconsistently applied address terms, and often defaulted to literal or culturally neutral options such as “sir”.

Contextual factors, including social distance and ranking of imposition, also significantly shaped the complexity of apology realization. In high imposition, high distance scenarios, such as the coffee spill or missed volunteer shift, British and ESL participants constructed more elaborate, multi formula apologies that focused on responsibility, explanation, and repair. British participants, particularly, were adept at modulating tone, often incorporating humility and empathy to soften the impact of the apology. Similarly, ESL participants demonstrated sensitivity to the social stakes involved. Saudi Arabic participants, while more direct in expressing regret, employed culturally specific strategies to navigate these variables, which framed their apologies in spiritual language mostly. Their responses demonstrated a strong collectivist orientation where the relationship and moral accountability are crucial.

However, EFL participants somehow struggled to appropriately adjust their responses based on contextual variables. Their apologies appeared relatively simple across both high and low imposition scenarios, which suggests a lack of situational adjustment. For instance, they frequently used the same formulaic phrases regardless of whether they had blocked an aisle or caused public embarrassment through a spilled drink. This one size fits all approach points to a lack of flexibility and an underdeveloped sensitivity to face-threatening acts, which are crucial components of pragmatic competence. It also shows a gap in interlanguage development, where learners may have structural knowledge of English but lack the sociopragmatic awareness to apply it appropriately across contexts. The influence of imposition and social distance seen across groups also supports earlier research on contextual sensitivity in apology behaviour as Olshtain (1989) demonstrated that more severe offenses typically elicit more elaborate apology structures,

including repair and forbearance strategies. The British and ESL data in this study clearly follow this escalation pattern, whereas the limited adjustment among EFL participants mirrors findings that learners often struggle to interact according to situational demands (Trosborg, 1995).

In general, the findings of apology are broadly consistent with cross-cultural research (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983; Holmes, 1990), particularly in demonstrating that British English speakers tend to employ layered and strategically sequenced apology structures that combine regret, explanation, and repair. However, this study also suggests a greater degree of structural elaboration than earlier descriptions imply. Similarly, Saudi Arabic apologies incorporated culturally embedded religious expressions and relational address terms, aligning with Arabic-focused research (Bataineh & Bataineh, 2006; Al-Laheebi & Sori Ya'Allah, 2014). Nevertheless, the present findings reveal that Saudi participants were often explicit in accepting responsibility while simultaneously embedding their apologies within religious and solidarity-based framing. Furthermore, the divergence between EFL and ESL participants provides additional evidence for the developmental role of exposure (Hussein & Hammouri, 1998; Félix-Brasdefer, 2007; Qari, 2017).

5.7. Summary

The results of this chapter highlight the deeply contextual and culturally contingent nature of apology performance. While all participant groups conveyed regret and attempted to manage face-threatening acts, the strategies they used varied widely in form, complexity, and sociocultural depth. British participants consistently expressed high pragmatic complexity where they integrated a wide range of semantic formulas and structuring their apologies to match some social expectations. Saudi Arabic participants displayed a culturally rich and relationally oriented style of apologizing that is loaded with religious and emotional content. Saudi ESL participants showed promising interlanguage development especially in their awareness of context and incorporation of mitigation strategies. However, Saudi EFL participants revealed significant gaps in pragmatic competence which is demonstrated by limited formula use, structural simplicity, and context-insensitive responses. These findings provide evidence that pragmatic competence

in EFL contexts must be intentionally cultivated through targeted instruction, exposure to authentic discourse, and cultural awareness training which this study provides materials for. The next chapter extends this analysis to refusals and completes the multi-dimensional examination of speech acts central to the study.

Chapter Six: The Speech Act of Refusal

6.1.Introduction

This chapter completes the analysis of the three target speech acts. As outlined in Chapter Two, refusals are considered highly face-threatening and interactionally complex. In this chapter, the analysis explores how cultural values, sociolinguistic norms, and L2 proficiency shape the selection, combination, and realization of refusal strategies. The discussion sheds light on the differences in the types and structures of refusal formulas, the role of address terms in mitigating refusals, and how social distance and ranking of imposition influence pragmatic choices across linguistic and cultural contexts. These results are framed within the broader discussion of interlanguage pragmatics and cultural variation in speech act performance.

As shown in the previous chapter, refusal responses were analyzed using Beebe et al.'s (1990) coding scheme, which identifies nine semantic formulas representing the functional components of refusal performance. These formulas include No, Negative Willingness/Ability, Regret, Excuse/Reason/Explanation, Offering Alternative, Future Acceptance/Promise, Statement of Philosophy, Acceptance as a Refusal, and Positive Feeling/Appreciation. Each semantic formula is a distinct communicative function that contributes to the realization of refusal. Each response was segmented into functional units and was subsequently assigned to one of the nine semantic formula categories based on its primary communicative function. As an instance:

"I'm really sorry, but I can't attend because I already have another commitment."

This response was segmented and coded as follows:

"I'm really sorry": This was coded as Regret because it carries apologetic softening and functions as a face-saving device.

"I can't attend": This was classified as Negative Willingness/Ability because it delivers inability to comply with the request.

"because I already have another commitment": This was analyzed as Excuse/Reason/Explanation as it delivers justification for the refusal.

So, this single response has three semantic formulas which are Regret, Negative Willingness/Ability, and Excuse/Reason/Explanation. After coding all responses, the frequency of each semantic formula was calculated for each participant group. This included counting the total number of instances of each semantic formula across the 30 responses produced by each group in the refusal situation. For instance, British participants employed the Excuse/Reason/Explanation formula 45 times. This frequency represents the total number of instances in which British participants provided justification statements such as explaining prior commitments or other reasons for refusing. After that, percentages were computed. These percentages were calculated by dividing the frequency of each semantic formula by the total number of semantic formulas used by that group and multiplying the result by 100. For example, Saudi Arabic participants produced a total of 68 semantic formulas in this situation. Since 26 of these were Excuse/Reason/Explanation formulas, the percentage was calculated as follows:

26 divided by 68 multiplied by 100 equals 38.2 percent.

Similar to previous speech acts in this study, the structural organisation of refusal responses was also investigated. This structural analysis concentrated on how many semantic formulas were combined within each individual refusal response. For instance, a response such as "Sorry." was classified as a single-formula structure including Regret and a response such as "Sorry, I can't." was coded as a two-formula structure of Regret and Negative Willingness/Ability. The number of responses within each structural category was then counted. For instance, Saudi Arabic participants produced eight responses of a single semantic formula, twelve responses of two formulas, six responses of three formulas, three responses of four formulas, and one response of five formulas. Moreover, the number of structural forms was also calculated. This consisted of identifying the different combinations of semantic formulas regardless of how frequently they were employed. As an example, the combinations of Regret with Excuse/Reason/Explanation and Positive Feeling/Appreciation with Negative Willingness/Ability represent different structural forms. Below is a breakdown of all refusal situations along with their results and discussions.

6.2. Situation of refusal (Bypassing a queue place)

“ Imagine that while you were in a shopping center, you finished choosing a large number of products to buy and you went to the counter to pay. You were in a hurry, but it was too crowded at the payment queue. Anyway, you took your place in the queue and started waiting. Then, a customer came to you and asked you to allow them to be in front of you in the queue because they only wanted to buy one single product and they told you that it will not take a long time to pay. You did not want to allow the customer to take your place because you were in a hurry. So, you wanted to refuse the request.”

Situation	Bypassing a queue place
Speaker's role	Refuser (Customer)
Hearer's role	Refused (Customer)
Ranking of imposition	Low R
Social distance	High D
Power	(S=H)

Table 6.1. Situation of refusal (1) in the Discourse Completion Task.

Types of semantic formulas:

Formulas	Frequency			
	Saudi Arabic	EFL	ESL	British English
I. No	4	0	0	4
II. Negative willingness/ability	5	21	11	2
III. Regret	23	14	17	32

IV. Excuse/reason/explanation	26	23	27	45
V. Offering alternative	5	3	3	7
VI. Future acceptance/promise	0	0	0	0
VII. Statement of philosophy	2	0	0	0
VIII. Acceptance as a refusal	1	0	0	5
IX. positive feeling/appreciation	2	0	2	3
Total of formulas	68	61	60	98

Table 6.2. Frequency of all groups' semantic formulas (refusal situation 1)

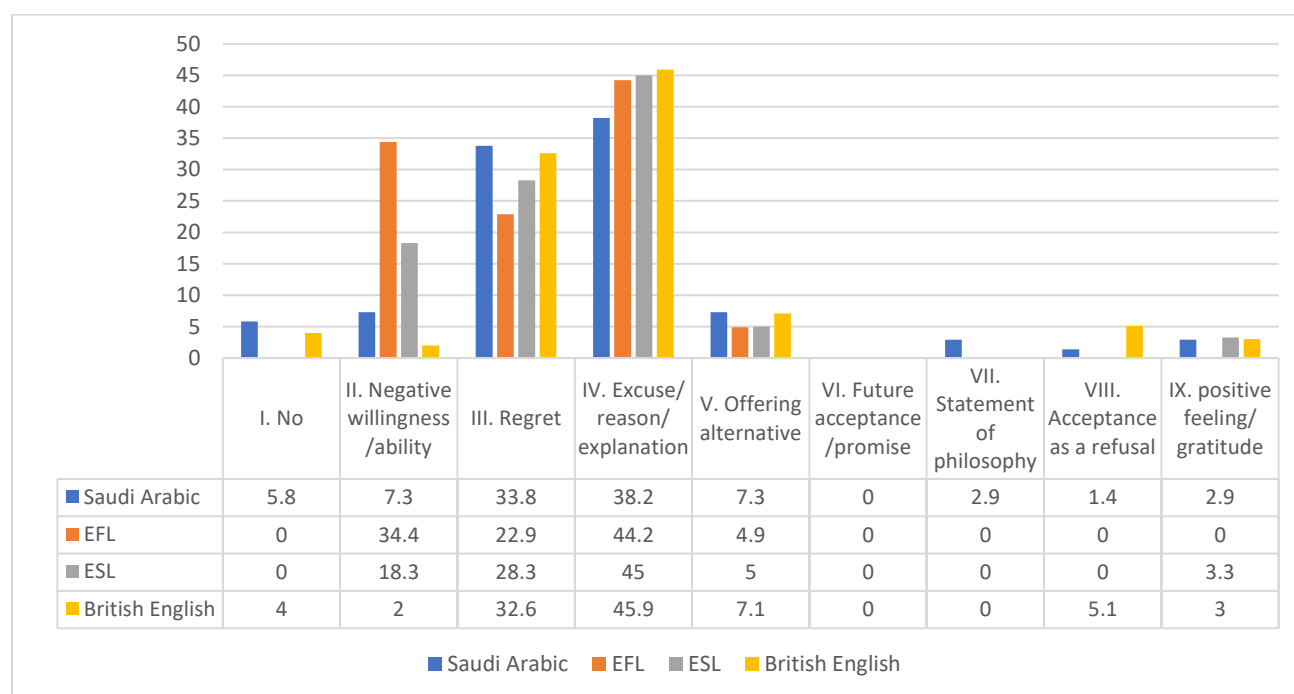


Figure 6.1. Frequency percentages of all groups' semantic formulas (refusal situation 1)

There were 287 semantic formulas used by all participants in this situation. Results show differences in the semantic formula usage across the various participant groups, with British participants showing a high usage of semantic formulas (98), while Saudi Arabic participants used less semantic formulas (68) in this situation. EFL and ESL participants used lower number of semantic formulas with a total of 61 and 60. The semantic formula of Excuse/reason/explanation

was utilized prominently across all participant groups. Saudi Arabic participants employed it 26 times, constituting 38.2% of their total semantic formulas. EFL participants showcased a close number, employing the semantic formula of Excuse/reason/explanation formula 23 times, representing 44.2% of their formulas. ESL participants also employed this formula 27 times, making up 45% of their semantic usage. British participants highly used the semantic formula of Excuse/reason/explanation 45 times, comprising 45.9% of their total usage.

The Regret formula was also highly used with different levels of employment. Saudi Arabic participants utilized it 23 times, accounting for 33.8% of their formulas. EFL participants employed the Regret 14 times, representing 22.9% of their semantic formulas. ESL participants used this formula 17 times, constituting 28.3% of their total usage. British participants showcased a higher usage, employing the Regret formula 32 times, representing 32.6% of their semantic formulas. Negative willingness/ability emerged as another notable formula used across the participant groups. Saudi Arabic participants utilized it 5 times, comprising 7.3% of their semantic formulas. EFL participants employed the Negative willingness/ability formula 21 times, representing 34.4% of their formulas. ESL participants used it 11 times, making up 18.3% of their total usage. British participants showcased lower emphasis, using the Negative willingness/ability formula 2 times, comprising 2% of their formulas. The Offering alternative formula appeared with less employment. Saudi Arabic participants employed it 5 times, representing 7.3% of their semantic formulas. EFL participants used the Offering alternative formula 3 times, accounting for 4.9% of their formulas. Similarly, ESL participants employed it 3 times, making up 5% of their total usage. British participants showcased a higher utilization, employing the Offering alternative formula 7 times, representing 7.1% of their semantic formulas.

Saudi Arabic participants used the semantic formula of No 4 times, making up 5.8% of their semantic formulas. Similarly, British participants used the semantic formula of No 4 times, accounting for 4% of their semantic formulas. EFL and ESL participants did not use the semantic formula of No. All participants showed no employment of the semantic formula of Future acceptance/promise whereas the Statement of philosophy semantic formula was only used by Saudi Arabic participants 2 times (2.9%). Saudi Arabic participants used the semantic formula of Acceptance as a refusal once, making up 2.9% of their semantic formulas. British participants

used the semantic formula of Acceptance as a refusal 5 times, accounting for 5.1% of their semantic formulas. EFL and ESL participants did not use the semantic formula of Acceptance as a refusal. Saudi Arabic participants used the positive feeling/appreciation formula 2 times, representing 2.9% of their semantic formulas. ESL participants showcased a similar usage with 2 instances, making up 3.3% of their formulas. British participants employed the positive feeling/appreciation formula 3 times, comprising 3% of their semantic formulas. EFL participants did not employ the semantic formula of positive feeling/appreciation.

Regarding the content of refusals, Saudi Arabic participants' responses demonstrate culturally derived interaction styles that emphasize respect, social cohesion, and indirectness in a way that balances directness with politeness derived from cultural roots. In this way, refusals are made in a manner that minimizes face-threatening effects, aligns with social norms, and upholds solidarity and humility as values. Many participants used direct refusals like "لا" (No) or "ما أقدر" (I can't) but were softened by subsequent apologies and justifications in line with both positive and negative politeness strategies. Using expressions such as "انا اسف" (I'm sorry) or "اعتذر منك" (I apologize) minimizes the impact of the refusal by showing respect for the listener's face and avoiding direct confrontation. These negative politeness strategies demonstrate respect for the other person as refusals frequently revolve around personal reasons like "مستعجل جدا" (I'm in a big hurry). In this way, the refusal is not perceived as a personal choice, but as a result of external factors rather than being outright rejected, which protects both parties' faces.

Moreover, they expressed solidarity by using kinship terms, such as "أخوي" (my brother), which builds feelings of connection that mitigates the refusal and lessens social distance. Inclusive phrases, such as "كلنا مستعجلين" (we're all in a hurry), create feelings of shared experience and indirectly acknowledge the other person's needs, which enhances communal solidarity. This emphasis on mutual understanding is reinforced by apologies, which shows the cultural importance given to maintaining social harmony and avoiding confrontation. The use of religious language, such as "والله معليش" (I'm sorry swear to Allah!), shows the balance of truthfulness and humbleness in communication, which is something common in Saudi Arabic culture. Furthermore, the utilization of respectful expressions such as "ولا على العين والراس" (even though you're on the

eye and the head) shows high respect that conveys to the listener that the refusal does not imply disrespect.

EFL participants' responses reflect both cultural norms and language proficiency, which reveal both politeness strategies, face-saving strategies, and cultural values reshaped in the context of the English language. Typically, their responses consisted of brief and direct refusals, such as "I can't" or "I cannot do it," which suggests a simplified strategy resulting more from a lack of linguistic proficiency than from a desire to be impolite. Nevertheless, some EFL participants softened their refusals with apologies, as in "Sorry, but I am in a hurry," or "I am sorry. + Take your place in the line!". By expressing regret, apologies align with negative politeness strategies aimed at minimizing face-threatening acts.

Additionally, EFL participants utilized face-saving strategies by highlighting external constraints (e.g., "I am in a hurry" or "I am very busy"), which focused the attention on the situation rather than the hearer. Using this indirect method, participants can maintain politeness without making themselves look overly confrontational. Moreover, the utilization of address terms such as "Brother" serves to reinforce solidarity, which is a cultural expression of respect and reduction of social distance. The use of the term "brother" shows the adaptation of Saudi Arabic culture into English. As something uncommon in native English interactions, it shows an expression of kindness and mutual respect. Furthermore, in some responses, softened directives or suggestions are employed as in "You can ask someone to take his place". Participants can offer an alternative to their refusal and redirect the hearer's request without undermining their own position. Rather than dismissing the hearer's needs, this method maintains politeness by offering a solution that respects their requests. Using direct refusals along with these strategies indicates an effort to balance English language constraints with culturally grounded politeness. Despite being brief and somewhat formulaic, the refusals demonstrate a deep commitment to social harmony and respect, in a way that aligns with cultural norms even though the refusals are limited by their proficiency limitations.

Saudi ESL participants' responses reveal a more sophisticated combination of politeness strategies, face-saving methods, and cultural values in refusal situations. Typically, ESL

participants start with apologies, such as "I'm sorry" or "Sorry!", as a negative politeness strategy to minimize the impact of the refusal. This form of apology illustrates an understanding of the social dynamics involved, which shows a desire not to impose on the hearer's feelings and the desire not to be impolite even with some direct refusals such as "I cannot".

Using phrases that indicate urgency like "I am in a rush" or "I can't wait long time in queue" can serve as both a reason for refusing and a face-saving method. In framing the refusal around personal constraints, participants move the focus from denying the request to being unable to comply due to external constraints. By using this approach, both parties can avoid potential embarrassment in a way that protects the hearer's face while supporting their needs. Moreover, ESL participants directly expressed concern for social norms and mutual respect by responding "it is rude to cross the whole queue", which highlights the significance of order in the group and social consideration for others. In addition, the phrase "I want to help you" conveys a sense of solidarity and kindness, which shows that the refusal is not due to disinterest but rather to a limitation imposed by the situation. Taking this approach aligns with values that emphasize community and interpersonal relationships. Using qualifiers such as "extremely sorry" shows the speaker's regret, which further reduces the negative impact of the refusal and reinforces the sense of empathy and concern for the recipient's emotions.

Regarding British participants' responses, a notable characteristic is the frequent use of apologies, such as "Sorry!" or "I'm really sorry" which soften the effect of refusals. When they apologize, participants show consideration of any discomfort their refusals could cause and express the wish to maintain a polite tone even when needs are expressed. Additionally, most responses include justifications that describe personal constraints such as "I'm in a hurry at the moment" or "I've been waiting for ages already". The focus on personal circumstances acts as a face-saving tool and allows participants to draw attention away from their refusal of the request to their situational urgency. Expressions such as "I was here first" not only communicate the rationale for the refusal, they also reinforce social order and fairness, which is in line with social traditions of queueing and respect for others.

Expressions of regret were further enhanced by qualifying statements such as "I hope that's okay" or "Any other day would have been fine", which convey respect and acknowledgement of the other person's viewpoint. Despite the inconvenience caused by the refusal, these statements demonstrate a commitment to solidarity and a desire to maintain the relationship. Inviting the hearer to "try and squeeze in behind me" or suggesting alternatives in general shows an attempt to provide practical options, which indicates a willingness to help regardless of the refusal. The use of "No!" along with polite phrases represents a pragmatic strategy for being assertive and polite at the same time. By combining a clear rejection with a subsequent clarification and apology, British participants maintained their position without making themselves seem rude. Generally, British participants' responses reflect sophisticated strategies for negotiating social interaction, including apologetic language, personal justifications, and an adherence to societal values such as fairness. Within the context of queuing, this sophisticated method enabled them to deal with refusals effectively while maintaining social harmony and respecting collective norms.

Analyzing refusal responses of Saudi Arabic, EFL, ESL, and British participants shows notable differences with regard to politeness approaches, face-saving strategies, expressions of solidarity, and the role of cultural values. Saudi Arabic participants often used direct refusals combined with a number of apologetic phrases and incorporated cultural symbols and address terms to mitigate their position and express respect. Through their frequent use of shared experiences, such as urgency and queue etiquette, they reinforced collective values and minimized potential face threats. Conversely, EFL participants showed a more straightforward style with simplified structures where they often depended on direct refusals and apologies without the same level of cultural contextualization. In their responses, they showed an adaptation of Saudi norms within English proficiency constraints and expressed solidarity through kinship terms rather than elaborate explanations. ESL participants, while sharing similar cultural beliefs, displayed more advanced English abilities and used a mixture of politeness and justification when dealing with refusals. Many of their responses include multiple apologies and a focus on personal constraints, which illustrates sensitivity to social complexities while preserving cultural traditions. British participants exhibited a pragmatic approach that focused on clear explanations and fairness in social interactions as revealed by their references to queueing etiquette. Often, their responses

are a careful balance between politeness and assertiveness in a way that balances direct refusals with empathy and acknowledging the social context.

Structures of semantic formulas:

		1 Formula structure	Combination of 2 formulas	Combination of 3 formulas	Combination of 4 formulas	Combination of 5 formulas	Total
Saudi Arabic	Responses	8	12	6	3	1	30
	Structures	4	4	6	3	1	18
EFL	Responses	4	22	4	-	-	30
	Structures	1	4	3	-	-	8
ESL	Responses	7	17	6	-	-	30
	Structures	2	5	5	-	-	12
British	Responses	-	1	22	5	2	30
	Structures	-	1	6	5	2	14

Table 6.3. All participants' semantic formulas structures results (refusal situation 1)

Results show that Saudi Arabic participants used the highest number of semantic formula structures (18), followed by British participants (14), and ESL participants (12) while EFL participants used the lowest number of structures (8). Saudi Arabic used the most diverse range of semantic formulas structures followed by British participants. EFL and ESL participants used a lower range of semantic formula structures, primarily single formulas and combinations of 2, and 3 formulas. Saudi Arabic participants used a range of structures including single formulas and combinations of 2, 3, 4, and 5 semantic formulas. British participants expressed their refusals using combinations of 2, 3, 4, and 5 semantic formulas. While Saudi Arabic and British participants displayed broader structural diversity, the British group stood out for their high usage of 3 formulas combinations while Saudi Arabic were different in using single formulas as a complete refusal. Conversely, the EFL and ESL participants appeared to exhibit a comparatively narrower range, particularly in their utilization of multiple semantic formulas, indicating a relatively limited ability in constructing refusals structures compared to the other control groups. Having explained the overall results, a detailed illustration of each group is crucial in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the data.

