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Hamzah Ahmad A. Kuriri

Candidate

Language, Literacy, and Sociocultural Studies
Department

This dissertation is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication:

Approved by the Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Emma Trentman, Cl	hairperson Emme D. Frentman	
Dr. Pisarn Chamcharats	ri Bee Chamcharatari	
Dr. Mary Rice	Mary F Rice	
Professor. Arif Al-Ahdal	ulse	

PRAGMATIC ELEMENTS IN EFL LEARNERS' REQUEST E-MAILS TO TEACHERS: A STUDY OF LEARNERS' COMMUNICATIVE SUCCESS

by

HAMZAH AHMAD A. KURIRI

B.S., English, King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia, 2007

M.A. Indiana State University, Linguistics, USA, 2013

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Educational Linguistics

The University of New Mexico

Albuquerque, New Mexico

May, 2023

DEDICATION

To the persons who sacrifice their time, efforts, and everything for me and for my brothers and sisters, who keep praying for us all at all times, to my dearest parents, my father, Ahmad, and my

mother, Aishah. I will be in debt forever!

To my soulmate and beloved wife, Afnan, who was patient and paved all the paths for me to be successful; I love you more than you think, although I may not say that all the time!

To my precious children, Taleen, the first daughter and the one who made me first a father, my love for you is endless.

To Tamim, the son whom I love so much and whom taught me to be persistent and keep doing my work; and lastly, to my latest child, Maa'n, whom I adore so much. Being around you all always keeps me smiling and provides me with the energy needed to keep fighting all obstacles while doing this.

Lastly, to my brothers, Mohammad, Ibrahim, Taher, Yousef, and Wael; and my beloved sisters, Fatimah, Layla, Safieh, Samah, and Kholood.

This is for you all.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank the Almighty *Allah* (God) for His guidance, blessings, and all success that occurred and is still in my life. I would like also to express my sincere gratitude to my parents, Ahmad and Aishah, whom loved and are still loving me without any conditions. Thank you so much. The same also goes for my brothers and sisters, whom supported me immensely during the years of my studying. I will never forget that.

Further, I am to extend my sincere thanks to my beloved wife, Afnan, who gave everything to facilitate the environment for me, along with her endless and appreciated love.

Also, my deepest gratitude goes to the respected professor in my committee, Dr. Emma Trentman. Working with her was an opportunity that I acknowledged and appreciated very much. Dr. Trentman was always available for me to answer all my serious and silly questions, along with providing the guidance needed to get back on the road whenever I was off. I was so fortunate to have her.

Further, I was extensively fortunate to receive valuable feedback and insights from the committee members, Dr. Pisarn Chamcharatsri (Bee), Dr. Mary Rice, and Professor. Arif Al-Ahdal. Your trust in my ability gave me the strength needed to complete this dissertation. Your kind words will always be remembered.

Further, I was so fortunate to have many graduate friends surrounding me whom made my years of studying easy, along with having fruitful discussions about our courses and other steps toward earning our PhDs, as well as providing guidance and the strength to overcome all obstacles in my academic life. Additionally, special thanks go to my USA friends from both Saudi Arabia and the State of Kuwait, with whom I spent joyful time that was needed to keep me focusing on my dissertation. I will remember each and every one of you and will always be in debt.

I want also to extend my deepest gratitude to Dr. Hani Albelihi, Dr. Assem Alqarni, Dr. Yaseen Azi, Dr. Anas Alkhofi, Dr. Jaber Maslamani, Dr. Ghaleb Alomaish, and Dr. Jaber Alharthi for all your supports and trust that you put in me. I am so fortunate to be your colleague and friend.

Lastly, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the participants who agreed to take part in this study. Your participation is highly appreciated.

Pragmatic Elements in EFL Learners' Request E-mails to Teachers: A Study of Learners'

Communicative Success

by

Hamzah Ahmad A. Kuriri

B.S., English, King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia, 2007

M.A., Linguistics, Indiana State University, USA, 2013

Ph.D., Educational Linguistics, The University of New Mexico, USA, 2023

ABSTRACT

Language is a tool for communication. People use it when they converse with each other. One way to comprehend what is being said is based on understating the intended meanings of the conversation, or what is called the underlined meanings (pragmatics). Pragmatic studies how different meanings are conveyed, depending on the utterances provided. A case study to investigate the phenomenon of pragmatics is selected as the methodology to specifically examine English as a foreign language (EFL) instructors' perceptions of EFL students' e-mails sent to their instructors. Qualitative methods are used to examine data for a period of almost three months (October, November, and December of 2022). Academic Saudi EFL staff at Jazan University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are selected as participants in this single case study. Interviews, observations while the participants are interviewed, and review contexts (i.e., formality, directness, and politeness of EFL students' e-mails) are used to collect data during that period. Suggestions for instructions, limitations, and future research are presented.

Keywords: language, communication, pragmatics, EFL, forming requests in e-mails.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Learning a language is not an easy task. It involves continuous processes not only for young but also for adult learners who desire to learn a language. When learning a language, one must also learn other components related to it. According to Taguchi (2019), experts and laypeople claim that learning grammar and vocabulary is not enough to learn a language. From this perspective, the structural components (i.e., phonemes, morphemes, lexemes, syntax, and context/setting) of a language should also be learned. Linguistic components include phonology, syntax, semantics, morphology, and pragmatics. Birnar (2012) argued that "Linguistics is the scientific study of language, and the study of linguistics typically includes, among other things, the study of our knowledge of sound systems (phonology), word structure (morphology), and sentence structure (syntax)" (p. 2). Learning these components is critical, as almost no individual may be able to master any given language if one