6.2.1.Saudi Arabic responses:

6.2.1.1.Types of semantic formulas:

The total number of semantic formulas used by Saudi Arabic participants is 68. The most frequently used semantic formula is Excuse/reason/explanation, which was used 26 times with a percentage of 38.2%. As the second most used semantic formula, Regret formula was employed 23 times with a 33.8%. The semantic formulas of Negative willingness/ability and Offering alternative were used 5 times each with a percentage of 7.3%. The semantic formula of No was used 4 times with a percentage of 5.8%. The semantic formulas of Statement of philosophy and Positive feeling/appreciation were used 2 times with a percentage of 2.9%. The semantic formula of Acceptance as a refusal was used once with a percentage of 1.4% and the semantic formula of Future acceptance/promise was not used by Saudi Arabic participants.

6.2.1.2.Structures of semantic formulas:

In the first refusal situation, Saudi Arabic participants used 18 different semantic formula structures. These structures differed, ranging from single formulas to combinations of 2, 3, 4, and 5 formulas. For individual refusal responses, participants, for example, employed the formulas of No and Negative willingness/ability individually to provide a complete refusal response. In instances where two semantic formulas were combined for a complete response, participants employed 4 different structures. For example, they combined Regret with Excuse/reason/explanation or Regret with Offering alternative. When formulating responses with three semantic formulas, Saudi Arabic participants used 6 different structures in 6 responses. This involved combinations like Regret with Negative willingness/ability and Excuse/reason/explanation or Regret with Excuse/reason/explanation and Offering alternative. For responses comprising four semantic formulas, participants used three different structures in three responses. For instance, they combined Regret with Excuse/reason/explanation, Negative willingness/ability, and Positive feeling/appreciation. In cases where a complete response required five semantic formulas, participants utilized one specific structure in one response. This structure included combining Regret with Excuse/reason/explanation, Offering alternative,

another Regret and another Excuse/reason/explanation. Table 6.4 provides examples of Saudi Arabic semantic formula structures in this scenario.

Formulas Structure	Example
Single formula	لا! No! ما أقدر! I can't!
Combination of 2 formulas	اعتذر منك، + بس حاول تكون في الطابور لو سمحت! I am sorry, + please try to stay in line. انا مستعجل جدا، + اعتذر منك! I'm in a hurry, + I apologize.
Combination of 3 formulas	اعتذر منك، + كلنا مستعجلين، + بإمكانك ان تصف بالدور. I apologize, + we're all in a hurry. + You can wait your turn in line. لا! + انا اسف، + بس إني مستعجل. No! + I'm sorry, + but I'm in a hurry.
Combination of 4 formulas	اسف. + ما أقدر، + مستعجل جدا. + ما يمديها. I'm sorry. + I can't, + I'm in a big hurry. + I won't be able. والله معلش! + صف طابور معنا! + يزعلون الاخرين، + ولا على العين والراس. I'm sorry swear to Allah! + But please wait in line with us! + Others might get upset, + even though you're on the eye and the head.
Combination of 5 formulas	معلش أخوي، + مستعجل الصراحة، + تقدر تشوف اللي وراي! + اعذرنى، + ولكني مره احتاج أخلص بسرعة. Sorry brother, + but I'm really in a hurry. + You can check with the people behind me! + I apologize, + but I really need to finish quickly.

Table 6.4. Saudi Arabic participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 1)

6.2.2.EFL responses:

6.2.2.1.Types of semantic formulas:

In this scenario, EFL participants employed a total of 61 semantic formulas to formulate their responses. Among these, the most frequently used formula was Excuse/reason/explanation

appearing 23 times, accounting for 44.2% of the total. Next, the Negative willingness/ability formula was the second most commonly used, being used 21 times and representing 34.4%. The Regret formula was used 14 times, making up 22.9%. The Offering alternative formula was utilized 3 times, comprising 4.9% of the total. EFL participants did not employ the semantic formulas of No, Future acceptance/promise, Statement of philosophy, Acceptance as a refusal, or Positive feeling/appreciation in their refusals to this situation.

6.2.2.2. Structures of semantic formulas:

EFL participants employed 8 different semantic formula structures when making refusals. These structures consisted of single formulas and combinations of 2, and 3 formulas. For single refusals responses, the semantic formula Negative willingness/ability was used four times by EFL participants. When combining two semantic formulas for complete refusal responses, participants used 4 different structures in 22 responses. For instance, they paired Regret with Negative willingness/ability and Regret with Excuse/reason/explanation. In constructing responses with three semantic formulas, participants used 3 different structures in 4 responses. Examples included combining Regret with Negative willingness/ability and Offering alternative or Regret with Negative willingness/ability and Excuse/reason/explanation. Table 6.5 shows examples of EFL participants' semantic formula structures.

Formulas Structure	Example
Single formula	I can't I cannot do it.
Combination of 2 formulas	Sorry + but I am in a hurry. I am sorry. + Take your place in the line!
Combination of 3 formulas	I am sorry. + I am in a hurry. + I can't. Brother I can't. + I am very busy. + You can ask someone to take his place.

Table 6.5. EFL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 1)

6.2.3.ESL responses:

6.2.3.1.Types of semantic formulas:

ESL participants used a total of 60 semantic formulas in this situation. The formula of Excuse/reason/explanation was used 27 times with a percentage of 45%. The formula of Regret was employed by ESL participants 17 times with a 18.3% and is the second most commonly used semantic formula. The semantic formula of Negative willingness/ability was used by ESL participants 11 times in this situation with a percentage of 18.3%. The semantic formula of Offering alternative was employed 3 times with a percentage of 5% and the semantic formula of Positive feeling/appreciation was employed 2 times with a percentage of 3.3%. ESL participants did not employ the semantic formulas of No, Future acceptance/promise, Statement of philosophy, or Acceptance as a refusal in their refusals to this situation.

6.2.3.2.Structures of semantic formulas:

For the first refusal scenario, ESL participants used 12 distinct semantic formula structures. These structures comprised individual formulas and combinations of 2, and 3 formulas. In individual refusal responses, the semantic formula of Regret and Negative willingness/ability were employed individually 7 times by ESL participants. Combining two semantic formulas for complete refusal responses, participants employed five different structures in 17 responses. For instance, they paired Regret with Excuse/reason/explanation and Regret with Negative willingness/ability. In constructing responses with three semantic formulas, participants utilized 5 different structures in 6 responses. Examples included combining Regret with Positive feeling/appreciation and Excuse/reason/explanation or Regret with Negative willingness/ability and Excuse/reason/explanation. Table 6.6 provides examples of ESL participants' semantic formula structures.

Formulas Structure	Example
Single formula	I am sorry. I cannot.
Combination of 2 formulas	Sorry! + I can't wait long time in queue. I am extremely sorry + but I am in a rush.
Combination of 3 formulas	Sorry! + I want to help you + but I'm in a hurry. Sorry + I am in a hurry + and it is rude to cross the whole queue.

Table 6.6. ESL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 1)

6.2.4. British English responses:

6.2.4.1. Types of semantic formulas:

In this situation, British participants used 98 semantic formulas to express their responses. Among these, the Excuse/reason/explanation formula was the most frequently utilized, being used 45 times, accounting for 45.9% of the total. The Regret formula was second in frequency, used 32 times, constituting 32.6%. The Offering alternative formula was employed 7 times, representing 7.1%, while the Acceptance as a refusal formula was utilized 5 times, with a percentage of 5.1%. The No formula was employed 4 times, making up 4%. The Positive feeling/appreciation formula was employed 3 times, representing 3%, while the Negative willingness/ability formula was utilized 2 times, with a percentage of 2%. British participants did not employ the semantic formulas of Future acceptance/promise and Statement of philosophy in their refusals to this situation.

6.2.4.2. Structures of semantic formulas:

British participants made refusals employing a total of 14 distinct semantic formula structures. These structures included combinations of 2, 3, 4, and 5 semantic formulas. In responses containing two semantic formulas, one structure was used in one response where they mixed Regret with Excuse/reason/explanation. Moving on to three-formula responses, participants used 6 different structures in 22 responses. Examples included combining Regret with

Excuse/reason/explanation and Offering alternative as well as No with Regret and Excuse/reason/explanation. Regarding the four semantic formula structures, 5 different structures were used in 5 responses. Instances of these structures comprised combining No with Regret, Excuse/reason/explanation, and Offering alternative as well as Regret with Excuse/reason/explanation, another Excuse/reason/explanation, and Offering alternative. For complete refusal responses involving five semantic formulas, two different structures were found in 2 responses. An example is combining No with Regret, Excuse/reason/explanation, another Excuse/reason/explanation, and Offering alternative. Another example is combining Regret with Excuse/reason/explanation, Offering alternative, another Regret, and Acceptance as a refusal. Table 6.7 presents examples of British semantic formula structures used in this situation.

Formulas Structure	Example
Combination of 2 formulas	Sorry! + I'm in a hurry at the moment.
Combination of 3 formulas	I'm really sorry + but I have been waiting a really long time. + I hope that's okay. Sorry, + I'm really in a hurry + and I was here first.
Combination of 4 formulas	Normally I would let you + but I am in such a rush today. + Really need to pay and get out! + So sorry! Sorry + but I've been waiting for ages already + and I'm in a rush. + Try and squeeze in behind me!
Combination of 5 formulas	No! + Sorry! + I've been waiting here + and I'm also in a hurry. + Just join the queue like everybody else! I'm so sorry + but I'm in such a rush! + Are there any other check outs you could maybe join? + Sorry! + Any other day would have been fine but today the clock's against me.

Table 6.7. British participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 1)

6.3.Situation of refusal (Wedding)

“ Imagine that while you were completing pending tasks that you had to finish as soon as possible, you received a message from a sibling inviting you to attend their wedding which will take place in two weeks. You have many outstanding responsibilities and obligations that do not accept delay or postponement, forcing you to send a message refusing to attend the wedding.”

Situation	Wedding
Speaker's role	Refuser (Sibling)
Hearer's role	Refused (Sibling)
Ranking of imposition	High R
Social distance	Low D
Power	(S=H)

Table 6.8. Situation of refusal (2) in the Discourse Completion Task.

Types of semantic formulas:

Formulas	Frequency			
	Saudi Arabic	EFL	ESL	British English
I. No	0	0	0	0
II. Negative willingness/ability	9	24	15	10
III. Regret	29	11	22	36

IV. Excuse/reason/explanation	34	27	34	51
V. Offering alternative	0	0	0	1
VI. Future acceptance/promise	4	0	0	1
VII. Statement of philosophy	5	0	0	0
VIII. Acceptance as a refusal	6	0	0	13
IX. positive feeling/appreciation	14	8	6	12
Total of formulas	101	70	77	124

Table 6.9. Frequency of all groups' semantic formulas (refusal situation 2)

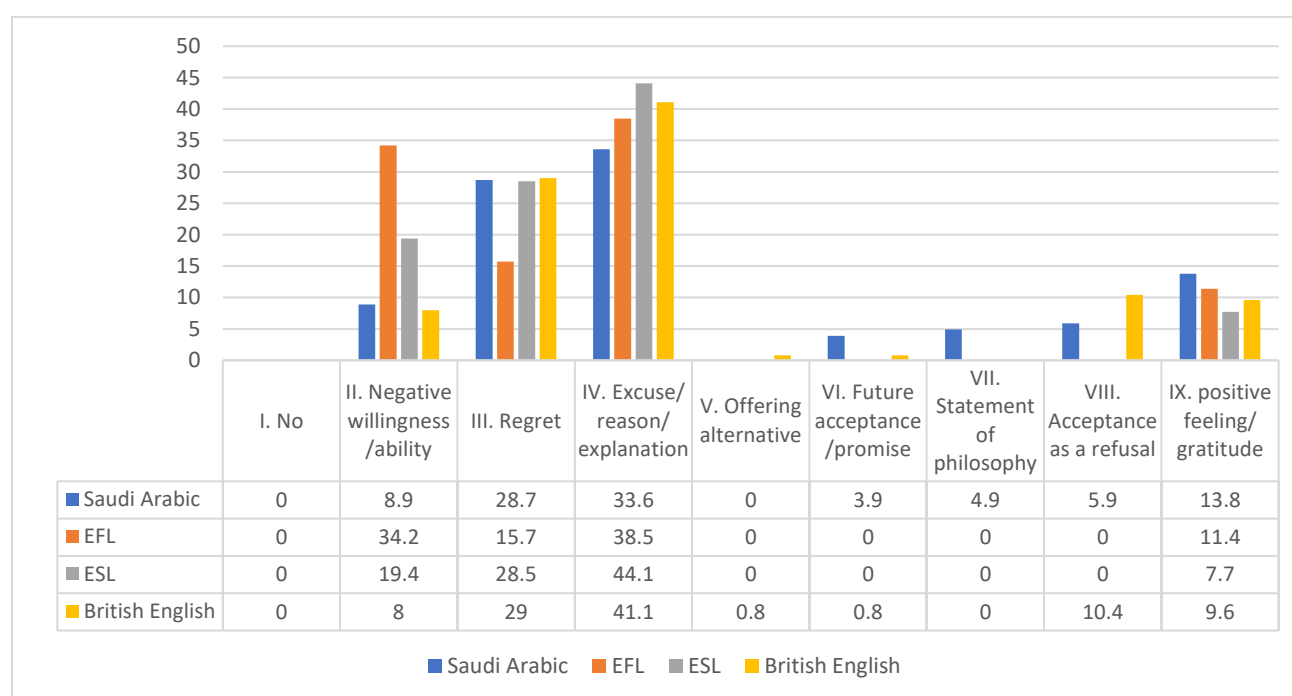


Figure 6.2. Frequency percentages of all groups' semantic formulas (refusal situation 2)

There were 372 semantic formulas used by all participants in this situation. Results show differences in the semantic formula usage across the various participant groups, with British participants showing a high usage of semantic formulas (124), while Saudi Arabic participants used less semantic formulas (101) in this situation. ESL and EFL participants used lower number

of semantic formulas with a total of 77 and 70. The semantic formula of Excuse/reason/explanation was utilized prominently across all participant groups. Saudi Arabic participants employed it 34 times, constituting 33.6% of their total semantic formulas. EFL participants showcased a close percentage, employing the semantic formula of Excuse/reason/explanation formula 27 times, representing 38.5% of their formulas. ESL participants employed this formula 34 times, making up 44.1% of their semantic usage. British participants highly used the semantic formula of Excuse/reason/explanation 51 times, comprising 41.1% of their total usage.

The Regret formula was also highly used with different levels of employment. Saudi Arabic participants utilized it 29 times, accounting for 28.7% of their formulas. EFL participants employed the Regret 11 times, representing 15.7% of their semantic formulas. ESL participants used this formula 22 times, constituting 28.5% of their total usage. British participants showcased a higher usage, employing the Regret formula 36 times, representing 29% of their semantic formulas. Negative willingness/ability emerged as another notable formula used across the participant groups. Saudi Arabic participants utilized it 9 times, comprising 8.9% of their semantic formulas. EFL participants employed the Negative willingness/ability formula 24 times, representing 34.2% of their formulas. ESL participants used it 15 times, making up 19.4% of their total usage. British participants showcased employment as well, using the Negative willingness/ability formula 10 times, comprising 8% of their formulas. The Offering alternative formula appeared with less employment. British English participants employed it once, representing 0.8% of their semantic formulas. It was not used at all by the other groups in this refusal situation. In addition, all participants did not use the semantic formula of No in this situation. The semantic formula of Future acceptance/promise was used by Saudi Arabic 4 times (3.9%) and British participants once (0.8%). The Statement of philosophy semantic formula was only used by Saudi Arabic participants 5 times (4.9%). Saudi Arabic participants used the semantic formula of Acceptance as a refusal 6 times, making up 5.9% of their semantic formulas. British participants used the semantic formula of Acceptance as a refusal 13 times, accounting for 10.4% of their semantic formulas. EFL and ESL participants did not use the semantic formula of Acceptance as a refusal. Saudi Arabic participants used the positive feeling/appreciation formula

14 times, representing 13.8% of their semantic formulas. EFL participants showcased a usage as well with 8 instances, making up 11.4% of their formulas. ESL participants used it 6 times, making up 7.7% of their formulas. British participants employed the positive feeling/appreciation formula 12 times, comprising 9.6% of their semantic formulas.

The responses of Saudi Arabic participants to wedding invitations show a unique cultural approach to refusals, which is influenced by respect, solidarity, and avoiding direct confrontation. When refusals are expressed, they are often balanced with religious expressions, familial terms, and positive expressions that minimize any face-threatening consequences. For example, direct refusals such as "ما أقدر اجي + لان عندي اشغال كثيرة" (I can't come + as I have a lot to do) are mitigated by the inclusion of apologies and justifications. By using external factors, such as "الظروف تمنعني" (circumstances prevent me), the speaker shifts the emphasis from personal choice to external factors, which helps to maintain the listener's positive face. Furthermore, religious references such as "والله يا حبيب اخوك + وراي التزامات كثيرة" (By Allah, your brother loves you + I have many obligations) express truthfulness and humility and the mention of Allah highlights the speaker's consideration of social and religious norms. Terms of kinship such as "أخوي" (my brother) or warm phrases like "يا بعدي" (my beloved) contribute to maintaining solidarity and minimizing the impact of refusal. For instance, "إعذر وسامح يا بعدي" (Excuse me and forgive me, my love!) emphasizes the importance of close relationships by shifting the tone from outright rejection to forgiveness. Even when refusing, Saudi Arabic participants frequently use congratulatory expressions, such as "الف مبروك الزواج" (Congratulations on the wedding!), which convey positivity and contribute to social cohesion. In addition, the promise of future commitment, such as "لكن اوعدك أني بجيك بعد" (I promise you that I will come to you a few days after the wedding to congratulate you), further minimizes the consequences of the refusal and illustrates the cultural significance of maintaining long-term relationships. In general, these strategies illustrate the deep-rooted values of humility, respect, and social cohesion in Saudi culture.

Conversely, EFL participants, on the one hand, show a more straightforward and less complex approach to refusals due to their limited English proficiency and cultural norms. Although their responses are often in the same tone as Saudi Arabic speakers, there is a lack of cultural contextualization in their responses. For instance, a refusal like "Sorry! + I can't attend the

wedding" shows straightforwardness along with a simple apology but contains no additional explanation or expression of solidarity. Similar to that, statements such as "Congrats! + I wish you all the best. + Sorry! + I can't come to your wedding" indicate an effort to balance the refusal with positive wishes, but their approach remains relatively formulaic. Rather than a lack of politeness, this briefness may be considered a result of linguistic limitations as participants depend on the familiar structures in order to express regret and maintain social harmony. Interestingly, EFL participants do use terms of kinship, such as "Brother I am ready. + Sorry + but I can't come," which indicates the incorporation of Saudi cultural norms into their English responses. This use of "Brother" shows the effect of native cultural norms, which imply respect and solidarity, despite the fact that the language used is not native. Nevertheless, the lack of more sophisticated face-saving strategies, including more detailed justifications or future engagement promises, underscores how language proficiency limitations hinder or restrict the capability to effectively convey politeness strategies rooted in cultural norms. Even with these limitations, the use of apologies and positive wishes by EFL participants illustrates their desire to maintain relationships and social harmony.

Saudi ESL participants, on the other hand, show a more complex use of politeness strategies that merge cultural norms with higher levels of language proficiency. Many of their responses begin with an apology, such as "I am really sorry. + I can't come," which is a way of decreasing the impact of the refusal through negative politeness. ESL participants often include justifications to divert attention away from them, such as "I am sorry for not attending the wedding + because I have work to finish". When they frame their refusals around external constraints, like "I have many obligations I cannot postpone," ESL participants manage to save their own face as well as the hearer's face, which shows a level of social awareness supported by linguistic ability. Moreover, ESL participants frequently use congratulatory language, such as "Congratulations on your wedding! + I am so sorry for not being able to attend," which underscores Saudi culture's reliance on positive affirmation. Statements such as "Thank you for inviting me! + I am very pleased for you + but I cannot come + because I have other responsibilities" demonstrate a genuine effort to combine regret with gratitude, which indicates both linguistic and cultural competence. Through the use of qualifiers such as "I wish I could" or "Sorry again!", Saudi ESL

participants demonstrate their genuineness and sympathy, which makes their refusals less impactful. This sophisticated blend of politeness strategies, cultural norms, and language proficiency allows ESL participants to become more adept at navigating Saudi and English-speaking social interactions.

British participants, by contrast, show a pragmatic and thoroughly structured perspective to refusals that is marked clearly by justifications and regrets. For instance, responses such as "I'm really, really sorry + but I don't think I can come. + I've got too much work" indicate directness combined with empathy. The use of personal reasons, such as "I've just got so much on at the moment", is a face-saving strategy used by participants to justify their refusal while remaining polite. Justifications such as these are in line with cultural norms that prioritize individual accountability and respect for social order. British participants' responses always consist of apologies, such as "I am so so sorry + but I can't make it + due to all my deadlines in the next week". Repeating apologies along with qualifiers like "I wish I could be there," shows sincerity and regret, which underscores the speaker's commitment to building positive relationships. Additionally, some British participants offered alternatives, such as "I'll send over my gift + and I sincerely congratulate you," which shows their willingness to contribute even when they cannot attend the wedding. This highlights a culture that places importance on practical solutions and upholding social obligations even under challenging circumstances. Using expressions such as "Unfortunately, I won't be able to attend + due to prior obligation" shows the significance of adhering to social expectations, especially in contexts like wedding invitations. When refusals are framed within the context of external factors, participants become less dismissive or indifferent, which helps achieve a balance between assertiveness and politeness.

To conclude, comparing refusal strategies among Saudi Arabic, EFL, ESL, and British participants shows important differences in politeness methods, face-saving strategies, and cultural norms. Through religious expressions, kinship terms, and positive affirmations, Saudi Arabic participants show respect, humility, and solidarity, while EFL participants depend on simplified structures that mirror their linguistic constraints, but maintain cultural characteristics like terms of kinship. ESL participants show a more sophisticated integration of politeness strategies and cultural norms, which combines language proficiency with cultural awareness. British participants, on the other

hand, use a pragmatic and structured method that is centered around clear justifications and sympathy.

Structures of semantic formulas:

		Combination of 2 formulas	Combination of 3 formulas	Combination of 4 formulas	Combination of 5 formulas	Combination of 6 formulas	Combination of 10 formulas	Total
Saudi Arabic	Responses	12	10	5	3	-	-	30
	Structures	3	5	3	2	-	-	13
EFL	Responses	19	10	1	-	-	-	30
	Structures	4	5	1	-	-	-	10
ESL	Responses	18	9	3	-	-	-	30
	Structures	4	3	2	-	-	-	9
British	Responses	-	16	7	4	2	1	30
	Structures	-	5	4	2	2	1	14

Table 6.10. All participants' semantic formulas structures results (refusal situation 2)

Results show that British participants used the highest number of semantic formula structures (14), followed closely by Saudi Arabic participants (13), and EFL participants (10) while ESL participants used the lowest number of structures (9). British participants used the most diverse range of semantic formulas structures followed by Saudi Arabic participants. EFL and ESL participants used a lower range of semantic formula structures, primarily combinations of 2, 3, and 4 formulas. British participants expressed their refusals using combinations of 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10 semantic formulas. Saudi Arabic participants used a range of structures including combinations of 2, 3, 4, and 5 semantic formulas. While Saudi Arabic and British participants displayed broader structural diversity, the British group stood out for their usage of 3, 6, and 10 formulas combinations while Saudi Arabic were different in using the combination of 2 formulas as a complete refusal. In contrast, the EFL and ESL participants appeared to exhibit a comparatively narrower range, particularly in their utilization of multiple semantic formulas,

indicating a relatively limited ability in constructing refusals structures compared to the other control groups. Having explained the overall results, a detailed illustration of each group is crucial in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the data.

6.3.1.Saudi Arabic responses:

6.3.1.1.Types of semantic formulas:

The total number of semantic formulas used by Saudi Arabic participants is 101. The most frequently used semantic formula is Excuse/reason/explanation, which was used 34 times with a percentage of 33.6%. As the second most used semantic formula, Regret formula was employed 29 times with a 28.7%. The semantic formula of Negative willingness/ability was used 9 times with a percentage of 8.9%. The Positive feeling/appreciation was employed 14 times with a 13.8%.The semantic formulas of Statement of philosophy was used 5 times with a percentage of 4.9%. The Positive feeling/appreciation was employed 14 times with a 13.8%. The semantic formula of Acceptance as a refusal was used 6 times with a percentage of 5.9% and the semantic formula of Future acceptance/promise was used 4 times with a percentage of 3.9%. The semantic formulas of No and Offering alternative were not used by Saudi Arabic participants.

6.3.1.2.Structures of semantic formulas:

In the second refusal situation, Saudi Arabic participants used 13 different semantic formula structures. These structures differed, ranging from combinations of 2, 3, 4, and 5 formulas. In instances where two semantic formulas were combined for a complete response, participants employed 3 different structures in 12 responses. For example, they combined Regret with Negative willingness/ability or Negative willingness/ability with Excuse/reason/explanation. When formulating responses with three semantic formulas, Saudi Arabic participants used 5 different structures in 10 responses. This involved combinations like Positive feeling/appreciation with Regret and Excuse/reason/explanation or Positive feeling/appreciation with another Positive feeling/appreciation and Negative willingness/ability. For responses comprising four semantic formulas, participants used three different structures in five responses. For instance,

they combined Regret with Excuse/reason/explanation, Positive feeling/appreciation, and Future acceptance/promise. As another example, they combined Positive feeling/appreciation with another Positive feeling/appreciation, another Positive feeling/appreciation, and Regret. In cases where a complete response required five semantic formulas, participants utilized 2 different structures in three responses. This included combining Regret with another Regret, Excuse/reason/explanation, another Excuse/reason/explanation, and Statement of philosophy as well as combining Regret with Excuse/reason/explanation, Statement of philosophy, Future acceptance/promise, and Positive feeling/appreciation. Table 6.11 provides examples of Saudi Arabic semantic formula structures in this scenario.

Formulas Structure	Example
Combination of 2 formulas	اعتذر، + ولكن لا يمكنني الحضور. I apologize, + but I can't attend. ما أقدر احي + لان عندي اشغال كثيرة. I can't come + as I have a lot to do.
Combination of 3 formulas	والله يا حبيب اخوك + وراي التزامات كثيرة. + العذر من الله ثم منك. By Allah, your brother love + I have many obligations. + The apology is from Allah and then from you. عزيزي وحيبي اخوي! + ألف مبروك الزواج! + بس والله اني مقدر احضر. My dear and beloved brother! + Congratulations on the wedding! + But I swear to Allah I can't attend.
Combination of 4 formulas	مبروك الزواج أخوي! + انا والله اعتذر لأنني لن أكون أحد الحضور. + لدي الكثير من الاعمال الشاقة، + لكن اوعدك أني بجيك بعد الزواج بأيام لكي ابارك لك. Congratulations on your wedding, brother! + I swear to Allah I apologize that I won't be attending. + I have a lot of hard work, + but I promise you that I will come to you a few days after the wedding to congratulate you.

	ماشاء الله الله يبارك لك! + الله يبني بيتك + ويجعل منك المال ومنها العيال!، + اعتذر منك بشدة عن عدم مقدرتي على الحضور. Masha Allah may Allah bless you! + May Allah build your home + and make you rich and from her children! + I deeply apologize for not being able to attend.
Combination of 5 formulas	معلش أخوي، + العذر والسموحة والله!، + عندي اشغال كثيرة. + الظروف تمنعني. + لكن لعل في الامر خيرة. Excuse me, brother, + apologies and forgiveness I swear to Allah! + By Allah! I have a lot of work to do. + Circumstances prevent me. + But perhaps there is a good in this matter. اعذر وسامح يا بعدي!، + يعلم الله أنني مرتبط. + الدنيا ماهي على الكيف. + لكن ابشر بالعوض وانا اخوك + مع دعواتي لك بالتوفيق. Excuse me and forgive me, my love! + Allah knows that I am in business. + The world is not as it should be. + But be assured of compensation, and I am your brother + With my prayers for your success.

Table 6.11. Saudi Arabic participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 2)

6.3.2.EFL responses:

6.3.2.1.Types of semantic formulas:

In this scenario, EFL participants employed a total of 70 semantic formulas to formulate their responses. Among these, the most frequently used formula was Excuse/reason/explanation appearing 27 times, accounting for 38.5% of the total. Next, the Negative willingness/ability formula was the second most commonly used, being used 27 times and representing 34.2%. The Regret formula was used 11 times, making up 15.7%. EFL participants did not employ the semantic formulas of No, Offering alternative, Future acceptance/promise, Statement of philosophy, nor Acceptance as a refusal. The formula Positive feeling/appreciation was utilized 8 times, comprising 11.4% of their refusals to this situation.

6.3.2.2.Structures of semantic formulas:

EFL participants employed 10 different semantic formula structures when making refusals. These structures consisted of combinations of 2, 3, and 4 formulas. When combining two semantic formulas for complete refusal responses, participants used 4 different structures in 19 responses. For instance, they paired Regret with Negative willingness/ability and Regret with Excuse/reason/explanation. In constructing responses with three semantic formulas, participants used 5 different structures in 10 responses. Examples included combining Regret with Negative willingness/ability and Excuse/reason/explanation and Regret with Negative willingness/ability and Positive feeling/appreciation. In constructing responses with four semantic formulas, participants used 1 structure in 1 response. In which, they combined Positive feeling/appreciation with another Positive feeling/appreciation, Regret, and Negative willingness/ability. Table 6.12 shows examples of EFL participants' semantic formula structures.

Formulas Structure	Example
Combination of 2 formulas	I apologize. + I am busy. Sorry! + I have so many responsibilities to do.
Combination of 3 formulas	Sorry! + I am too busy. + I can't attend the wedding. Brother I am ready. + Sorry + but I can't come.
Combination of 4 formulas	Congrats! + I wish you all the best. + Sorry! + I can't come to your wedding.

Table 6.12. EFL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 2)

6.3.3.ESL responses:

6.3.3.1.Types of semantic formulas:

ESL participants used a total of 77 semantic formulas in this situation. The formula of Excuse/reason/explanation was used 34 times with a percentage of 44.1%. The formula of Regret

was employed by ESL participants 22 times with a 28.5% and is the second most commonly used semantic formula. The semantic formula of Negative willingness/ability was used by ESL participants 15 times in this situation with a percentage of 19.4%. The semantic formula of Positive feeling/appreciation was employed 6 times with a percentage of 7.7%. ESL participants did not employ the semantic formulas of No, Offering alternative, Future acceptance/promise, Statement of philosophy, or Acceptance as a refusal in their refusals to this situation.

6.3.3.2. Structures of semantic formulas:

For the second refusal scenario, ESL participants used 9 distinct semantic formula structures. These structures comprised combinations of 2, 3, and 4 formulas. Combining two semantic formulas for complete refusal responses, participants employed four different structures in 18 responses. For instance, they paired Regret with Excuse/reason/explanation and Regret with Negative willingness/ability. In constructing responses with three semantic formulas, participants utilized 3 different structures in 9 responses. Examples included combining Regret with Positive feeling/appreciation and Excuse/reason/explanation and Regret with Negative willingness/ability and Excuse/reason/explanation. In constructing responses with four semantic formulas, participants utilized 2 different structures in 3 responses. Examples included combining Positive feeling/appreciation with another Positive feeling/appreciation, Negative willingness/ability, and Excuse/reason/explanation as well as Negative willingness/ability with another Negative willingness/ability, Positive feeling/appreciation, and Regret. Table 6.13 provides examples of ESL participants' semantic formula structures.

Formulas Structure	Example
Combination of 2 formulas	I am really sorry. + I can't come. I am sorry for not attending the wedding + because I have work to finish.

Combination of 3 formulas	I am sorry! + I can't attend the wedding. + I have obligations I can't delay them. Congrats on your wedding! + I am so sorry for not being able to attend. + I have many obligations I cannot postpone.
Combination of 4 formulas	Thank you for inviting me! + I am very pleased for you + but I cannot come + because I have other responsibilities that cannot be postponed. I am unable to attend the wedding. + I wish I could. + I wish you the best. + Sorry again!

Table 6.13. ESL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 2)

6.3.4. British English responses:

6.3.4.1.Types of semantic formulas:

In this situation, British participants used 124 semantic formulas to express their responses. Among these, the Excuse/reason/explanation formula was the most frequently utilized, being used 51 times, accounting for 41.1% of the total. The Regret formula was second in frequency, used 36 times, constituting 29%. The Offering alternative formula was employed once, representing 0.8%, while the Acceptance as a refusal formula was utilized 13 times, with a percentage of 10.4%. The Positive feeling/appreciation formula was employed 12 times, representing 9.6%, while the Negative willingness/ability formula was utilized 10 times, with a percentage of 8%. The semantic formulas of Future acceptance/promise was employed once, representing 0.8%. British participants did not employ the No formula nor Statement of philosophy in their refusals to this situation.

6.3.4.2.Structures of semantic formulas:

British participants made refusals employing a total of 14 distinct semantic formula structures. These structures included combinations of 3, 4, 5, 6, and 10 semantic formulas. In responses

containing three semantic formulas, 5 structures were used in 16 responses where they mixed Regret with Excuse/reason/explanation and Positive feeling/appreciation as well as Negative willingness/ability with Regret and Excuse/reason/explanation. Moving on to four-formula responses, participants used 4 different structures in 7 responses. Examples included combining Positive feeling/appreciation with Regret, Excuse/reason/explanation, and Negative willingness/ability as well as Regret with Excuse/reason/explanation, Positive feeling/appreciation, and another Positive feeling/appreciation. Regarding the five semantic formulas structures, 2 different structures were used in 4 responses. These 2 structures comprised Negative willingness/ability with Regret, Excuse/reason/explanation, another Excuse/reason/explanation, and another Regret as well as Regret with Excuse/reason/explanation, Negative willingness/ability, another Excuse/reason/explanation, and Positive feeling/appreciation. For complete refusal responses involving six semantic formulas, two different structures were found in 2 responses. An example is combining Regret with Negative willingness/ability, Excuse/reason/explanation, another Negative willingness/ability, Future acceptance/promise, and Positive feeling/appreciation. The second example is combining Regret with Negative willingness/ability, another Negative willingness/ability, Excuse/reason/explanation, another Excuse/reason/explanation, and another Regret. For complete refusal responses involving 10 semantic formulas, one structure was found in 1 response. It included Regret with Excuse/reason/explanation, another Excuse/reason/explanation, another Excuse/reason/explanation, Negative willingness/ability, another Excuse/reason/explanation, Positive feeling/appreciation, another Positive feeling/appreciation, Acceptance as a refusal, and another Regret. Table 6.14 presents examples of British semantic formula structures used in this situation.

Formulas Structure	Example
Combination of 3 formulas	I'm really, really sorry + but I don't think I can come. + I've got too much work.

	I really appreciate the invite + but I've just got so much on at the moment + so I'm gonna have to say I can't come.
Combination of 4 formulas	I am so so sorry + but I can't make it + due to all my deadlines in the next week. + I wish I could be there. Unfortunately, I won't be able to attend + due to prior obligation. + I hope you have a wonderful day. + Good luck for everything in the future!
Combination of 5 formulas	I have to do this but I'm not going to be able to make it. + I am so so sorry. + It is just too short notice. + I can't get off my arrangements. + Again, so sorry! Sorry + I can't make it. + I'm really busy at work. + Have lots of tasks to complete ASAP. + Wish you the best though!
Combination of 6 formulas	I am so sorry + but I can't make it. + I have so much work on. + I just don't think I can make it. + I will let you know if anything changes though. + Have a great time! I am incredibly sorry + but I can't make your wedding. + I wish I could be there + but I just have so much work to do. + I can't get out of it either so it's compulsory that I get it all done on time. + I am so sorry.
Combination of 10 formulas	I am so sorry + but I have so much work right now. + It's been impossible. + The deadlines are really soon. + I don't think I can make it to the wedding. + I would just be stressed and really anxious over finishing these projects. + I'll send over my gift + and I sincerely congratulate you. + If there is a meetup after this I'd love to come then. + Sorry again!

Table 6.14. British participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 2)

6.4. Situation of refusal (Borrowing of a mobile phone)

“ Imagine that you were a student sitting in the library writing one of the essays that you were required to submit. A student came to you and asked you to give them your mobile phone because they needed to call a friend. As you have never met and don’t trust this student, you refused the request.”

Situation	Borrowing of a mobile phone
Speaker’s role	Refuser (Student)
Hearer’s role	Refused (Student)
Ranking of imposition	High R
Social distance	High D
Power	(S=H)

Table 6.15. Situation of refusal (3) in the Discourse Completion Task.

Types of semantic formulas:

Formulas	Frequency			
	Saudi Arabic	EFL	ESL	British English
I. No	7	0	2	13
II. Negative willingness/ability	15	28	21	11
III. Regret	26	8	14	29
IV. Excuse/reason/explanation	21	12	11	27

V. Offering alternative	5	0	3	15
VI. Future acceptance/promise	0	0	0	0
VII. Statement of philosophy	0	0	0	0
VIII. Acceptance as a refusal	0	0	0	0
IX. positive feeling/appreciation	10	0	5	0
Total of formulas	84	48	56	95

Table 6.16. Frequency of all groups' semantic formulas (refusal situation 3)

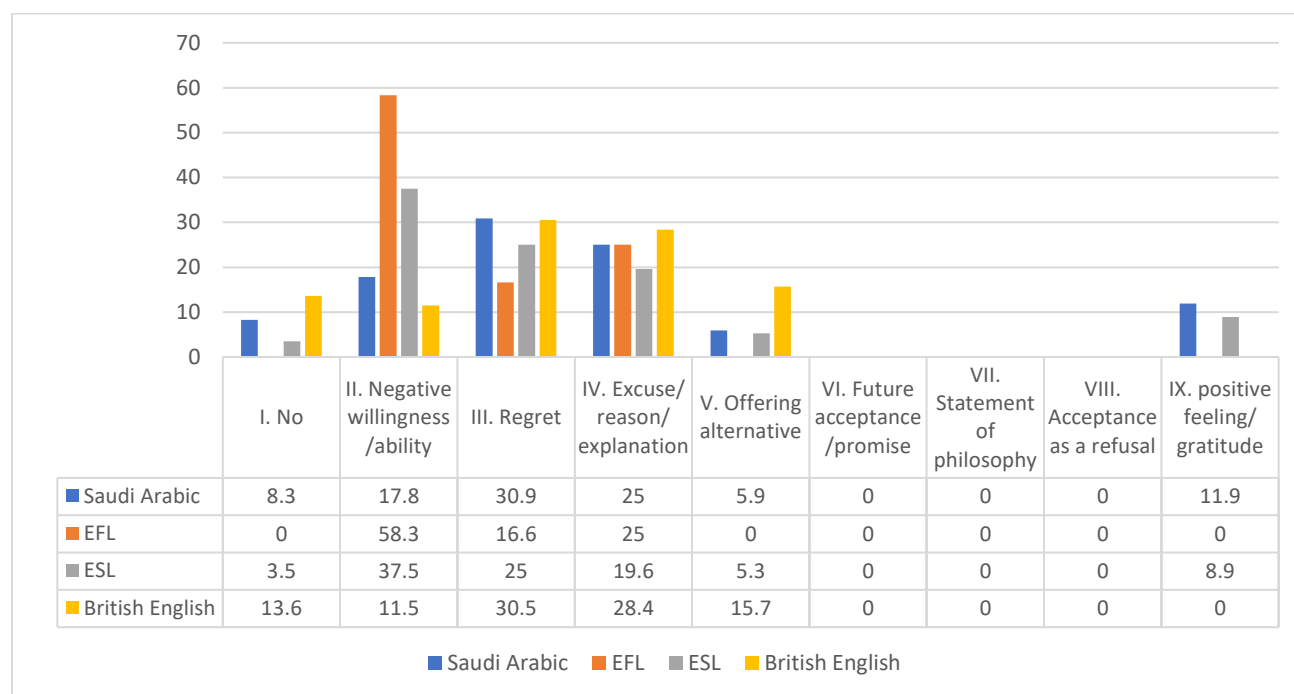


Figure 6.3. Frequency percentages of all groups' semantic formulas (refusal situation 3)

There were 283 semantic formulas used by all participants in this situation. Results show differences in the semantic formula usage across the various participant groups, with British participants showing a high usage of semantic formulas (95), while Saudi Arabic participants used less semantic formulas (84) in this situation. ESL and EFL participants used lower number of semantic formulas with a total of 56 and 48. The semantic formula of Excuse/reason/explanation

was utilized prominently across all participant groups. Saudi Arabic participants employed it 21 times, constituting 25% of their total semantic formulas. EFL participants showcased an identical percentage, employing the semantic formula of Excuse/reason/explanation formula 12 times, representing 25% of their formulas. ESL participants employed this formula 11 times, making up 19.6% of their semantic usage. British participants highly used the semantic formula of Excuse/reason/explanation 27 times, comprising 28.4% of their total usage.

The Regret formula was also highly used with different levels of employment. Saudi Arabic participants utilized it 26 times, accounting for 30.9% of their formulas. EFL participants employed the Regret 8 times, representing 16.6% of their semantic formulas. ESL participants used this formula 14 times, constituting 25% of their total usage. British participants showcased a higher usage, employing the Regret formula 29 times, representing 30.5% of their semantic formulas. Negative willingness/ability emerged as another notable formula used across the participant groups. Saudi Arabic participants utilized it 15 times, comprising 17.8% of their semantic formulas. EFL participants employed the Negative willingness/ability formula 28 times, representing 58.3% of their formulas. ESL participants used it 21 times, making up 37.5% of their total usage. British participants showcased employment as well, using the Negative willingness/ability formula 11 times, comprising 11.5% of their formulas. The Offering alternative formula appeared with less employment. British English participants employed it 15 times, representing 15.7% of their semantic formulas. Saudi Arabic participants employed it 5 times, representing 5.9% of their semantic formulas. ESL participants employed it 3 times, representing 5.3% of their semantic formulas. It was not used at all by EFL participants in this refusal situation. Saudi Arabic participants used the semantic formula of No 7 times, making up 8.3% of their semantic formulas. British participants used the semantic formula of No 13 times, accounting for 13.6% of their semantic formulas. ESL participants used the semantic formula of No twice, accounting for 3.5% of their semantic formulas. EFL participants did not use the semantic formula of No. Saudi Arabic participants used the positive feeling/appreciation formula 10 times, representing 11.9% of their semantic formulas. ESL participants used it 5 times, making up 8.9% of their formulas. British and EFL participants did not employ the positive feeling/appreciation formula in this refusal situation. The semantic formulas of Future acceptance/promise,

Acceptance as a refusal, and The Statement of philosophy were not used by all participants in this refusal situation.

The responses from Saudi Arabic participants reveal culturally rooted refusals, including face-saving strategies, politeness, and expressions of solidarity. Many refusals depend on external factors such as "ما فيه شحن" (No battery charge) or "ما عندي رصيد" (I don't have credit), which draw attention away from personal unwillingness and instead put the focus on external constraints, minimizing the possibility of face threats. Furthermore, many refusals incorporate apologetic and warm language, such as "يا حبيبي" (Oh my dear!) and "يا أخوي الغالي" (My dear brother!), which serve to maintain social harmony and promote warm relationships. The use of religious expressions such as "معليش والله" (Sorry, I swear to Allah!) further illustrates the cultural focus on humbleness and esteem. Some refusals, such as "ولا كان ابشر بالسعد" (Otherwise, I would have gladly helped), reinforce social solidarity and soften the refusal by being open to assistance under different circumstances. These strategies describe a high-context style where implicit meanings, relational closeness, and indirect refusals are important in mitigating face-threatening acts.

Saudi EFL participants used a more direct but still polite approach, influenced by their growing pragmatic competence in English. Even though some refusals include expressions such as "Sorry!" and "I can't give my mobile," they often lack the complex social mitigation strategies seen in Saudi Arabic. In addition, the emphasis is more on personal agency, as demonstrated by the phrase "I can't give you my phone. I need it," which places the refusal firmly on personal preferences rather than factors outside one's control. Moreover, statements like "I don't know who you are. I can't give you my phone" demonstrate concerns about personal safety, a viewpoint less explicitly addressed in Saudi Arabic responses. The individualistic tone in these responses is clearly seen in a way that is different from Saudi Arabic responses.

Saudi ESL participants show a slightly more sophisticated application of politeness strategies, using both direct refusals and apologetic mitigations. However, the responses they provide, similar to EFL participants, are usually brief and direct, such as "I am sorry. I can't give you my phone," but they also try to illustrate their refusals through explanations like "but I need my mobile phone.". As in Saudi EFL responses, it is apparent that personal justifications are taking

precedence over external excuses, as seen in "I can't. You can ask someone else to help you," which maintains politeness while redirecting the request. Despite similarities to EFL participants, the ESL participants' inclusion of indirect alternatives indicates an increased understanding of pragmatics in English by balancing assertiveness with social consideration. However, the responses do not have the richness of cultural expressions found in Saudi Arabic discourse, suggesting adaptation to more direct influenced forms of communication.

By contrast, British participants tend to use an assertive yet polite approach, emphasizing personal boundaries and comfort. Direct responses such as "No!" and "Sorry, No!" are more common, reflecting a cultural preference to value clear and practical responses while still showing politeness through regrets. Refusals such as "I don't feel comfortable letting you use my phone" and "I don't really know you" introduce clear personal restrictions in a way that conveys the importance of individual privacy and security. Furthermore, justifications such as "I've been using my phone to help with the research of this essay" or "The battery is very low and I need it later" indicate a tendency to justify oneself rationally, which is consistent with negative politeness strategies that emphasize personal necessity while acknowledging the imposition. Some refusals, such as "Ask somebody else!" direct the requester to alternative solutions while signaling helpfulness. In general, British responses are direct, autonomous, and polite, consistent with low-context styles that emphasize explicit reasoning and individual needs.

When comparing the four groups, Saudi Arabic participants employ relational language, cultural expressions, and external justifications heavily when softening refusals and maintaining social harmony. Saudi EFL and ESL participants, while still polite, demonstrate a more direct approach, probably due to their English proficiency and adaptation to English pragmatics. British participants, in contrast, prefer clarity and individual autonomy while being polite through apologies and justifications. There is an interplay between language, culture, and pragmatics in refusal strategies, with high-context cultures such as Saudi Arabia emphasizing social harmony and indirectness, and low-context cultures such as Britain emphasizing directness, boundaries, and explicit reasoning. The analysis of refusals strategies across Saudi Arabic, Saudi EFL, Saudi ESL, and British participants sheds light on crucial cultural and linguistic differences that have lasting implications for pragmatic competence development in EFL contexts. In order to maintain

social harmony and minimize threats, Saudi Arabic participants usually use indirect refusals, external justifications, and expressions of solidarity. Despite this being effective within their cultural context, Saudi EFL learners tend to simplify their responses, losing the politeness strategies embedded in their native language during the transition to English. While their refusals may be functional, in certain English-speaking contexts they may come across as abrupt, as they frequently use direct statements like "I can't give my mobile" or "I don't know who you are.". It is crucial to expose them to more subtle refusal strategies balancing politeness with directness, such as indirect refusals, hedging, and alternative strategies.

Saudi ESL participants employ more advanced politeness conventions, integrating apologies and justifications, however, their responses are comparatively short and lack a degree of detail. While British participants skillfully blend politeness markers, personal justifications, and clear refusals, Saudi ESL might benefit from more pragmatic awareness of how native English speakers manage face-threatening situations. EFL learners could improve their pragmatic competence by incorporating justifications and discourse softeners, such as using phrases like "I wish I could help, but..." or "I'm really sorry, but I need my phone for..." instead of direct refusals. As part of enhancing EFL learners' pragmatic competence, educators need to provide explicit instruction on cultural variations in politeness strategies, provide contextualized exposure to native English refusals, and encourage role-play activities that simulate real-life interactions. By doing so, EFL learners will be able to balance politeness and assertiveness effectively to ensure their refusals in English are both socially acceptable and effective. It will help them navigate diverse communicative contexts more easily, reducing the risk of being overly direct or rude while still maintaining clarity and confidence.

Structures of semantic formulas:

		Single formula	Combination of 2 formulas	Combination of 3 formulas	Combination of 4 formulas	Total
Saudi Arabic	Responses	5	19	5	1	30
	Structures	1	3	3	1	8

EFL	Responses	8	18	4	-	30
	Structures	2	2	1	-	5
ESL	Responses	4	15	11	-	30
	Structures	2	3	1	-	6
British	Responses	1	7	17	5	30
	Structures	1	3	4	4	12

Table 6.17. All participants' semantic formulas structures results (refusal situation 3)

Results show that British participants used the highest number of semantic formula structures (12), followed by Saudi Arabic participants (8), and ESL participants (6) while EFL participants used the lowest number of structures (5). British participants and Saudi Arabic participants used the most diverse range of semantic formulas. EFL and ESL participants used a lower range of semantic formula structures, primarily single formulas and combinations of 2, 3, and 4 formulas. British participants expressed their refusals using a single formula and combinations of 2, 3, and 4 semantic formulas. Similarly, Saudi Arabic participants used a range of structures including a single formula and combinations of 2, 3, and 4 semantic formulas. While Saudi Arabic and British participants displayed broader structural diversity, the British group stood out for their higher usage of 4 formulas combinations while Saudi Arabic were different in their higher usage of the combination of 2 formulas as a complete refusal. In contrast, the EFL and ESL participants appeared to exhibit a comparatively narrower range, particularly in their utilization of multiple semantic formulas, indicating a relatively limited ability in constructing refusals structures compared to the other control groups. Having explained the overall results, a detailed illustration of each group is crucial in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the data.

6.4.1. Saudi Arabic responses:

6.4.1.1. Types of semantic formulas:

The total number of semantic formulas used by Saudi Arabic participants is 84. The most frequently used semantic formula is Regret, which was used 26 times with a percentage of 30.9%.

As the second most used semantic formula, Excuse/reason/explanation formula was employed 21 times with 25%. The semantic formula of Negative willingness/ability was used 15 times with a percentage of 17.8%. Positive feeling/appreciation was employed 10 times with 11.9%. The semantic formulas of No was used 7 times with a percentage of 8.3%. The Offering alternative was employed 5 times with a 5.9%. The semantic formulas of Statement of philosophy, Future acceptance/promise, and Acceptance as a refusal were not used by Saudi Arabic participants in this situation.

6.4.1.2. Structures of semantic formulas:

In the third refusal situation, Saudi Arabic participants used 8 different semantic formula structures. These structures differed, ranging from single formulas and combinations of 2, 3, and 4 formulas. For individual refusal responses, participants employed the formula of Excuse/reason/explanation individually in five responses to provide a complete refusal response. In instances where two semantic formulas were combined for a complete response, participants employed 3 different structures in 19 responses. For example, they combined Regret with Negative willingness/ability or Negative willingness/ability with Excuse/reason/explanation. When formulating responses with three semantic formulas, Saudi Arabic participants used 3 different structures in 5 responses. This involved combinations like Positive feeling/appreciation with Regret and Excuse/reason/explanation or No with Positive feeling/appreciation and Negative willingness/ability. For responses comprising four semantic formulas, participants used one structure in one response. In which, they combined Regret with Excuse/reason/explanation, Positive feeling/appreciation, and another Regret. Table 6.18 provides examples of Saudi Arabic semantic formula structures in this scenario.

Formulas Structure	Example
Single formula	ما فيه شجن.

	No battery charge. ما عندي رصيد. I don't have credit.
Combination of 2 formulas	انا اسف، + ولكن الهاتف لا يوجد فيه شحن. I'm sorry, + but the phone has no charge. ما عندي شريحة. + ولا كان ابشر بالسعد. I don't have a SIM card. + Otherwise, I would have gladly helped.
Combination of 3 formulas	يا حبيبي! + انا اعتذر منك. + ما أقدر اعطيك اياه. Oh my dear! + I apologize to you. + I can't give it to you. اسف! + جوالي ما فيه رصيد + ولا تبشر. Sorry! + My phone has no credit. + Otherwise, I would have gladly helped.
Combination of 4 formulas	العذر والسموحة! + يا أخوي الغالي! + بس ما عندي خدمة اتصال. + معليش والله! Apologies and forgive me! + My dear brother! + I just don't have any signal. + Sorry, really!

Table 6.18. Saudi Arabic participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 3)

6.4.2.EFL responses:

6.3.2.1.Types of semantic formulas:

In this scenario, EFL participants employed a total of 48 semantic formulas to formulate their responses. Among these, the most frequently used formula was Negative willingness/ability appearing 28 times, accounting for 58.3% of the total. Next, the Excuse/reason/explanation formula was the second most commonly used, being used 12 times and representing 25%. The Regret formula was used 8 times, making up 16.6%. EFL participants did not employ the semantic formulas of No, Offering alternative, Future acceptance/promise, Positive feeling/appreciation, Statement of philosophy, nor Acceptance as a refusal.

6.4.2.2.Structures of semantic formulas:

EFL participants employed 5 different semantic formula structures when making refusals. These structures consisted of single formulas and combinations 2, and 3 formulas. For individual refusal responses, participants employed the formulas of Excuse/reason/explanation and Negative willingness/ability individually in 8 responses to provide a complete refusal response. When combining two semantic formulas for complete refusal responses, participants used 2 different structures in 18 responses. For instance, they paired Excuse/reason/explanation with Negative willingness/ability and Excuse/reason/explanation with another Excuse/reason/explanation. In constructing responses with three semantic formulas, participants used one structure in 4 responses. It included combining Regret with Negative willingness/ability and Excuse/reason/explanation. Table 6.19 shows examples of EFL participants' semantic formula structures.

Formulas Structure	Example
Single formula	My phone is closed. I can't give my mobile.
Combination of 2 formulas	I don't know who you are. + I can't give you my mobile. I can't give you my phone. + I have something to write.
Combination of 3 formulas	Sorry! + I can't. + And the battery is 1%. Sorry! + I can't give you my phone. + I need it.

Table 6.19. EFL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 3)

6.4.3.ESL responses:

6.4.3.1.Types of semantic formulas:

ESL participants used a total of 56 semantic formulas in this situation. The formula of Negative willingness/ability was used 21 times with a percentage of 37.5%. The formula of Regret was

employed by ESL participants 14 times with a 25% and is the second most commonly used semantic formula. The semantic formula of Excuse/reason/explanation was used by ESL participants 11 times in this situation with a percentage of 19.6%. The semantic formula of Positive feeling/appreciation was employed 5 times with a percentage of 8.9%. The semantic formula of No was employed twice with a percentage of 3.5% and the formula of Offering alternative was employed by ESL participants 3 times with a 5.3%. ESL participants did not employ the semantic formulas of Future acceptance/promise, Statement of philosophy, or Acceptance as a refusal in their refusals to this situation.

6.4.3.2. Structures of semantic formulas:

For the third refusal scenario, ESL participants used 6 distinct semantic formula structures. These structures comprised single formulas and combinations of 2, and 3 formulas. Regarding individual refusal responses, participants employed the formulas of Regret and Negative willingness/ability individually in 4 responses to provide a complete refusal response. Combining two semantic formulas for complete refusal responses, participants employed 3 different structures in 15 responses. For instance, they paired Regret with Excuse/reason/explanation and Regret with Negative willingness/ability. In constructing responses with three semantic formulas, participants utilized one structure in 11 responses. It included combining Regret with Negative willingness/ability and Offering alternative. Table 6.20 provides examples of ESL participants' semantic formula structures.

Formulas Structure	Example
Single formula	I am sorry. I can't give you my phone.
Combination of 2 formulas	I am sorry + but I need my mobile phone. Sorry! + I can't.
Combination of 3 formulas	I can't + I am sorry. + Find another way.

	I am sorry. + I can't. + You can ask someone else to help you.
--	--

Table 6.20. ESL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 3)

6.4.4. British English responses:

6.4.4.1. Types of semantic formulas:

In this situation, British participants used 95 semantic formulas to express their responses. Among these, the Regret formula was the most frequently utilized, being used 29 times, accounting for 30.5% of the total. The Excuse/reason/explanation formula was second in frequency, used 27 times, constituting 28.4%. The Offering alternative formula was employed 15 times, representing 15.7%. The Negative willingness/ability formula was utilized 11 times, with a percentage of 11.5%. The No formula was utilized 13 times, with a percentage of 13.6%. British participants did not employ the formulas of Future acceptance/promise, Positive feeling/appreciation, Acceptance as a refusal formula, and Statement of philosophy in their refusals to this situation.

6.4.4.2. Structures of semantic formulas:

British participants made refusals employing a total of 12 distinct semantic formula structures. These structures included a single formula and combinations of 2, 3, and 4 semantic formulas. Regarding individual refusal responses, British participants employed the formula of No individually in one response to provide a complete refusal response. Combining two semantic formulas for complete refusal responses, participants employed 3 different structures in 7 responses. For example, they paired Regret with Excuse/reason/explanation and Regret with Negative willingness/ability. In responses containing three semantic formulas, 4 structures were used in 17 responses where they mixed Regret with Excuse/reason/explanation and Positive feeling/appreciation as well as Negative willingness/ability with Regret and Excuse/reason/explanation. Moving on to four-formula responses, participants used 4 different structures in 5 responses. Examples included combining Positive feeling/appreciation with Regret, Excuse/reason/explanation, and Negative willingness/ability as well as Regret with

Excuse/reason/explanation, Positive feeling/appreciation, and another Excuse/reason/explanation. Table 6.21 presents examples of British semantic formula structures used in this situation.

Formulas Structure	Example
Single formula	No!
Combination of 2 formulas	Sorry, + No! I'm sorry, + I don't feel comfortable letting you use my phone.
Combination of 3 formulas	Ah sorry, + I've been using my phone to help with the research of this essay + so I need it. Sorry + but I don't really know you. + I don't feel comfortable lending my phone to a stranger.
Combination of 4 formulas	Sorry! + No! + Can't do it. + Ask somebody else! No! + I'm sorry. + I can't lend you my phone. + The battery is very low and I need it later.

Table 6.21. British participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 3)

6.5.Situation of refusal (Organizing an event)

" Imagine that, during your volunteer work in a volunteer organization, one of the volunteers, with whom you have a good relationship and mutual respect, invited you to participate with them in organizing a new event that they will supervise. Unfortunately, you were busy with too many missions and could not participate. So, you refused his invitation."

Situation	Organizing an event
Speaker's role	Refuser (Volunteer)

Hearer's role	Refused (Volunteer)
Ranking of imposition	Low R
Social distance	Low D
Power	(S=H)

Table 6.22. Situation of refusal (4) in the Discourse Completion Task.

Types of semantic formulas:

Formulas	Frequency			
	Saudi Arabic	EFL	ESL	British English
I. No	0	0	0	0
II. Negative willingness/ability	11	23	25	9
III. Regret	28	10	14	26
IV. Excuse/reason/explanation	26	17	21	32
V. Offering alternative	2	0	7	11
VI. Future acceptance/promise	6	0	4	10
VII. Statement of philosophy	0	0	0	0
VIII. Acceptance as a refusal	0	0	0	0
IX. positive feeling/appreciation	17	0	5	10
Total of formulas	90	50	76	98

Table 6.23. Frequency of all groups' semantic formulas (refusal situation 4)

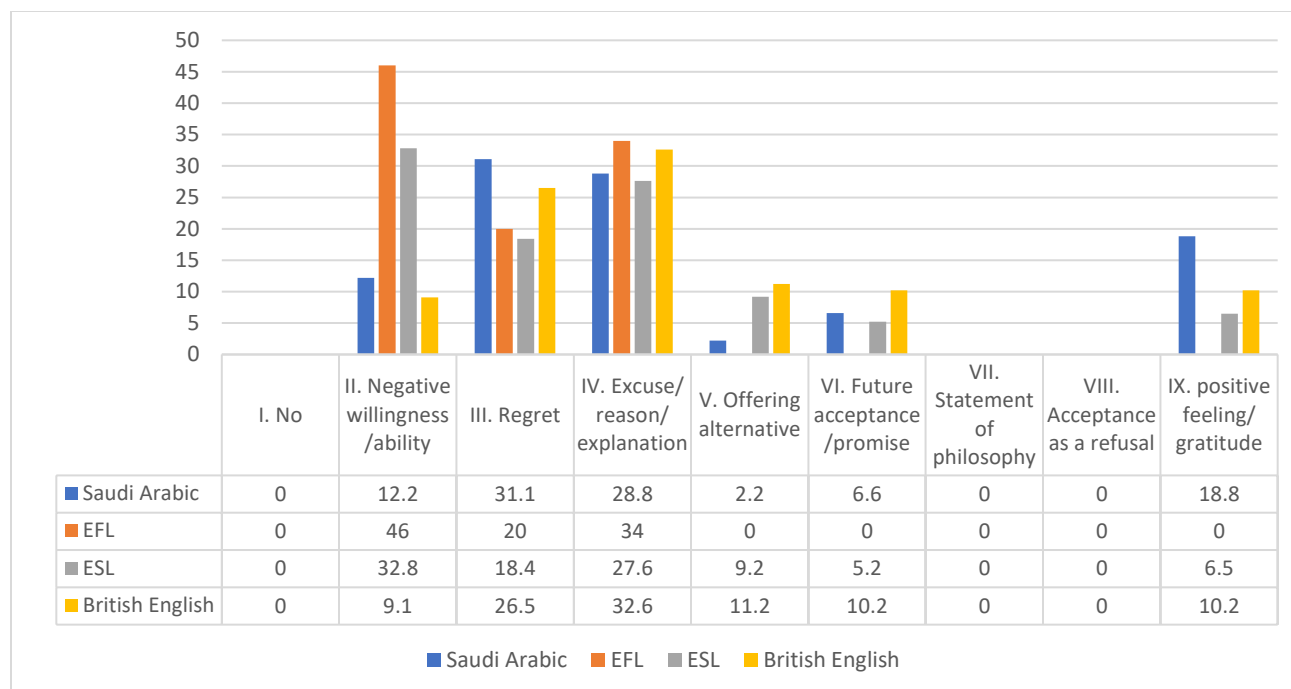


Figure 6.4. Frequency percentages of all groups' semantic formulas (refusal situation 4)

There were 314 semantic formulas used by all participants in this situation. Results show differences in the semantic formula usage across the various participant groups, with British participants showing a higher usage of semantic formulas (98), while Saudi Arabic participants used less semantic formulas (90) in this situation. ESL and EFL participants used lower number of semantic formulas with a total of 76 and 50. The semantic formula of Excuse/reason/explanation was utilized prominently across all participant groups. Saudi Arabic participants employed it 26 times, constituting 28.8% of their total semantic formulas. EFL participants employed the semantic formula of Excuse/reason/explanation formula 17 times, representing 34% of their formulas. ESL participants employed this formula 21 times, making up 27.6% of their semantic usage. British participants highly used the semantic formula of Excuse/reason/explanation 32 times, comprising 32.6% of their total usage.

The Regret formula was also highly used with different levels of employment. Saudi Arabic participants utilized it 28 times, accounting for 31.1% of their formulas. EFL participants employed the Regret 10 times, representing 20% of their semantic formulas. ESL participants used this formula 14 times, constituting 18.4% of their total usage. British participants employed

the Regret formula 26 times, representing 26.5% of their semantic formulas. Negative willingness/ability emerged as another notable formula used across the participant groups. Saudi Arabic participants utilized it 11 times, comprising 12.2% of their semantic formulas. EFL participants employed the Negative willingness/ability formula 23 times, representing 46% of their formulas. ESL participants used it 25 times, making up 32.8% of their total usage. British participants showcased employment as well, using the Negative willingness/ability formula 9 times, comprising 9.1% of their formulas. The Offering alternative formula appeared with less employment. Saudi Arabic participants utilized it twice, comprising 2.2% of their semantic formulas. ESL participants used it 7 times, making up 9.2% of their total usage. British English participants employed it 11 times, representing 11.2% of their semantic formulas. It was not used at all by EFL participants in this refusal situation. The Future acceptance/promise formula was also used with different levels of employment. Saudi Arabic participants utilized it 6 times, comprising 6.6% of their semantic formulas. ESL participants used it 4 times, making up 5.2% of their total usage. British English participants employed it 10 times, representing 10.2% of their semantic formulas. It was not used at all by EFL participants in this refusal situation. Saudi Arabic participants used the positive feeling/appreciation formula 17 times, representing 18.8% of their semantic formulas. ESL participants used it 5 times, making up 6.5% of their formulas. British participants employed the positive feeling/appreciation formula 10 times, comprising 10.2% of their semantic formulas. It was not used at all by EFL participants in this refusal situation. In addition, all participants did not use the semantic formulas of No, Statement of philosophy, and Acceptance as a refusal in this situation.

The responses produced by Saudi Arabic participants in this situation show strong adherence to collectivist cultural values, particularly with regard to the saving of positive face and the expression of affiliation with the inviter. The constant usage of religious expressions such as "والله" (I swear to Allah) and "الله يرحم والديك" (May Allah have mercy on your parents) illustrates how religion is embedded in social interaction. Furthermore, the employment of warm terms such as "يا بعدي" (my dear) and "انا اخوك" (I'm your brother) further reinforces the role of solidarity, warmth, and closeness in refusals. It aligns with Saudi culture, where giving endearment, expressing emotional connection, and committing to the future softens the refusal.

In addition, indirectness is present in these responses as Saudi Arabic participants are cautious when responding with a blunt “no”. Rather, refusals are built through a combination of different mitigation strategies, such as excuses (e.g., "عندي شغل والله" – I have work, I swear to Allah) (e.g., "لو ما كان عندي اشغال مهمة أخلصها كان شاركت معك" – If I didn’t have important tasks, I would have participated) and self-deprecation (e.g., "ودّي اخدمك بعيوني" – I wish I could serve you with my eyes). They demonstrate a high degree of sensitivity to an invitee's face, as well as an effort to mitigate the potential impact of a refusal. Interestingly, the use of intensifiers such as "والله" (I swear to Allah) and "اعذرنا يطول عمرك" (forgive us, may you live long) are indicative of sociocultural emphasis on maintaining social harmony and saving the inviter's positive face. A further indication of this is the use of formulaic closing remarks such as "استودعك الله" (I entrust you to Allah) and "الله يرحم والديك" (may Allah have mercy on your parents), which demonstrate culturally established politeness and commitment to positive relations in the future. In general, Saudi Arabic participants manage refusals while maintaining social harmony and minimizing offenses using indirectness, deference, and the strategic employment of religious and communal expressions. Nevertheless, cultural differences can make these strategies difficult to communicate in intercultural contexts, particularly when dealing with low-context cultures.

The responses provided by Saudi EFL participants show noticeable patterns of pragmatic transfer from their L1, which resulted in formulaic, repetitive, and relatively limited refusal strategies. The most common characteristics seen in EFL refusals include the overuse of simple refusals (e.g., “I am sorry, I can’t come”) and minimal excuse elaboration. This tendency indicates a lower level of pragmatic competence as EFL participants are restricted by their linguistic capabilities, which forces them to use simple and direct formulations as a means of conveying their refusals. The lack of detailed language, apology upgrades, or face-saving strategies indicates that EFL participants are yet to develop a sophisticated knowledge of L2 refusal strategies. Additionally, the lack of formalized politeness strategies, such as indirect refusals or solidarity expressions, shows the gap in socio-pragmatic competence.

Another observable characteristic is the lack of empathy expressions toward the inviter, possibly due to a lack of exposure to L2 sociopragmatic norms. In Arabic refusals, participants show excessive flattery, religious expressions, and social alignment in order to save face. In contrast,

in EFL refusals, linguistic barriers and lack of sociocultural skills lead to refusals that may be interpreted as blunt or impolite in the target context. Based on the overall pattern of refusals, it seems that Saudi EFL participants have not achieved a high level of pragmatic competence. Despite their ability to formulate refusals, they need strategic linguistic flexibility to integrate politeness strategies, indirectness, and mitigation devices to significantly minimize the face-threatening impact of refusal. This highlights the pedagogical necessity for instructional intervention to develop their refusal strategies and pragmatic competence in English.

The responses provided by ESL participants show clear improvement in linguistic capabilities as well as a moderate level of pragmatic competence. In contrast to EFL participants, ESL participants displayed more employment of indirectness and politeness strategies (e.g., “I wish I can help but I have a lot on my plate”). This demonstrates their increasing familiarity with target language pragmatic norms, enabling them to formulate responses that are less direct and more face-saving. Compared to EFL participants, there is a clear difference in how much ESL participants use softeners such as “I hope you understand me” or “I’m really sorry, I won’t be able to make it”. A closer look at this shows that ESL participants are more aware of face-management when handling refusals. It can also be observed that ESL participants use repetitive apology structures, which reflect a British tendency for over apologizing in order to minimize the face-threatening effect of the act. Moreover, the use of conditionals (e.g., “I would if I could”) and formulaic closing remarks (e.g., “I hope it goes well though”) indicates a growing shift in pragmatic norms toward L2. As this development illustrates, ESL participants' pragmatic competence is in a clear transition phase.

British participants demonstrate a strong reliance on negative politeness strategies in their refusals, where they are primarily concerned with minimizing the imposition on the inviter while maintaining a sense of social distance. In contrast to Saudi Arabic refusals, which place emphasis on affiliation, solidarity, and face-enhancing, British participants' responses place emphasis on autonomy, individualism, and indirectness. This can be clearly seen in the consistent use of mitigators (e.g., “I’d love to, but I’ve got loads of stuff to do”) and the use of apologies (e.g., “I’m so sorry though, I have a lot to work on right now”). A critical aspect of their refusals is the strategic use of future involvement markers, such as “let me know if I can help in the future” or

“I’d really love to get involved later”. By doing this, the speaker conveys his reluctance without imposing guilt on the interlocutor or harming his face, thus demonstrating an advanced level of pragmatic competence. Furthermore, the tendency for British participants to prioritize task-oriented refusals over relational refusals (e.g., “I already have commitments”) emphasizes British culture’s preference for autonomy. In addition, it is notable that no emotion-laden language is used, no religious references are included, and there is no overt flattery shown. A sharp contrast exists here to Saudi Arabic refusals, in which refusals are steeped in emotional closeness and social alignment. British English refusals, which lack these features, can be attributed to low-context styles of expression, where meaning is conveyed explicitly, not through social inference as it is the case in Saudi Arabic refusals.

In a comparative analysis, it is clear that Saudi Arabic refusals are deeply rooted in collectivist cultural values that emphasize social closeness, face-saving, and affiliation. Several factors contribute to this, including indirectness, religious invocations, and elaborate expressions of regret. Conversely, British refusals are characterized by low context, negative politeness, and autonomy, with offers of future involvement as a way to mitigate the refusal. EFL participants struggle to navigate the pragmatic gap which results in various pragmatically different refusals in English. In contrast, ESL participants seem to have improved pragmatic competence as they balance indirectness with the use of culturally appropriate language in their refusals. Nevertheless, better pragmatic competence remains difficult to achieve without continued exposure and explicit instruction.

Structures of semantic formulas:

		Single formula	Combination of 2 formulas	Combination of 3 formulas	Combination of 4 formulas	Combination of 5 formulas	Combination of 6 formulas	Total
Saudi Arabic	Responses	3	7	10	7	3	-	30
	Structures	2	4	4	3	2	-	15
EFL	Responses	3	20	7	-	-	-	30

	Structures	2	2	1	-	-	-	5
ESL	Responses	-	7	18	5	-	-	30
	Structures	-	4	3	3	-	-	10
British	Responses	-	-	11	14	4	1	30
	Structures	-	-	4	3	4	1	12

Table 6.24. All participants' semantic formulas structures results (refusal situation 4)

Results show that Saudi Arabic participants used the highest number of semantic formula structures (15), followed closely by British participants (12), and ESL participants (10) while EFL participants used the lowest number of structures (5). Saudi Arabic participants used the most diverse range of semantic formulas structures followed by British participants. EFL and ESL participants used a lower range of semantic formula structures, primarily single formulas and combinations of 2, 3, and 4 formulas. British participants expressed their refusals using combinations of 3, 4, 5, and 6 semantic formulas. Saudi Arabic participants used a range of structures including single formulas and combinations of 2, 3, 4, and 5 semantic formulas. While Saudi Arabic and British participants displayed broader structural diversity, the British group stood out for their usage of 6 formulas combinations while Saudi Arabic were different in using single formula and using the combination of 2 formulas as a complete refusal. In contrast, the EFL and ESL participants appeared to exhibit a comparatively narrower range, particularly in their utilization of multiple semantic formulas, indicating a relatively limited ability in constructing refusals structures compared to the other control groups. Having explained the overall results, a detailed illustration of each group is crucial in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the data.

6.5.1.Saudi Arabic responses:

6.5.1.1.Types of semantic formulas:

The total number of semantic formulas used by Saudi Arabic participants is 90. The most frequently used semantic formula is Regret, which was used 28 times with a percentage of 31.1%. As the second most used semantic formula, Excuse/reason/explanation formula was employed

26 times with a 28.8%. Positive feeling/appreciation formula was employed 17 times with a 18.8%. The semantic formula of Negative willingness/ability was used 11 times with a percentage of 12.2%. The semantic formula of Future acceptance/promise was used 6 times with a percentage of 6.6%. The semantic formulas of Offering alternative were used twice with a percentage of 2.2%. The semantic formulas of No, Acceptance as a refusal, and Statement of philosophy were not used by Saudi Arabic participants.

6.5.1.2. Structures of semantic formulas:

In the fourth refusal situation, Saudi Arabic participants used 15 different semantic formula structures. These structures differed, ranging from single formulas and combinations of 2, 3, 4, and 5 formulas. For individual refusal responses, participants employed the formulas of Regret and Excuse/reason/explanation 3 times individually to provide a complete refusal response. In instances where two semantic formulas were combined for a complete response, participants employed 4 different structures in 7 responses. For example, they combined Regret with Negative willingness/ability or Negative willingness/ability with Excuse/reason/explanation. When formulating responses with three semantic formulas, Saudi Arabic participants used 4 different structures in 10 responses. This involved combinations like Positive feeling/appreciation with Regret and Excuse/reason/explanation or Positive feeling/appreciation with Future acceptance/promise and Negative willingness/ability. For responses comprising four semantic formulas, participants used three different structures in 7 responses. For instance, they combined Regret with Excuse/reason/explanation, Positive feeling/appreciation, and Future acceptance/promise. As another example, they combined Positive feeling/appreciation with another Positive feeling/appreciation, Excuse/reason/explanation, and Regret. In cases where a complete response required five semantic formulas, participants utilized 2 different structures in three responses. This included combining Regret with another Regret, Excuse/reason/explanation, Positive feeling/appreciation, and another Positive feeling/appreciation as well as combining Regret with Excuse/reason/explanation, Positive feeling/appreciation, another Positive feeling/appreciation, and another Positive feeling/appreciation. Table 6.25 provides examples of Saudi Arabic semantic formula structures in this scenario.

Formulas Structure	Example
Single formula	اعتذر. I apologize. اسف بشدة. I'm deeply sorry.
Combination of 2 formulas	انا اسف، + ما أقدر أشارك والله العظيم. I'm sorry, + I swear to Allah I can't participate. اعتذر منك. + الجايات اكثر وانا اخوك. I apologize to you. + The coming ones are more, and I'm your brother.
Combination of 3 formulas	ما أقدر. + عندي شغل والله. + اعتذر منك. I can't. + I have work, I swear to Allah. + I apologize to you. اعتذر منك! + والله تبشر. + لو ما كان عندي اشغال مهمة . I apologize to you! + I swear to Allah with pleasure. + If I didn't have important tasks to finish, I would've participated with you.
Combination of 4 formulas	اسف! + ودي اخدمك بعيوني. + لكن عندي التزامات مهمة. + أتمنى ان تعذرني يا اخي الغالي. I'm sorry! + I wish I could serve you with my eyes. + But I have important commitments. + I hope you can forgive me, my dear brother. يالأمير! + اعذرنا يطول عمرك! + عندي ارتباطات ولا كان جيتك. + الله يرحم والديك. Oh, prince! + Please forgive us, may you live long! + I have commitments, otherwise, I would've come to you. + May Allah have mercy on your parents.
Combination of 5 formulas	حبيبي! + والله أنى مشغول. + تشرفني المشاركة. + الشرف لأنك حاط يدك على العمل. + استودعك الله!

	My dear! + I swear to Allah I'm busy. + It would be an honor to participate. + The honor is mine for you having your hand on the work. + I entrust you to Allah! موفق خير! + الواجب والله أكون معك. + بس عندي اشغال يا بعدي. + اعتذر منك. + اتمنى لك الخير يعلم الله! May you be successful in good! + It's my duty, I swear to Allah, to be with you. + But I have tasks, my dear. + I apologize to you. + I wish you all the best, Allah knows!
--	---

Table 6.25. Saudi Arabic participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 4)

6.5.2.EFL responses:

6.5.2.1.Types of semantic formulas:

In this scenario, EFL participants employed a total of 50 semantic formulas to formulate their responses. Among these, the most frequently used formula was Negative willingness/ability appearing 23 times, accounting for 46% of the total. Next, the Excuse/reason/explanation formula was the second most commonly used, being used 17 times and representing 34%. The Regret formula was used 10 times, making up 20%. EFL participants did not employ the semantic formulas of No, Offering alternative, Future acceptance/promise, Positive feeling/appreciation, Statement of philosophy, nor Acceptance as a refusal.

6.5.2.2.Structures of semantic formulas:

EFL participants employed 5 different semantic formula structures when making refusals. These structures consisted of single formulas and combinations of 2 and 3 formulas. For single refusals responses, the semantic formulas of Regret and Excuse/reason/explanation were used 3 times individually by EFL participants. When combining two semantic formulas for complete refusal responses, participants used 2 different structures in 20 responses. They paired Regret with Negative willingness/ability and Regret with Excuse/reason/explanation. In constructing responses with three semantic formulas, participants used 1 structure in 7 responses. It included

combining Regret with Negative willingness/ability and Excuse/reason/explanation. Table 6.26 shows examples of EFL participants' semantic formula structures.

Formulas Structure	Example
Single formula	I am sorry. I am busy with many missions.
Combination of 2 formulas	I have many missions in my day. + My day is not free to come with you. I am very sorry. + I am so busy so much.
Combination of 3 formulas	Sorry my friend! + I can't come. + I am so busy. I really want to come with you! + but I have to do a lot of things. + I am really sorry.

Table 6.26. EFL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 4)

6.5.3.ESL responses:

6.5.3.1.Types of semantic formulas:

ESL participants used a total of 76 semantic formulas in this situation. The formula of Excuse/reason/explanation was used 21 times with a percentage of 27.6%. The formula of Regret was employed by ESL participants 14 times with a 18.4%. The semantic formula of Negative willingness/ability was used by ESL participants 25 times in this situation with a percentage of 32.8%. The semantic formula of Positive feeling/appreciation was employed 5 times with a percentage of 6.5%. The semantic formula of Offering alternative was used by ESL participants 7 times in this situation with a percentage of 9.2%. The semantic formula of Future acceptance/promise was employed 4 times with a percentage of 5.2%. ESL participants did not employ the semantic formulas of No, Statement of philosophy, or Acceptance as a refusal in their refusals to this situation.

6.5.3.2. Structures of semantic formulas:

For the second refusal scenario, ESL participants used 10 distinct semantic formula structures. These structures comprised combinations of 2, 3, and 4 formulas. Combining two semantic formulas for complete refusal responses, participants employed four different structures in 7 responses. For instance, they paired Regret with Excuse/reason/explanation and Regret with Negative willingness/ability. In constructing responses with three semantic formulas, participants utilized 3 different structures in 18 responses. Examples included combining Regret with Positive feeling/appreciation and Excuse/reason/explanation and Regret with Negative willingness/ability and Excuse/reason/explanation. In constructing responses with four semantic formulas, participants utilized 3 different structures in 5 responses. Examples included combining Positive feeling/appreciation with Offering alternative, Negative willingness/ability, and Excuse/reason/explanation as well as Negative willingness/ability with Excuse/reason/explanation, Positive feeling/appreciation, and Regret. Table 6.27 provides examples of ESL participants' semantic formula structures.

Formulas Structure	Example
Combination of 2 formulas	Sorry for not doing it! + I don't have time. I wish I can help + but I have a lot on my plate at the moment.
Combination of 3 formulas	I am sorry. + I am so busy. + I am not able to participate with you. Sorry! + I can't be with you. + I have a lot to do.
Combination of 4 formulas	Sorry! + I will not be able. + I have missions to do at this time. + I hope you understand me. I'm sorry. + I won't be able to make it + because I have too many missions. + I hope it goes well though.

Table 6.27. ESL participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 4)

6.5.4. British English responses:

6.5.4.1. Types of semantic formulas:

In this situation, British participants used 98 semantic formulas to express their responses. Among these, the Excuse/reason/explanation formula was the most frequently utilized, being used 32 times, accounting for 32.6% of the total. The Regret formula was second in frequency, used 26 times, constituting 26.5%. The Offering alternative formula was employed 11 times, representing 11.2%. The Positive feeling/appreciation formula was employed 10 times, representing 10.2%, while the Negative willingness/ability formula was utilized 9 times, with a percentage of 9.1%. The semantic formulas of Future acceptance/promise was employed 10 times, representing 10.2%. British participants did not employ the No formula, Acceptance as a refusal nor Statement of philosophy in their refusals to this situation.

6.5.4.2. Structures of semantic formulas:

British participants made refusals employing a total of 12 distinct semantic formula structures. These structures included combinations of 3, 4, 5, and 6 semantic formulas. In responses containing three semantic formulas, 4 structures were used in 11 responses where they mixed Regret with Excuse/reason/explanation and Positive feeling/appreciation as well as Negative willingness/ability with Regret and Excuse/reason/explanation. Moving on to four-formula responses, participants used 3 different structures in 14 responses. Examples included combining Positive feeling/appreciation with Regret, Excuse/reason/explanation, and Negative willingness/ability as well as Regret with Excuse/reason/explanation, Positive feeling/appreciation, and another Excuse/reason/explanation. Regarding the five semantic formulas structures, 4 different structures were used in 4 responses. These structures comprised Future acceptance/promise with Regret, Excuse/reason/explanation, another Excuse/reason/explanation, and another Regret as well as Regret with Excuse/reason/explanation, Offering alternative, another Excuse/reason/explanation, and Positive feeling/appreciation. For complete refusal responses involving six semantic formulas,

one structure was found in one response. It was by combining Regret with Negative willingness/ability, Excuse/reason/explanation, Positive feeling/appreciation, another Positive feeling/appreciation, and another Positive feeling/appreciation. Table 6.28 presents examples of British semantic formula structures used in this situation.

Formulas Structure	Example
Combination of 3 formulas	I would love too + but I've got loads of stuff to do. + Good luck! I would absolutely love to join + but I have too many other things at the moment. + Let me know if there is anything else I can help with in the future though.
Combination of 4 formulas	Sorry! + I just have so much to do. + Just don't have time at the moment. + Hope it all goes well. I am sorry. + But already have commitments. + I am unavailable to help you, + good luck!
Combination of 5 formulas	Thank you for inviting me! + I'm so flattered. + Unfortunately I have so many things going on at the moment. + So I can't take on any new projects. + I'd be really happy to get involved in the future. I'm really sorry + but I can't this time. + You know how much I love to help + but I have so much on the moment. + I couldn't possibly give it the time it needs.
Combination of 6 formulas	That sounds so great. + I'm really excited for you. + I'm so sorry though, + I have a lot to work on right now + so I don't think I can participate. + All the best to you and this event though!

Table 6.28. British participants' semantic formulas structures with examples (refusal situation 4)

6.6.Overall insights

When examining the extent to which the types of refusals differ among the four groups, the results demonstrate culturally and contextually rooted variation. British English native speakers used a broad range of refusal strategies often favoring indirect refusals, expressions of regret, and extensive justifications. Their responses commonly started with strong apologetic expressions such as "I'm really sorry," followed by rational explanations like "I've got too much on" or "I've been waiting already," and finished with mitigating closings such as "I hope that's okay" or "Try and squeeze in behind me." The utilization of multiple semantic formulas, particularly justification, regret, and indirect alternatives, aligns with what previous studies showed as British cultural preferences for negative politeness and face-saving strategies that emphasize individual boundaries while maintaining harmony. British refusals were pragmatically complex, driven by empathy and a consistent effort to soften direct rejections with reasonable external explanations or forward-looking commitments. This pattern is in line with foundational refusal studies. Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990) showed that English refusals frequently combine expressions of regret with explanations and adjuncts in order to mitigate face-threat. The British data in this study reflect this layered sequencing, particularly the integration of apology, justification, and supportive closings.

Saudi Arabic participants also used a variety of formulas, but their refusals were deeply rooted in high-context cultural norms that emphasize solidarity, religious modesty, and social obligation. Direct refusals, when employed, were typically mitigated through religious expressions (e.g., "والله معليش" – I swear to Allah, sorry) and endearing address terms (e.g., "أخوي" – my brother). Even when declining an urgent request or a significant invitation, participants employed emotional and religious appeals such as "May Allah forgive me," or statements that emphasized external constraints ("I'm in a big hurry," "circumstances prevent me") rather than personal unwillingness. Furthermore, Saudi Arabic participants often concluded their refusals with well-wishing or future oriented promises, such as "I will visit you after the wedding to congratulate

you,” showing a preference for maintaining long-term relational closeness despite immediate noncompliance. The Saudi Arabic refusal patterns observed here resonate strongly with Nelson, Carson, Al-Batal, and El Bakary (2002), where it was reported that Arabic speakers tend to employ more indirect strategies and provide extensive justifications compared to American speakers, which reflects collectivist orientations toward relational maintenance. Furthermore, Ababtain (2021) observed that Saudi Arabic speakers predominantly depended on excuses and explanations to soften refusals and preserve social harmony. The present study extends this work by showing how religious expressions and future-oriented promises function as additional culturally embedded mitigation devices. These strategies show that refusal in the Saudi context is not merely an act of rejection but a relational negotiation embedded within shared cultural values.

However, Saudi EFL participants showed a more limited range of refusal strategies. Their responses often depended on direct refusals combined with apologies (“Sorry, I can’t”) and occasionally explanations. Interestingly, elements of L1 culture still filtered into their English refusals, especially in the occasional use of kinship terms like “Brother,” indicating a somewhat pragmatic transfer where L1 strategies are adapted to L2 discourse with varying success. The relatively low semantic variety and frequency of mitigation strategies suggest that these learners struggle with pragmatic appropriateness in L2, probably due to both limited exposure to native English refusal patterns and underdeveloped sociopragmatic awareness. While there were efforts to show politeness, such as offering an apology or explanation, the lack of culturally complex expressions made their refusals appear overly blunt. Similarly, Al-Kahtani (2005) reported that Saudi EFL learners often relied on a narrow set of strategies and showed insufficient pragmatic flexibility, even when attempting indirectness. Likewise, Qadi (2021) observed that although Saudi EFL learners preferred regret and explanation strategies, their refusals sometimes lacked appropriate contextual calibration.

Saudi ESL participants, on the other hand, demonstrated a higher level of pragmatic complexity. Their refusal responses contained greater complexity in both the types and combinations of semantic formulas. Similar to native English speakers, they frequently employed multi layered strategies that included regret, justification, and indirectness. For instance, their use of

statements such as “I’m really sorry, but I have a lot on my plate right now” illustrates an awareness of face-saving practices in English. Even though ESL participants occasionally defaulted to directness, their efforts to hedge refusals, provide reasons, and offer alternative suggestions reflect a transitional interlanguage stage that shows both L1 influence and growing alignment with L2 pragmatic norms.

Another crucial component of this study was the analysis of how the structures of refusal responses varied across groups. British English speakers displayed the most extensive structural complexity, with many responses combining up to five or even six semantic formulas. These structures typically followed a pattern of apology + explanation + justification + expression of empathy + alternative + forms of closing. This complex sequencing highlights a pragmatic orientation that values clarity, politeness, and a coherent narrative that mitigates the refusal’s impact. In the wedding and phone borrowing scenarios, British participants frequently paired direct statements with softened modifiers and suggestions in a way which ensures that their refusals were assertive yet socially considerate.

Saudi Arabic participants also showed structural richness but with a distinct cultural style. Their refusals were often emotionally expressive and built around indirectness, religious framing, and extensive explanation. Rather than following a rigid semantic formula order, their responses emphasized cultural values such as modesty, deference, and group harmony. Combinations of three to five formulas were frequently used, including apology, justification, religious exclamations, and positive feelings. These multi part structures had not only a linguistic function but also a relational one as participants negotiated the act of refusal within a framework of cultural solidarity and mutual respect.

Saudi EFL participants, in contrast, most frequently formulated responses comprising one or two formulas. The lack of depth and syntactic variation in their responses points to the challenges EFL learners face in accessing a full range of pragmatic strategies in L2. Their refusal structures typically included a direct statement (“I can’t”) and an apology (“Sorry”), with limited contextualization or explanation. Saudi ESL participants used more varied structural patterns

with frequent use of three formula combinations (e.g., apology + explanation + empathy), which indicates growing comfort with English politeness conventions and refusal sequencing.

Address terms played a significant role in shaping the tone and effectiveness of refusals across some groups. Among Saudi Arabic participants, the use of kinship and affective address terms was pervasive. Terms such as “أخوي” (my brother), “يا بعدي” (my beloved), or “يا حبيبي” (oh my dear) were employed to create intimacy and reduce social distance, even in refusals involving high imposition or high social distance. These expressions, deeply rooted in Arab pragmatics, serve both to honor the hearer and to mitigate the negative force of refusal. Their consistent use demonstrates the collectivist orientation of Saudi culture, where refusal is rarely delivered without accompanying relational markers that preserve dignity and respect.

Among Saudi EFL and ESL participants, the influence of L1 norms on the address term usage was evident. EFL learners used terms like “brother” in English, which reflects a literal translation of L1 politeness devices. While these attempts indicate cultural transfer and intent to soften the refusal, they may come across as unfamiliar or awkward in native English interaction. ESL participants, nonetheless, began to adopt more target like strategies, occasionally omitting address terms altogether and focusing instead on modality and hedging. British English participants did not use address terms as they generally preferred indirectness, explanations, and strategic apology to convey politeness. Their refusals depended more on tone and discourse markers than on explicit terms of address, which is consistent with the values of independence, individualism, and low-context communication. The contrast in address term usage across groups further shows broader sociocultural differences in politeness orientation. While Arabic refusals often incorporate relational markers and affective expressions to reduce distance (Al-Issa, 2003), English refusals typically depend more heavily on linguistic mitigation devices such as hedging and modalization (Beebe et al., 1990). This study’s findings reinforce this distinction by showing that Saudi EFL learners occasionally transfer L1 address strategies into English, whereas ESL participants start to shift toward more target-like mitigation through discourse markers rather than kinship terms.

The influence of social distance and ranking of imposition on refusal was significant across some groups. In high-imposition, high-distance contexts (such as refusing to lend a phone or declining a wedding invitation), British and ESL participants responded with greater levels of politeness, offering extended justifications, apologies, and even symbolic gestures of goodwill, such as offering to send a gift. The careful modulation of tone and content demonstrates pragmatic awareness of face sensitivity in contexts where refusal may risk social friction. The observed sensitivity to imposition and distance supports Brown and Levinson (1987), where it was proposed that higher levels of imposition and greater social distance increase the need for mitigation, a pattern clearly reflected in the British and ESL responses. Additionally, Beebe et al. (1990) emphasized that refusals frequently expand in length and complexity when face-threat intensifies. The escalation patterns evident in high-imposition scenarios in the current study therefore provide empirical support for the context-dependent and negotiable nature of refusal behaviour. Saudi Arabic participants responded with extensive cultural expressions, religious phrases, and promises of future compliance or support. Their refusals were less about saying “no” and more about expressing regret and reaffirming the social bond despite the inability to comply.

In low-imposition, low-distance contexts (such as declining to participate in organizing an event with a peer), British responses remained structured and polite but were more casual, often using expressions like “Hope it all goes well” or “Maybe next time.” Saudi Arabic responses in these situations were still deeply relational, commonly highlighting mutual respect, obligation, and the wish to help under other circumstances. While ESL participants balanced between the native-like structure and L1 cultural expression, EFL participants often failed to adjust their responses to changes in distance or imposition, producing uniformly brief refusals across scenarios with slight differences. This inflexibility highlights the need for explicit teaching of context-sensitive pragmatic variation in EFL instruction.

6.7.Summary

The findings of this chapter confirm the conclusion that refusals are complex speech acts shaped by language proficiency, cultural expectations, and situational variables. British English participants depended on indirectness, structure, and empathy to manage face threats. Saudi Arabic participants employed religious language, kinship terms, and external justifications to deliver refusals rooted in social harmony. Saudi ESL participants displayed meaningful development in their ability to integrate English politeness strategies with culturally appropriate deference. EFL participants, while well-intentioned, showed reduced pragmatic range, often resulting in oversimplified responses. These differences emphasize the need for comprehensive pragmatic instruction that not only teaches formulaic language but also helps learners recognize the social and cultural variables that shape speech acts. Developing such awareness and working on it pedagogically will empower learners to communicate more effectively and respectfully across cultural and linguistic boundaries. The findings across the three speech acts are synthesised in Chapter Seven, where their broader theoretical and pedagogical implications are discussed.

Chapter Seven: Implications and Conclusion

7.1. Summary of Key Findings

This study explored the pragmatic performance of three core speech acts, complaints, apologies, and refusals, among four different participant groups: British English, Saudi monolingual speakers of Arabic, Saudi learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and Saudi learners of English as a Second Language (ESL). The analysis concentrated on four aspects for each speech act which are the types of semantic formulas employed, the structural complexity of the responses, the role of address terms, and the influence of social distance and ranking of imposition. As explained in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, results show both cross-cultural differences and developmental patterns in interlanguage pragmatics, which provides insight into how pragmatic competence is shaped by linguistic, social, and contextual considerations.

Across the three speech acts, British English native speakers consistently showed the most pragmatically complex responses, characterized by high semantic variety, structured formulaic combinations, and context-sensitive mitigation strategies. Their responses revealed a strong preference for negative politeness, indirectness, and individualized reasoning, with apologies and refusals often featuring hedging, justification, and expressions of empathy. In complaints, British English participants frequently used softeners to preserve interpersonal harmony while addressing the issue. In apologies and refusals, they placed emphasis on personal accountability and sincerity on which they often integrated multiple semantic elements to balance assertiveness with politeness. Saudi Arabic participants, by contrast, presented culturally rich but structurally distinct pragmatic strategies. Their responses were often emotionally expressive and had religious language, kinship terms, and culturally rooted formulas that conveyed solidarity, humility, and group harmony. Complaints were structured relationally with religious overtones. Apologies were expressed with sensitive language, communal values, and, sometimes, future oriented promises, while refusals typically depended on indirectness, external justifications, and extensive use of communal face saving expressions. Their pragmatic style represents high context

communication norms where meaning is constructed relationally and indirectly in a way that prioritizes emotional attachment and social balance over explicitness.

The Saudi EFL participants showed the least pragmatically developed responses in all three speech acts. Their responses were typically short, formulaic, and lacking both structural depth and contextual sensitivity. There was an overreliance on direct refusals and basic apologies with minimal mitigation or explanation. Despite some efforts to include politeness markers, these were often poorly calibrated to the social context or target language norms. Address terms were used inconsistently sometimes in a way that reflects literal L1 transfer without an awareness of L2 pragmatic considerations. This group's performance suggests significant challenges in sociopragmatic awareness and discourse level fluency, which is consistent with limited exposure to authentic English interaction and more clearly a lack of explicit instruction in pragmatic variation. Saudi ESL participants displayed pragmatic competence which reflects a transitional stage in interlanguage development. Their speech acts were more elaborated than those of EFL participants and consisted of multiple semantic formulas, occasional hedging, and more sensitivity to social variables. ESL participants demonstrated clear progress toward L2 pragmatic norms particularly in their use of structured refusal and apology sequences, expressions of empathy, and situational explanations. Their performance could be due to greater immersion in English speaking environments, which appears to facilitate both pragmatolinguistic control and sociopragmatic adaptation.

On the one hand, address terms were a consistent marker of cultural differences throughout the data. Saudi Arabic participants frequently employed kinship and endearment terms to mitigate the illocutionary force of speech acts and reinforce relational bonds. ESL and EFL participants demonstrated less degrees of address terms usage. British participants, in contrast, did not use address terms, where they relied instead on syntactic mitigation and discursive softeners to manage interpersonal dynamics. On the other hand, the variables of social distance and ranking of imposition had significant influence on all participant groups though at different levels. British and ESL participants clearly modified the complexity and tone of their speech acts depending on these contextual variables while Saudi Arabic speakers adjusted through affective and relational expressions rather than syntactic or semantic variation. EFL learners, by contrast, often failed to

modify their speech acts meaningfully as they employed similar formulations across contexts regardless of distance or imposition, which demonstrates a lack of context sensitive pragmatic control.

The key findings of this study show that pragmatic competence is both culturally situated and developmentally influenced. Although native speakers and ESL participants demonstrated flexible and contextually rich pragmatic strategies, EFL participants demonstrated limited variation and sociopragmatic control. Saudi Arabic participants showed complex and culturally consistent strategies rooted in shared values and relational communication. These results affirm the need to address pragmatics explicitly in L2 education, especially in EFL contexts where authentic exposure is limited.

7.2.Theoretical Implications

The results of this study provide crucial theoretical contributions to the field of interlanguage pragmatics, speech act theory, and cross-cultural pragmatics, especially in the context of EFL and ESL learners from linguistically and culturally different backgrounds. By comparing British English native speakers, Saudi Arabic monolinguals, Saudi EFL learners, and Saudi ESL learners across three major speech acts, complaints, apologies, and refusals, this study expands the understanding of how pragmatic competence is formed by language exposure, sociocultural norms, and instructional context.

At the core of this study lies support for the fundamental assumption in interlanguage pragmatics that pragmatic development is not linear, nor is it automatically acquired through increased linguistic competence alone (Taguchi, 2011). Saudi EFL learners, although capable of using English grammar and vocabulary, showed underdeveloped pragmatic abilities. Their overreliance on direct refusals, minimal employment of mitigation in complaints, and simplified apologies indicate that grammatical proficiency does not necessarily lead to pragmatic proficiency. This further strengthens the necessity for theoretical models of L2 acquisition to consider pragmatics as an independent but interconnected domain, one that needs targeted attention and is shaped

by both cognitive and social learning factors. The study also supports and complements Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, particularly in terms of the interaction between face-threatening acts (FTAs) and the strategies employed to address them across cultures. British English participants generally preferred depending on negative politeness, emphasizing deference, hedging, and minimization of imposition. In contrast, Saudi Arabic participants balanced positive politeness (e.g., kinship terms, solidarity statements) with culturally specific mitigation strategies such as religious expressions. This supports that Brown and Levinson's universality claims require cultural contextualization. The strategic purpose to manage face may be universal, but the ways it takes are culture specific and deeply rooted in socio religious norms especially in collectivist societies such as Saudi Arabia. Consequently, the study contributes to ongoing discussions around context sensitive applications of politeness theory where it emphasizes a need to expand the model to integrate indirect, affectively rich, and relational elements of politeness that may not fit within its original and current typology.

Additionally, this study highlights the value of speech act theory in analyzing interlanguage behavior but also points out its limitations when applied across diverse cultural contexts. Although Searle's (1969) categorization of illocutionary acts offers a valuable analytical framework, this study shows that the illocutionary force of a speech act is not fixed, but negotiated through form, sequencing, tone, and culturally rooted discourse markers. For example, what is considered a refusal in English (e.g., "I'm sorry, I can't") might be performed through an entirely different set of linguistic resources in Arabic (e.g., religious justification + kinship terms). These results contribute to an expanded model of speech act theory that give more attention to sociocultural mediation, multimodal expression, and formulaic cultural elements, in a way that reinforces the theoretical premise that meaning in interaction is jointly constructed. The developmental process observed between Saudi EFL and ESL participants also supports key concepts of interlanguage pragmatics especially the influence of input quality and interactional experience. ESL learners, living in English-speaking environments, produced more context sensitive, detailed, and structurally complex speech acts than their EFL counterparts. This is consistent with Schmidt's (1993) Noticing Hypothesis, which holds that conscious awareness of input, particularly in authentic communicative situations, is crucial for the acquisition of L2

pragmatic features. The results also align with Vygotskian sociocultural theory, which emphasizes that pragmatic competence is socially mediated and developed through participation in meaningful interactions. ESL learners benefited from having access to more varied and socially situated models of English use, which enabled them to internalize both pragmalinguistic forms and sociopragmatic norms.

From a broader theoretical point of view, this study contributes to the ongoing redefinition of pragmatic competence as a multi componential construct. The performance differences between native speakers and learners, particularly in their ability to integrate apology, justification, mitigation, and social positioning into a single speech act, indicate that pragmatic competence includes not only knowledge of language functions, but also discursive awareness, cultural sensitivity, and strategic flexibility. This confirms newer models of communicative competence (e.g., Bachman, 1990; Celce-Murcia et al., 1995) that treat pragmatics not as a supplementary skill but as a central, integrative domain of communication competence. To conclude, the theoretical implications of this study demonstrate that pragmatic competence is developmental, culture dependent, and context sensitive, which requires an integrative approach in both research and pedagogy. Future theoretical models need to continue considering the rich sociocultural grounding of speech acts, the role of immersion and noticing in L2 pragmatic development, and the dynamic interplay between L1 and L2 standards. Consequently, they can more fully describe how learners navigate the complex settings of multilingual multicultural interaction.

7.3. Pedagogical Implications

This study's findings have significant implications for the teaching and learning of English as a foreign or second language, especially in settings where pragmatic competence is often underemphasized in formal curricula. The observed differences between native speakers, Saudi Arabic monolinguals, and Saudi EFL and ESL learners highlight the urgent need for more explicit, context sensitive instruction in interlanguage pragmatics, particularly for learners in EFL contexts who lack regular meaningful exposure to authentic English discourse.

First of all, the data strongly suggest that pragmatic competence does not develop automatically alongside grammatical competence. Saudi EFL learners in particular showed pragmatic limitations not due to a lack of general language ability, but because of insufficient awareness of how language is used differently across social and cultural contexts. Their tendency to respond with formulaic, context insensitive responses, even in scenarios involving significant social distance or high imposition, shows that they rely on literal translations or memorized expressions rather than interactionally grounded choices. Accordingly, this study supports the growing consensus in applied linguistics that explicit instruction in pragmatics is essential, particularly in EFL environments where immersion is not possible.

One crucial pedagogical implication is the importance of raising learners' awareness of cultural variation in speech acts. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate a contrastive pragmatic analysis in the classroom, drawing students' attention to how expressions of refusal, apology, and complaint differ between English and Arabic in terms of directness, sequencing, mitigation strategies, and use of address terms. For example, learners need to understand why a phrase like "I'm sorry, but I can't" might be perfectly acceptable in an English speaking context but perceived as cold or ineffective in Arabic, and conversely, why the use of some address terms in English may sound overly intimate or unnatural. Such instruction can enable learners to identify the sociopragmatic norms of the target language while reflecting critically on the norms of their own L1. Moreover, it is crucial that language educators integrate authentic input and interaction into pragmatics instruction. Findings from ESL participants in this study revealed that immersive exposure, through studying or living in English speaking environments, often led to significantly more natural, varied, and socially appropriate pragmatic behavior. While full immersion is not always possible, teachers can simulate this through the incorporation of authentic dialogues, role plays, and films. Carefully structured activities can enhance learners' development of pragmatic fluency by offering models of how native speakers manage speech acts in context, followed by time for learners to analyze, reflect, and produce similar structures themselves.

Another implication lies in the need to address both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic components of speech acts. While pragmalinguistics involves the linguistic means used to realize intentions (e.g., modal verbs, hedging, syntactic softeners), sociopragmatics involves

understanding what is appropriate in light of the speaker and hearer relationship, cultural norms, and contextual variables. This study illustrates that EFL learners may grasp the former (e.g., “I’m sorry”) but not the latter (e.g., when and how to apologize with sufficient clarity in English). Consequently, instruction should go beyond simply teaching phrases or structures to also emphasize the why and when behind their use. Pragmatic routines should be contextualized within specific scenarios that take into account social distance and the degree of imposition in a way that enables learners to develop a deeper understanding of appropriateness. In addition to this, the findings also highlight the potential value of structure focused instruction of speech acts. For instance, teaching students the typical sequences used by native speakers in apologies (e.g., apology + responsibility + offer of repair) or refusals (e.g., expression of apology + explanation + future promise) can equip learners with pragmatic templates that improve both fluency and appropriateness. Structured models can also minimize the likelihood of blunt or abrupt expressions that may be perceived as impolite or offensive.

Furthermore, the use of culturally rich expressions in the responses of Saudi Arabic participants, especially address terms, religious invocations, and affective closings, signals a resource rather than a deficit. Teachers should avoid suppressing L1 pragmatic norms but instead encourage learners to understand how and when they can be appropriately transferred, adapted, or avoided in L2 contexts. This implies the need for a critical intercultural approach to language teaching, one that validates learners’ cultural identities while empowering them to navigate different communicative norms across contexts. Discussions regarding the pragmatics of honorifics, kinship expressions, or expressions of humility in Arabic, for example, can serve as an entry point for understanding how social roles are constructed and negotiated differently in English. In conclusion, the insights extracted from this study contribute to the broader goal of developing pragmatic awareness as a core component of communicative competence. Through supporting learners to understand how speech acts are performed within different cultural contexts, educators can empower them not only to avoid pragmatic failure but also to present themselves more authentically and respectfully across cultures. As the world becomes increasingly globalized, such skills are essential for both personal and professional success.

7.4.Limitations of the Study

Although this study makes valuable contributions to the fields of interlanguage pragmatics and cross-cultural communication, it has some limitations. Acknowledging these limitations is crucial for situating the findings within a broader academic and methodological context.

This study is limited in its participant demographics. Although it effectively compared four distinct groups, British English native speakers, Saudi Arabic native speakers, Saudi EFL learners, and Saudi ESL learners, the sample sizes were relatively small and limited to specific educational and regional settings. For instance, the Saudi EFL learners come from formal academic institutions within Saudi Arabia, while the ESL learners were studying in the United Kingdom. This design, while successful in showing context based differences, may not take into account variability across gender, age, socioeconomic background, or regional varieties within each cultural group. Especially in Saudi Arabia, where regional and tribal differences can shape language use and politeness strategies, including a broader range of participants might have shed light on additional sociopragmatic aspects. Furthermore, this study concentrated exclusively on three speech acts which are complaints, apologies, and refusals. Although these are among the most complex and face threatening acts in interpersonal communication, they are only a subset of the pragmatic capabilities learners must develop in real world interaction. Speech acts such as requests, invitations, offers, suggestions, disagreements, or expressions of gratitude were not addressed in a similarly development oriented manner, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other areas of pragmatic competence.

Moreover, the study is cross sectional rather than longitudinal, which presents an analysis of participants' pragmatic competence at a single point in time. Such a design cannot measure the developmental process of pragmatic competence, nor can it clarify whether observed behaviors are stable or emergent. Although these limitations do not undermine the validity of the study's core findings, they do highlight areas where additional depth and broader participant sampling could provide richer and more generalizable interpretations. These considerations are further discussed in the subsequent section on future research directions.

7.5. Suggestions for Future Research

Building on the limitations mentioned above and the results that emerged from this study, a number of directions for future research are suggested to improve and extend our understanding of second/foreign language pragmatic development and cross-cultural speech act performance. One promising direction is the development of speech act categories beyond complaints, apologies, and refusals. There is room for future studies to develop and investigate pragmatically complex but less explored acts such as advice giving, compliments, offers, threats, denials, and even silence. By exploring a broader range of speech acts, future studies could provide a more comprehensive image of pragmatic competence development, especially in providing learning materials and shedding light on how learners manage conflicting needs of clarity, politeness, and relational harmony across contexts.

Taking into consideration the significant differences observed between EFL and ESL participants in this study, longitudinal research is also crucial to monitor the developmental progression of pragmatic competence over time. Such studies could observe learners as they move from one level to another, in a way that tracks changes in their pragmatic choices, fluency, and sociocultural awareness. A longitudinal design would also allow researchers to examine pragmatic fossilization discovering which speech act strategies are most resistant to change and why. Another key direction is to consider the pedagogical application of pragmatic research. Intervention research could measure the effectiveness of pragmatic instruction, input enhancement, task based learning, and technology assisted pragmatic training in improving learners' pragmatic competencies. In particular, attention could be given to how learners respond to form focused instruction on speech act structure, such as teaching the formulaic sequencing of apologies or refusals shown in native speaker data. These studies could be expanded by learner feedback to uncover how students perceive and internalize pragmatic instruction and whether cultural identity or affective factors contribute to their willingness to adopt L2 pragmatic norms. Future research could also consider a more intercultural and identity oriented perspective, where it explores how learners negotiate between L1 and L2 pragmatic systems and how they position themselves socially through language. This involves studying

pragmatic accommodation, code switching, and hybridization of norms, particularly in multilingual, multicultural, and professional environments. Such studies would contribute to a more comprehensive analysis of pragmatics as not only a linguistic skill but also an area of identity negotiation and cultural agency.

Finally, pragmatic competence should be researched in light of specific learner variables, such as age, gender, educational background, field of study, and communicative needs. A more in-depth awareness of how these factors interact with pragmatic development could contribute to more personalized and productive approaches in L2 pragmatic instruction. Research comparing different first language groups and cultural backgrounds would also be useful in allowing a broader comparative framework that focuses on universal versus culture specific pragmatic norms. Although the present study has made significant contributions to the understanding of speech act performance in L2 contexts, there remain many opportunities for further investigation. Future studies that are methodologically diversified, theoretically grounded, and pedagogically oriented will be crucial for expanding our understanding of how learners acquire, negotiate, and perform pragmatic competence.

7.6. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the pragmatic competence of Saudi EFL and ESL learners in comparison with British English native speakers and Saudi Arabic monolinguals by analyzing their performance in three core speech acts which are complaints, apologies, and refusals. The study investigated how different groups employ semantic formulas, organize speech act structures, use address terms, and react to differences in social distance and imposition. It showed patterns of cultural divergence, interlanguage development, and pragmatic variation that contribute significantly to the fields of applied linguistics, cross-cultural communication, and second language acquisition.

This study showed that across all three speech acts, British English native speakers displayed more complex levels of pragmatic competence which are demonstrated by complex sequencing,

utilization of mitigation, and sensitivity to relational factors. In their responses, they displayed indirectness, empathy, and contextually appropriate linguistic choices that helped minimize face threatening impacts. Conversely, Saudi Arabic participants showed pragmatic behaviors deeply rooted in their cultural and religious contexts where they employed emotionally expressive and relationally rich language practices especially through address terms, religious references, and collectivist speech norms. These cultural practices contributed to reduce social tension, strengthen solidarity, and protect communal values, even in the face of disagreement or confrontation.

The two groups of learners, Saudi EFL and ESL, presented a compelling contrast. EFL participants, constrained by limited exposure to English interaction and minimal pragmatic instruction, often responded with blunt, structurally simple, and socially incongruent responses. Their overreliance on literal translations, overuse of directness, and lack of explanation revealed critical gaps in both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence. ESL participants, conversely, showed more contextually appropriate and structurally varied responses, which highlight the impact of immersive environments and increased access to naturalistic input. Their utilization of mitigation techniques, hedging, and sequencing indicated an emerging alignment with target language norms. When viewed together, these results illustrate the interdependence of linguistic, cultural, and contextual variables in structuring pragmatic performance. Pragmatic competence is not merely a matter of mastering lexical or grammatical forms, it includes a deep understanding of how language works interpersonally within specific social and cultural environments. The data also confirm that pragmatic development does not happen automatically by exposure to grammar based instruction. Instead, it takes shape through interaction, reflection, and guided awareness of both L1 and L2 norms.

Pedagogically, this study emphasizes the urgent need to integrate explicit pragmatic instruction into language curricula, especially in EFL contexts where learners are otherwise deprived of rich social inputs. The study of pragmatics shouldn't be seen as an add on to linguistic competence, but as a core component of communicative proficiency. Instructors should work with learners to recognize and deal with cultural differences, be aware of the consequences of speech act misalignment, and develop strategies that are both linguistically appropriate and socially

respectful. Additionally, pragmatic instruction should be contextualized, authentic, and reflective, drawing from materials provided by this study and other development oriented studies as well as encouraging learners to think critically about language use across cultures. From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the evolving models of interlanguage pragmatics by drawing attention to the complex interplay between L1 transfer, cultural identity, immersion, and instructional context. It argues for a view of pragmatic competence as a dynamic and negotiable skill, formed not only by cognitive acquisition processes but also by affective, interpersonal, and sociocultural factors. The results also emphasize the need for continued refinement of speech act theory and politeness theory to better account for non-Western, high context communicative methods. This study emphasizes the significance of promoting pragmatic awareness among language learners, not simply as a linguistic goal, but as a social and intercultural requirement. With the English language increasingly serving as a global lingua franca, the skill to communicate across linguistic and cultural barriers with sensitivity, flexibility, and effectiveness is not just a sign of proficiency, it is a cornerstone of responsible and respectful global citizenship.

References

- Ababtain, H. A . (2021). A Gender-Based Analysis of the Speech Act of Refusal in Arabic Among Saudis. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research*, 8 (2).
- Abdo, S. M. M. (2021). *A pragmatic study of complaint strategies as used by Egyptian Arabic speakers*. Scientific Journal of the Faculty of Arts, 10(3), 123–138.
- Abed, A. Q. (2011). Pragmatic transfer in the speech act of complaint as produced by Arabic learners of English. *Journal of College Teaching & Learning*, 8(5), 1–10.
<https://doi.org/10.19030/tlc.v8i5.4259>
- Alsulayyi, M.N. (2016). Apology Strategies Employed by Saudi EFL Teachers. Retrieved from <https://www.journals.aiac.org.au/index.php/alls/article/view/2824/2399>
- Alsulayyi, M.N. (2018). *Factors Affecting The Development of L2 Pragmatic Competence: A Saudi-Chinese Comparison of Apology Strategies* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, United Kingdom.
- Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Al-Issa, A. (2003). Sociocultural transfer in L2 speech behaviors: Evidence and motivating factors. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 27(5), 581–601. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767\(03\)00050-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767(03)00050-3)
- Al-Jabali, M. (2018). Complaint Strategies in Arabic: An intra-Lingual Comparison of Jordanian and Saudi female Undergraduates. Retrieved from <https://journals.ju.edu.jo/DirasatHum/article/download/12529/9013>
- Al-Kahtani, S. (2005). Refusals Realizations in Three Different Cultures: A Speech Acts Theoretically- Based Cross-Cultural Study. *Journal of King Saud University: Languages and Translation*.

- Al-Laheebi, F., & Ya'Allah, M. (2014). Shifting responsibility strategies: *Apology in Saudi Arabia*. Retrieved from http://archives.univ-biskra.dz/bitstream/123456789/3794/1/mohamed_sori_yallah.pdf
- Al-Momani, H. (2009). Caught between two cultures: The realization of refusals by Jordanian EFL learners. *Pragmatics and Language Learning*, 13, 55–78.
- Al-Qahtani, A. A. (2020). Teaching Pragmatic Competence in EFL Context: The Case of Saudi EFL Teachers. *Asian EFL Journal*, 27(4), 137–164.
- Al-Rashidi, N. (2017). An Interlanguage Pragmatic Study of Saudis' Complaints. *C S Canada: Studies in Literature and Language*. Vol.15, No.2, pp.11-19.
- Al-Shorman, R. A . (2017). Saudi and Jordanian Undergraduates' Complaining Strategies: A Comparative Intralanguage Educational Linguistic Study. *Arab World English Journal*, 8 (1).
- Al-Zahrani, F. (2018). *Pragmatic Developmental Pathways by Saudi Learners of English During Study Abroad* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Memphis, Memphis, United States.
- Bachman, L. F. (1990). *Fundamental considerations in language testing*. Oxford University Press.
- Bachman, L. F., & Palmer, A. S. (2010). *Language assessment in practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bardovi-Harlig, K. (1999). Exploring the interlanguage of interlanguage pragmatics: A research agenda for acquisitional pragmatics. *Language Learning*, 49(4), 677–713.
- Bardovi-Harlig, K. (2013). Developing L2 pragmatics. *Language Learning*, 63(S1), 68–86.
- Bardovi-Harlig, K. (2015). *Pragmatics and language teaching*. In B. VanPatten & J. Williams (Eds.), *Theories in second language acquisition* (pp. 84–106). New York: Routledge.
- Bataineh, R. F., & Bataineh, R. F. (2006). Apology strategies of Jordanian EFL university students. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 38(11), 1901–1927. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2005.11.004>

Beebe, L. M., Takahashi, T., & Uliss-Weltz, R. (1990). Pragmatic transfer in ESL refusals. In R. C. Scarcella, E. S. Andersen, & S. D. Krashen (Eds.), *Developing communicative competence in a second language* (pp. 55–73). New York: Newbury House.

Beebe, L. M., & Cummings, M. C. (1996). Natural speech act data versus written questionnaire data. In S. M. Gass & J. Neu (Eds.), *Speech acts across cultures* (pp. 65–86). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Bereczky, A., & Trosborg, A. (Eds.). (2010). *Pragmatics across languages and cultures*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Blum-Kulka, S. (1982). Learning to say what you mean in a second language: A study of the speech act performance of learners of Hebrew as a second language. *Applied Linguistics*, 3(1), 29–59. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/3.1.29>

Blum-Kulka, S., & Olshtain, E. (1984). Requests and apologies: A cross-cultural study of speech act realization patterns (CCSARP). *Applied Linguistics*, 5(3), 196–213.

Blum-Kulka, S. (1987). Indirectness and politeness in requests. In J. Verschueren & M. Bertuccelli-Papi (Eds.), *The pragmatic perspective* (pp. 131–146). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Blum-Kulka, S., House, J., & Kasper, G. (1989). *Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies*. Ablex Publishing.

Blum-Kulka, S. (1991). Interlanguage pragmatics: The case of requests. In R. Phillipson et al. (Eds.), *Foreign/second language pedagogy research* (pp. 255–272). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Boxer, D. (1993). Complaining and commiserating: Functions, formulas, and gender focus. *Applied Linguistics*, 14(1), 23–50.

Braun, F. (1988). Terms of address: Problems of patterns and usage in various languages and cultures. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Brown, R., & Ford, M. (1961). Address in American English. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 62, 375–385.

Brown, P., & Gilman, A. (1960). The pronouns of power and solidarity. In T. A. Sebeok (Ed.), *Style in language* (pp. 253–276). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2005). Identity and interaction. *Discourse Studies*, 7, 585–614.

Celce-Murcia, M., Dörnyei, Z., & Thurrell, S. (1995). Communicative competence: A pedagogically motivated model with content specifications. *Applied Linguistics*, 6(2), 5–35.

Celce-Murcia, M., & Olshtain, E. (2000). *Discourse and context in language teaching: A guide for language teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chen, H. J. (2001). A preliminary study of compliment response patterns in Taiwan Mandarin. *Concentric: Studies in Linguistics*, 27(2), 157–184.

Chen, X., Ye, L., & Zhang, Y. (1995). Refusing in Chinese. In G. Kasper (Ed.), *Pragmatics of Chinese as native and target language* (pp. 119–163). Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Cohen, A. D. (2010). *Strategies in learning and using a second language* (2nd ed.). Harlow: Longman.

Cohen, A. D. (2018). *Learning pragmatics from native and nonnative language teachers*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Cohen, A. D., & Olshtain, E. (1981). The apology speech act set. In J. Fantome (Ed.), *Sociolinguistics and language acquisition*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Cohen, A. D., & Olshtain, E. (1993). The production of speech acts by EFL learners. *TESOL Quarterly*, 27(1), 33–56.

Cohen, A. D., & Sykes, J. (2013). *Teaching pragmatics in the second language classroom*. Honolulu: National Foreign Language Resource Center.

Cohen, A. D., Taguchi, N., & Ishihara, N. (2010). Developing tests of L2 pragmatics. *ETS Research Report Series*, 2010(2), i–30.

- Culpeper, J. (1996). Towards an anatomy of impoliteness. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 25(3), 349–367.
- Culpeper, J. (2011). *Impoliteness: Using language to cause offence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Culpeper, J., Haugh, M., & Kádár, D. Z. (Eds.). (2017). *The Palgrave handbook of linguistic (im)politeness*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Deutschmann, M. (2003). Apologising in British English. *YORK Papers in Linguistics*, 2(1), 1–30.
- Dickey, E. (1997). Forms of address and terms of reference. *Journal of Linguistics*, 33(2), 255–274.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies*. Oxford University Press.
- Drew, P. (1998). Complaints about transgressions and misconduct. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 31(3–4), 295–325.
- Economidou-Koetsidis, M. (2011). “Please answer me as soon as possible”: Pragmatic failure in non-native speakers’ email requests to faculty. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43(13), 3193–3215.
- Economidou-Koetsidis, M., & Woodfield, H. (Eds.). (2012). *Interlanguage request modification*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Eelen, G. (2001). *A critique of politeness theories*. Manchester: St. Jerome.
- Ellis, R. (2012). *The study of second language acquisition* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Farghal, M., & Shakir, A. (1994). Kin terms and titles of address. *Anthropological Linguistics*, 36, 240–253.
- Fasold, R. (1990). *Sociolinguistics of language*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Félix-Brasdefer, J. C. (2003). Declining an invitation: A cross-cultural study of pragmatic strategies in American English and Latin American Spanish. *Multilingua*, 22(3), 225–255.

Félix-Brasdefer, J. C. (2004). Interlanguage refusals: Linguistic politeness and length of residence in the target community. *Language Learning*, 54(4), 587–653. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9922.2004.00278.x>

Félix-Brasdefer, J. C. (2008). *Politeness in Mexico and the United States: A contrastive study of the realization and perception of refusals*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Ferguson, C. A. (1981). The structure and use of politeness formulas. In F. Coulmas (Ed.), *Conversational routine* (pp. 21–35). The Hague: Mouton.

Fraser, B. (1990). Perspectives on politeness. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 14(2), 219–236.

Gass, S. M., & Houck, N. (1999). *Interlanguage refusals: A cross-cultural study of Japanese-English*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Goffman, E. (1967). *Interaction ritual: Essays on face-to-face behavior*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.

Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In P. Cole & J. L. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and semantics: Vol. 3. Speech acts* (pp. 41–58). New York: Academic Press.

Gu, Y. (1990). Politeness phenomena in modern Chinese. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 14(2), 237–257.

Hariri, N. (2015). Apologies in Saudi Academic Emails. Retrieved from <https://www.york.ac.uk/language/ypl/parlay/03/YPL-PARLAY2015-05-Hariri.pdf>

Haugh, M. (2015). *Im/Politeness implicatures*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Haugh, M., & Kádár, D. Z. (2013). *Understanding politeness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hinkel, E. (Ed.). (2005). *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning* (Vol. 1). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences*. Sage.

Holmes, J. (1990). Apologies in New Zealand English. *Language in Society*, 19(2), 155–199.

- Holmes, J. (1995). *Women, men and politeness*. London: Longman.
- House, J. (1996). Developing pragmatic fluency in English as a foreign language. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 18(2), 225–252.
- Ishihara, N., & Cohen, A. D. (2010). *Teaching and learning pragmatics: Where language and culture meet*. Harlow: Pearson Longman.
- Ishihara, N., & Tarone, E. (2009). ITAs' pragmatic ability in the classroom. *TESOL Quarterly*, 43(4), 681–705.
- Jayus, J., & Kasper, G. (2014). Coding speech act realization patterns. *Pragmatics*, 24(4), 523–548.
- Kádár, D. Z., & Haugh, M. (2013). *Understanding politeness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kasper, G. (1992). Pragmatic transfer. *Second Language Research*, 8(3), 203–231.
- Kasper, G., & Blum-Kulka, S. (Eds.). (1993). *Interlanguage pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kasper, G., & Rose, K. R. (2002). *Pragmatic development in a second language*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Kecskes, I. (2013). *Intercultural pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kecskes, I., & Romero-Trillo, J. (Eds.). (2013). *Research in pragmatics*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Kendon, A. (2004). *Gesture: Visible action as utterance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Keshavarz, M. H., Eslami, Z. R., & Ghahraman, V. (2006). Pragmatic transfer and Iranian EFL refusals. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 16(1), 81–110.
- Koike, D. A. (1989). Requests and the role of deixis in politeness. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 13(2), 187–202.
- Kwon, J. (2004). Expressing refusals in Korean and American English. *Multilingua*, 23(4), 339–364.

- Laforest, M. (2002). Scenes of family life: Complaining in everyday conversation. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 34(10–11), 1595–1620.
- Lakoff, R. (1973). The logic of politeness; or, minding your p's and q's. In C. Corum, T. C. Smith-Stark, & A. Weiser (Eds.), *Papers from the Ninth Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society* (pp. 292–305). Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society.
- Lakoff, R. (1975). *Language and woman's place*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Leech, G. N. (1983). *Principles of pragmatics*. London: Longman.
- Leech, G. N. (2007). Politeness: Is there an East-West divide? *Journal of Politeness Research*, 3(2), 167–206.
- Leech, G. N. (2014). *The pragmatics of politeness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Liao, C., & Bresnahan, M. J. (1996). A contrastive pragmatic study of American English and Mandarin refusals. *Discourse Processes*, 21(3), 241–260.
- Lorenzo-Dus, N. (2001). Compliment responses among British and Spanish university students. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 33(1), 107–127.
- Locher, M. A. (2004). *Power and politeness in action*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Locher, M. A., & Watts, R. J. (2005). Politeness theory and relational work. *Journal of Politeness Research*, 1(1), 9–33.
- Mao, L. R. (1994). Beyond politeness theory: 'Face' revisited and renewed. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 21(5), 451–486.
- Martínez-Flor, A., & Usó-Juan, E. (Eds.). (2010). *Speech act performance: Theoretical, empirical and methodological issues*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Matsumoto, Y. (1988). Reexamination of the universality of face: Politeness phenomena in Japanese. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 12(4), 403–426.
- Mills, S. (2003). *Gender and politeness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Murphy, B., & Neu, J. (1996). My grade's too low: The speech act set of complaining. In S. M. Gass & J. Neu (Eds.), *Speech acts across cultures* (pp. 191–216). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Nelson, G., Carson, J., Al Batal, M., & El Bakary, W. (2002). Cross-cultural pragmatics: Strategy use in Egyptian Arabic and American English refusals. *Applied Linguistics*, 23(2), 163–189.
- Nureddeen, F. A. (2008). Cross-cultural pragmatics: Apology strategies in Sudanese Arabic. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 40(2), 279–306.
- Nwoye, O. G. (1992). Linguistic politeness and socio-cultural variations of the notion of face. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 18(4), 309–328.
- Ogiermann, E. (2009). *On apologising in negative and positive politeness cultures*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- O'Driscoll, J. (1996). About face: A defence and elaboration of universal dualism. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 25(1), 1–32.
- Olshtain, E. (1989). Apologies across languages. In S. Blum-Kulka, J. House, & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Cross-cultural pragmatics* (pp. 155–173). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Olshtain, E., & Cohen, A. D. (1983). Apology: A speech act set. In N. Wolfson & E. Judd (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics and language acquisition* (pp. 18–35). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Parkinson, D. (1985). Constructing social context. *Language in Society*, 14, 455–473.
- Qadi, A. H. (2021). Use of Refusal Strategies among Saudi EFL Students: An Investigative Study. *Journal of English Language Teaching*, 14 (7).
- Rivers, D., & Houghton, S. (2013). *Social identities and multiple selves in foreign language education*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Roever, C. (2005). Testing ESL pragmatics: *Developing communicative tests of pragmatic comprehension*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Roever, C., & Nguyen, T. T. M. (2020). *Pragmatic development in L2 learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Rose, K. R. (2005). On the effects of instruction in second language pragmatics. *System*, 33(3), 385–399.
- Rose, K. R., & Kasper, G. (Eds.). (2001). *Pragmatics in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sagarin, E. (1972). *Structure and language of politeness*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Searle, J. R. (1975). Indirect speech acts. In P. Cole & J. L. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and semantics: Vol. 3. Speech acts* (pp. 59–82). New York: Academic Press.
- Schauer, G. A. (2009). *Interlanguage pragmatic development: The study abroad context*. London: Continuum.
- Schmidt, R. (1993). Consciousness, learning and interlanguage pragmatics. In G. Kasper & S. Blum-Kulka (Eds.), *Interlanguage pragmatics* (pp. 21–42). Oxford University Press.
- Scollon, R., & Scollon, S. W. (2012). *Intercultural communication* (3rd ed.). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Spencer-Oatey, H. (2008). *Culturally speaking: Culture, communication and politeness theory* (2nd ed.). London: Continuum.
- Spencer-Oatey, H., & Kádár, D. Z. (Eds.). (2016). *The Routledge handbook of language and culture*. London: Routledge.
- Taguchi, N. (2011). The effect of L2 proficiency and study-abroad experience on pragmatic comprehension. *Language Learning*, 61(3), 904–939.
- Taguchi, N. (2015). *Developing interactional competence in a Japanese study abroad context*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Taguchi, N. (2017). *Second language pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Taguchi, N. (2019). *Pragmatic competence*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

- Taguchi, N., & Kim, Y. (2016). Collaborative dialogue in L2 pragmatics. *Language Teaching Research*, 20(4), 1–22.
- Taguchi, N., & Roever, C. (2017). *Second language pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Takahashi, S., & Beebe, L. M. (1987). The development of pragmatic competence by Japanese learners of English. *JALT Journal*, 8, 131–155.
- Tanaka, L. (2004). *Gender, language and culture*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Terkourafi, M. (2001). Politeness in Cypriot Greek. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 33(12), 1881–1905.
- Terkourafi, M. (2005). Beyond the micro-level in politeness research. *Journal of Politeness Research*, 1(2), 237–262.
- Thomas, J. (1983). Cross-cultural pragmatic failure. *Applied Linguistics*, 4(2), 91–112.
- Thomas, J. (1995). *Meaning in interaction: An introduction to pragmatics*. London: Longman.
- Trosborg, A. (1987). Apology strategies in natives/non-natives. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 11(2), 147–167.
- Trosborg, A. (1995). *Interlanguage pragmatics: Requests, complaints, and apologies*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Usó-Juan, E., & Martínez-Flor, A. (Eds.). (2008). *Learning how to request in an instructed language learning context*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Vásquez, C. (2011). Complaints online. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43(6), 1527–1539.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Wardhaugh, R., & Fuller, J. M. (2015). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (7th ed.). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Watts, R. J. (2003). *Politeness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wierzbicka, A. (1991). *Cross-cultural pragmatics: The semantics of human interaction*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Wolfson, N. (1983). An empirically based analysis of complimenting in American English. In N. Wolfson & E. Judd (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics and language acquisition* (pp. 82–95). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Wolfson, N. (1989). *Perspectives: Sociolinguistics and TESOL*. New York: Newbury House.

Woodfield, H., & Economidou-Koetsidis, M. (2010). *Interlanguage request modification*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Xie, C. (2010). Apologies in Chinese: A study on pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic variation. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 42(10), 2703–2716.

Yates, L. (2010). Pragmatic challenges for second language learners. In A. Trosborg (Ed.), *Handbook of pragmatics* (pp. 287–308). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Zhang, Y. (1995). Strategies in Chinese refusals. In G. Kasper (Ed.), *Pragmatics of Chinese as native and target language* (pp. 59–90). Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Zhu, H. (2014). *Exploring intercultural communication: Language in action* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.

Appendices

1. Appendix A: Questionnaire for Saudi Arabic participants

مهمة اكمال الحوار

شكراً جزيلاً لمشاركتك في هذا الاستبيان! يتكون هذا الاستبيان من 12 حالة (4 حالات اعتذار، 4 حالات شكوى، 4 حالات رفض). يرجى قراءة هذه الحالات بعناية ومن ثم التفاعل معها من خلال كتابة ردك على كل حالة. يرجى الرد على كل حالة بشكل طبيعي دون استغراق وقتاً طويلاً في التفكير. يرجى الرد على كل حالة بطريقة تتطابق مع ما ستقوله بالفعل لو كنت في نفس الموقف. إذا كان لديك أي أسئلة لا تتردد في طرحها، يسعدني الإجابة.

الجنسية:

العمر:

الجنس:

1. حالة الاعتذار (1)

تخيل أنه بينما كنت تتسوق في ممر أحد المحلات، لفت انتباهك أحد المنتجات. اخذته بيدك وبدأت في قراءة التفاصيل المكتوبة عليه. بينما كنت تقرأ اذ بشخص من الخلف يقول: معذرة! قمت بالالتفات له ثم أدركت أنك كنت تسد الممر وعلى الفور أردت الاعتذار منه عن حجبك للممر.

اعتذارك:

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. حالة الاعتذار (2)

تخيل أنك تطوعت للعمل في إحدى المنظمات التطوعية التي يتم من خلالها تنظيم العديد من الأنشطة الإنسانية. تقوم هذه المنظمة التطوعية بتوزيع ساعات العمل على جميع المتطوعين. أحد أعضاء الفريق، سبق لك التطوع والعمل معه في أكثر من مناسبة ولديك صداقة جيدة معه. سألك فيما يتعلق بإمكانية تبديل الورديات بحيث تقوم انت بتغطية ساعات

دوامه يوم الثلاثاء ويقوم هو بتغطية ساعات دوامك يوم الخميس. قمت بإعطائه موافقتك وحماسك للفكرة وتم الاتفاق عليها. للأسف، قمت انت بنسيان هذه الاتفاقية ولم تأت لتغطية ساعات عمله يوم الثلاثاء ووضعتة في موقف حرج مع إدارة المنظمة بسبب إخفاقك في تغطية ساعات عمله. بعد ذلك أردت التحدث معه للاعتذار عما حدث.

اعتذارك:

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. حالة الاعتذار (3)

تخيل أنه أثناء تواجدك في مركز تجاري، قمت بشراء كوباً من القهوة ثم بدأت بالتسوق ممسكاً بذلك الكوب. لسوء الحظ، سقط كوب القهوة وتناثر على الأرض وعلى العميل الذي كان بجوارك في ذلك الوقت. تبللت ملابس العميل بقهوتك وأردت الاعتذار له عن هذا الحدث غير المقصود.

اعتذارك:

.....

.....

.....

.....

4. حالة الاعتذار (4)

تخيل أنك استعرت كتاباً من أخيك وعلى الرغم من أن شقيقك لا يحتاج للكتاب، فقد وعدت بإعادة الكتاب في غضون أسبوع. لسوء الحظ، نسيت إعادة الكتاب في الوقت المحدد. لذا، ذهبت إلى أخيك لإعادة الكتاب والاعتذار عن هذا التأخير غير المقصود.

اعتذارك:

.....

.....

.....

.....

5. حالة الشكوى (1)

تخيل أنك كنت طالبًا وكنت تقوم بقراءة بعض الكتب في المكتبة. كان هنالك طالبًا في المكتبة يجلس بجوارك وكان يقرأ كتابًا وكان هاتفه المحمول يتلقى الرسائل بصوت عالٍ بشكل مستمر. كان صوت رسائل التنبيه مصدر إلهاء وتشتيت لان المكان كان هادئًا جدًا. قررت التحدث إلى الطالب للتعبير عن شكواك بشأن صوت تنبيهات هاتفه المحمول.

شكواك:

.....

.....

.....

.....

6. حالة الشكوى (2)

تخيل أنه أثناء وجودك في منزلك، كانت هنالك أصوات موسيقية مزعجة قادمة من شقة أحد الجيران التي تربطك به علاقة جيدة واحترام متبادل. حاولت التحلي بالصبر لبعض الوقت على أمل أن تتوقف هذه الأصوات الموسيقية المزعجة، ولكن هذه الأصوات استمرت. ذهبت إلى جارك لتقديم شكواك نظرا لهذه الأصوات الموسيقية المزعجة.

شكواك:

.....

.....

.....

.....

7. حالة الشكوى (3)

تخيل أنه أثناء عملك التطوعي في إحدى المنظمات التطوعية، كان أحد المتطوعين الجدد في المجموعة (لم تكن تعرفه مسبقًا) يتعامل معك بشكل سيئ حيث كان يصدر الأوامر بطريقة فضة ويطلب منك تنفيذها بالرغم من أنه لم يكن مديراً أو مشرفاً وليس لديه أي صفة نظامية لإصدار الأوامر. دفعتك هذه السلوكيات إلى التحدث معه للتعبير عن شكواك وعدم رضاك عن هذه السلوكيات غير المقبولة.

شكواك:

.....

.....

.....

.....

8. حالة الشكوى (4)

تخيل أن لديك جهازي كمبيوتر محمول، في حالة جيدة ويعملان بشكل جيد. جاء أخوك إليك وأخبرك أن جهاز الكمبيوتر المحمول الخاص به قد تعطل وأصبح غير صالح للاستخدام. أخبرك أيضًا أنه سيشترى كمبيوتر محمول جديد في غضون ثلاثة أشهر. ثم طلب منك إعارته أحد أجهزة الكمبيوتر المحمولة الخاصة بك لاستخدامه خلال الأشهر الثلاثة القادمة ووعده بإعادته إليك عند شراء كمبيوتر محمول جديد. قمت بإعارته أحد أجهزة الكمبيوتر المحمولة الخاصة بك. بعد ثلاثة أشهر، اشترى أخوك جهاز كمبيوتر محمول جديد وأعاد الكمبيوتر المحمول الخاص بك. للأسف، كانت حالة الكمبيوتر المحمول الخاص بك سيئة للغاية عند إعادته، وكانت آثار سوء الاستخدام والإهمال واضحة جدًا. بعد ذلك أردت التحدث مع أخيك للتعبير عن شكواك واستيائك من هذا السلوك غير المقبول.

شكواك:

.....

.....

.....

.....

9. حالة الرفض (1)

تخيل أنه عندما كنت في متجر تسوق، انتهيت من اختيار عدد كبير من المنتجات للشراء وذهبت إلى المحاسب من أجل الدفع. لقد كنت في عجلة من أمرك، لكن طابور انتظار الدفع كان مزدحم للغاية. على أي حال، أخذت مكانك في قائمة الانتظار وبدأت تنتظر. بعد ذلك، أتى إليك أحد العملاء وطلب منك السماح له بأن يكون أمامك في قائمة الانتظار لأنه أراد شراء منتج واحد فقط وأخبرك أن الأمر لن يستغرق منه وقتًا طويلًا في الدفع. لم ترغب في السماح له بأخذ مكانك لأنك كنت في عجلة من أمرك. لذا أردت أن ترفض طلبه.

رفضك:

.....

.....

.....

.....

10. حالة الرفض (2)

تخيل أنه أثناء قيامك بإكمال مهام معلقة كان عليك إنهاؤها في أقرب وقت ممكن، تلقيت رسالة من أخوك يدعوك من خلالها لحضور حفل زواجه الذي سيقام بعد اسبوعين. انت لديك العديد من المسؤوليات والالتزامات المعلقة التي لا تقبل التأخير أو التأجيل مما أجبرك على إرسال رسالة ترفض من خلالها حضور حفل الزواج.

رفضك:

.....

.....

.....

.....

11. حالة الرفض (3)

تخيل أنك كنت طالبًا جالسًا في المكتبة وكنت تقوم بكتابة إحدى المقالات التي طلب منك تسليمها. جاء إليك طالب وطلب منك أن تعطيه هاتفك المحمول لأنه بحاجة إلى الاتصال بصديق. نظرًا لأنك لا تعرف هذا الطالب مطلقًا ولا تثق به، فقد قمت برفض الطلب.

رفضك:

.....

.....

.....

.....

12. حالة الرفض (4)

تخيل أنه أثناء عملك التطوعي في منظمة تطوعية، دعاك أحد المتطوعين، الذي تربطك به علاقة جيدة واحترام متبادل، للمشاركة معه في تنظيم حدث جديد سيشرف عليه بنفسه. لسوء الحظ، كنت مشغولًا بالعديد من المهام ولم تتمكن من المشاركة معه. لذلك، قمت برفض دعوته.

رفضك:

.....

.....

.....

.....

شكرًا جزيلاً على وقتك وجهدك!

2. Appendix B: Questionnaire for EFL participants

Discourse Completion Task (DCT)

Many thanks for participating in this questionnaire! I highly appreciate your time and effort. This questionnaire consists of 12 situations (4 situations of apology, 4 situations of complaint, and 4 situations of refusal). Please read these situations carefully and interact with them by writing your responses to each situation. Please try to respond naturally without taking too long time to think. Try to respond to each situation as what you would actually say if you were in the same situation. If you have any questions, feel free to ask. I will be happy to answer.

Nationality:

Age:

Gender:

Level at the Department of English:

Latest IELTS score (if applicable):

Latest TOEFL score (if applicable):

Have you ever stayed in an English-speaking country? If yes, how many years/months?

1. Situation of apology (1)

Imagine that while you were shopping in an aisle of a shop, a product caught your eye. You picked it up and started reading the details written on it. While you were reading, someone from behind said: Excuse me! You turned around and then you realized that you were blocking the aisle and immediately you wanted to apologize for blocking the aisle.

Your apology:

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Situation of apology (2)

Imagine that you have volunteered to work in a voluntary organization through which many humanitarian activities are organized. This volunteering organization distributes working hours to all volunteers. One of the team members (represented by the letter A), who you have previously volunteered with and have a good friendship with, asked you if it is possible to swap shifts so that you cover A's shift hours on Tuesday, and A covers your shift hours on Thursday. You said yes and it was agreed. Unfortunately, you forgot and did not cover A's hours on Tuesday. This put A in an awkward position with the management of the organization. You wanted to talk to A to apologize for what happened.

Your apology:

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. Situation of apology (3)

Imagine that while you were in a shopping centre, you bought a cup of coffee and then you started shopping holding that cup. Unfortunately, the cup of coffee fell to the floor and scattered on the floor and on a customer who was next to you at that time. The customer's clothes got wet with your coffee and you wanted to apologize for this unintended event.

Your apology:

.....

.....

.....

.....

4. Situation of apology (4)

Imagine that you borrowed a book from your sibling and (even though your sibling does not need the book) you promised to return the book in a week. Unfortunately, you forgot to return the book on time. So, you go to your brother to return the book and to apologize for this unintended delay.

Your apology:

.....

.....

.....

.....

5. Situation of complaint (1)

Imagine that you were a student reading some books in the library. A student in the library was sitting next to you reading a book and their mobile phone was receiving messages loudly in a constant manner. The sound of messages alerts was a distraction because the place was very quiet. You decided to talk to the student to express your complaint about their mobile phone's alerts sound.

Your complaint:

.....

.....

.....

.....

6. Situation of complaint (2)

Imagine that, while you were at home, there were musical sounds coming from the apartment of a neighbor with whom you have a good relationship and mutual respect. You tried to wait for a while hoping that these musical sounds would stop but these sounds continued. You go to your neighbor to deliver your complaint due to these musical sounds.

Your complaint:

.....

.....

.....

.....

7. Situation of complaint (3)

Imagine that, during your voluntary work in one of the volunteer organizations, one of the new volunteers in the group who you have never met before was dealing with you badly. This volunteer was issuing orders in a rude manner and asking you to implement them even though this volunteer was not a manager or supervisor and did not have any legal capacity to issue orders. These behaviors prompted you to talk to this volunteer to express your complaints and dissatisfaction with these unacceptable behaviors.

Your complaint:

.....

.....

.....

.....

8. Situation of complaint (4)

Imagine that you have two laptops, both in good condition and in good working order. A sibling came to you and told you that their laptop broke down and became unusable. Also, your sibling told you that they

would buy a new laptop within three months. Then, your sibling asked you to lend them one of your laptops to use during the next three months and your sibling promised to return it to you when buying a new laptop. You lent your sibling one of your laptops. Three months later, your sibling bought a new laptop and returned yours. Unfortunately, the condition of your laptop was very poor when it was returned, and traces of misuse and neglect were very clear. After that, you wanted to talk to your sibling to express your complaint and resentment about this unacceptable behavior.

Your complaint:

.....

.....

.....

.....

9. Situation of refusal (1)

Imagine that while you were in a shopping centre, you finished choosing a large number of products to buy and you went to the counter to pay. You were in a hurry, but it was too crowded at the payment queue. Anyway, you took your place in the queue and started waiting. Then, a customer came to you and asked you to allow them to be in front of you in the queue because they only wanted to buy one single product and they told you that it will not take a long time to pay. You did not want to allow the customer to take your place because you were in a hurry. So, you wanted to refuse the request.

Your refusal:

.....

.....

.....

.....

10. Situation of refusal (2)

Imagine that while you were completing pending tasks that you had to finish as soon as possible, you received a message from a sibling inviting you to attend their wedding which will take place in two weeks. You have many outstanding responsibilities and obligations that do not accept delay or postponement, forcing you to send a message refusing to attend the wedding.

Your refusal:

.....

.....

.....

.....

11. Situation of refusal (3)

Imagine that you were a student sitting in the library writing one of the essays that you were required to submit. A student came to you and asked you to give them your mobile phone because they needed to call a friend. As you have never met and don't trust this student, you refused the request.

Your refusal:

.....

.....

.....

.....

12. Situation of refusal (4)

Imagine that, during your volunteer work in a volunteer organization, one of the volunteers, with whom you have a good relationship and mutual respect, invited you to participate with them in organizing a new event that they will supervise. Unfortunately, you were busy with too many missions and could not participate. So, you refused his invitation.

Your refusal:

.....

.....

.....

.....

Many thanks for your time and effort!

3. Appendix C: Questionnaire for ESL participants

Discourse Completion Task (DCT)

Many thanks for participating in this questionnaire! I highly appreciate your time and effort. This questionnaire consists of 12 situations (4 situations of apology, 4 situations of complaint, and 4 situations of refusal). Please read these situations carefully and interact with them by writing your responses to each situation. Please try to respond naturally without taking too long time to think. Try to respond to each situation as what you would actually say if you were in the same situation. If you have any questions, feel free to ask. I will be happy to answer.

Nationality:

Age:

Gender:

Latest IELTS score:

Duration of stay in an English-speaking country (How many years/months?):

1. Situation of apology (1)

Imagine that while you were shopping in an aisle of a shop, a product caught your eye. You picked it up and started reading the details written on it. While you were reading, someone from behind said: Excuse me! You turned around and then you realized that you were blocking the aisle and immediately you wanted to apologize for blocking the aisle.

Your apology:

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Situation of apology (2)

Imagine that you have volunteered to work in a voluntary organization through which many humanitarian activities are organized. This volunteering organization distributes working hours to all volunteers. One of the team members (represented by the letter A), who you have previously volunteered with and have a good friendship with, asked you if it is possible to swap shifts so that you cover A's shift hours on Tuesday,

and A covers your shift hours on Thursday. You said yes and it was agreed. Unfortunately, you forgot and did not cover A's hours on Tuesday. This put A in an awkward position with the management of the organization. You wanted to talk to A to apologize for what happened.

Your apology:

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. Situation of apology (3)

Imagine that while you were in a shopping centre, you bought a cup of coffee and then you started shopping holding that cup. Unfortunately, the cup of coffee fell to the floor and scattered on the floor and on a customer who was next to you at that time. The customer's clothes got wet with your coffee and you wanted to apologize for this unintended event.

Your apology:

.....

.....

.....

.....

4. Situation of apology (4)

Imagine that you borrowed a book from your sibling and (even though your sibling does not need the book) you promised to return the book in a week. Unfortunately, you forgot to return the book on time. So, you go to your brother to return the book and to apologize for this unintended delay.

Your apology:

.....

.....

.....

.....

5. Situation of complaint (1)

Imagine that you were a student reading some books in the library. A student in the library was sitting next to you reading a book and their mobile phone was receiving messages loudly in a constant manner.

The sound of messages alerts was a distraction because the place was very quiet. You decided to talk to the student to express your complaint about their mobile phone's alerts sound.

Your complaint:

.....

.....

.....

.....

6. Situation of complaint (2)

Imagine that, while you were at home, there were musical sounds coming from the apartment of a neighbor with whom you have a good relationship and mutual respect. You tried to wait for a while hoping that these musical sounds would stop but these sounds continued. You go to your neighbor to deliver your complaint due to these musical sounds.

Your complaint:

.....

.....

.....

.....

7. Situation of complaint (3)

Imagine that, during your voluntary work in one of the volunteer organizations, one of the new volunteers in the group who you have never met before was dealing with you badly. This volunteer was issuing orders in a rude manner and asking you to implement them even though this volunteer was not a manager or supervisor and did not have any legal capacity to issue orders. These behaviors prompted you to talk to this volunteer to express your complaints and dissatisfaction with these unacceptable behaviors.

Your complaint:

.....

.....

.....

.....

8. Situation of complaint (4)

Imagine that you have two laptops, both in good condition and in good working order. A sibling came to you and told you that their laptop broke down and became unusable. Also, your sibling told you that they

would buy a new laptop within three months. Then, your sibling asked you to lend them one of your laptops to use during the next three months and your sibling promised to return it to you when buying a new laptop. You lent your sibling one of your laptops. Three months later, your sibling bought a new laptop and returned yours. Unfortunately, the condition of your laptop was very poor when it was returned, and traces of misuse and neglect were very clear. After that, you wanted to talk to your sibling to express your complaint and resentment about this unacceptable behavior.

Your complaint:

.....

.....

.....

.....

9. Situation of refusal (1)

Imagine that while you were in a shopping centre, you finished choosing a large number of products to buy and you went to the counter to pay. You were in a hurry, but it was too crowded at the payment queue. Anyway, you took your place in the queue and started waiting. Then, a customer came to you and asked you to allow them to be in front of you in the queue because they only wanted to buy one single product and they told you that it will not take a long time to pay. You did not want to allow the customer to take your place because you were in a hurry. So, you wanted to refuse the request.

Your refusal:

.....

.....

.....

.....

10. Situation of refusal (2)

Imagine that while you were completing pending tasks that you had to finish as soon as possible, you received a message from a sibling inviting you to attend their wedding which will take place in two weeks. You have many outstanding responsibilities and obligations that do not accept delay or postponement, forcing you to send a message refusing to attend the wedding.

Your refusal:

.....

.....

.....

.....

11. Situation of refusal (3)

Imagine that you were a student sitting in the library writing one of the essays that you were required to submit. A student came to you and asked you to give them your mobile phone because they needed to call a friend. As you have never met and don't trust this student, you refused the request.

Your refusal:

.....

.....

.....

.....

12. Situation of refusal (4)

Imagine that, during your volunteer work in a volunteer organization, one of the volunteers, with whom you have a good relationship and mutual respect, invited you to participate with them in organizing a new event that they will supervise. Unfortunately, you were busy with too many missions and could not participate. So, you refused his invitation.

Your refusal:

.....

.....

.....

.....

Many thanks for your time and effort!

4. Appendix D: Questionnaire for British participants

Discourse Completion Task (DCT)

Many thanks for participating in this questionnaire! I highly appreciate your time and effort. This questionnaire consists of 12 situations (4 situations of apology, 4 situations of complaint, and 4 situations of refusal). Please read these situations carefully and interact with them by writing your responses to each situation. Please try to respond naturally without taking too long time to think. Try to respond to each situation as what you would actually say if you were in the same situation. If you have any questions, feel free to ask. I will be happy to answer.

Nationality:

Age:

Gender:

1. Situation of apology (1)

Imagine that while you were shopping in an aisle of a shop, a product caught your eye. You picked it up and started reading the details written on it. While you were reading, someone from behind said: Excuse me! You turned around and then you realized that you were blocking the aisle and immediately you wanted to apologize for blocking the aisle.

Your apology:

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Situation of apology (2)

Imagine that you have volunteered to work in a voluntary organization through which many humanitarian activities are organized. This volunteering organization distributes working hours to all volunteers. One of the team members (represented by the letter A), who you have previously volunteered with and have a good friendship with, asked you if it is possible to swap shifts so that you cover A's shift hours on Tuesday, and A covers your shift hours on Thursday. You said yes and it was agreed. Unfortunately, you forgot and did not cover A's hours on Tuesday. This put A in an awkward position with the management of the organization. You wanted to talk to A to apologize for what happened.

Your apology:

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. Situation of apology (3)

Imagine that while you were in a shopping centre, you bought a cup of coffee and then you started shopping holding that cup. Unfortunately, the cup of coffee fell to the floor and scattered on the floor and on a customer who was next to you at that time. The customer's clothes got wet with your coffee and you wanted to apologize for this unintended event.

Your apology:

.....

.....

.....

.....

4. Situation of apology (4)

Imagine that you borrowed a book from your sibling and (even though your sibling does not need the book) you promised to return the book in a week. Unfortunately, you forgot to return the book on time. So, you go to your brother to return the book and to apologize for this unintended delay.

Your apology:

.....

.....

.....

.....

5. Situation of complaint (1)

Imagine that you were a student reading some books in the library. A student in the library was sitting next to you reading a book and their mobile phone was receiving messages loudly in a constant manner. The sound of messages alerts was a distraction because the place was very quiet. You decided to talk to the student to express your complaint about their mobile phone's alerts sound.

Your complaint:

.....

.....

.....

.....

6. Situation of complaint (2)

Imagine that, while you were at home, there were musical sounds coming from the apartment of a neighbor with whom you have a good relationship and mutual respect. You tried to wait for a while hoping that these musical sounds would stop but these sounds continued. You go to your neighbor to deliver your complaint due to these musical sounds.

Your complaint:

.....

.....

.....

.....

7. Situation of complaint (3)

Imagine that, during your voluntary work in one of the volunteer organizations, one of the new volunteers in the group who you have never met before was dealing with you badly. This volunteer was issuing orders in a rude manner and asking you to implement them even though this volunteer was not a manager or supervisor and did not have any legal capacity to issue orders. These behaviors prompted you to talk to this volunteer to express your complaints and dissatisfaction with these unacceptable behaviors.

Your complaint:

.....

.....

.....

.....

8. Situation of complaint (4)

Imagine that you have two laptops, both in good condition and in good working order. A sibling came to you and told you that their laptop broke down and became unusable. Also, your sibling told you that they would buy a new laptop within three months. Then, your sibling asked you to lend them one of your laptops to use during the next three months and your sibling promised to return it to you when buying a new laptop. You lent your sibling one of your laptops. Three months later, your sibling bought a new laptop and returned yours. Unfortunately, the condition of your laptop was very poor when it was returned, and traces of misuse and neglect were very clear. After that, you wanted to talk to your sibling to express your complaint and resentment about this unacceptable behavior.

Your complaint:

.....

.....

.....

.....

9. Situation of refusal (1)

Imagine that while you were in a shopping centre, you finished choosing a large number of products to buy and you went to the counter to pay. You were in a hurry, but it was too crowded at the payment queue. Anyway, you took your place in the queue and started waiting. Then, a customer came to you and asked you to allow them to be in front of you in the queue because they only wanted to buy one single product and they told you that it will not take a long time to pay. You did not want to allow the customer to take your place because you were in a hurry. So, you wanted to refuse the request.

Your refusal:

.....

.....

.....

.....

10. Situation of refusal (2)

Imagine that while you were completing pending tasks that you had to finish as soon as possible, you received a message from a sibling inviting you to attend their wedding which will take place in two weeks. You have many outstanding responsibilities and obligations that do not accept delay or postponement, forcing you to send a message refusing to attend the wedding.

Your refusal:

.....

.....

.....

.....

11. Situation of refusal (3)

Imagine that you were a student sitting in the library writing one of the essays that you were required to submit. A student came to you and asked you to give them your mobile phone because they needed to call a friend. As you have never met and don't trust this student, you refused the request.

Your refusal:

.....

.....

.....

.....

12. Situation of refusal (4)

Imagine that, during your volunteer work in a volunteer organization, one of the volunteers, with whom you have a good relationship and mutual respect, invited you to participate with them in organizing a new event that they will supervise. Unfortunately, you were busy with too many missions and could not participate. So, you refused his invitation.

Your refusal:

.....

.....

.....

.....

Many thanks for your time and effort!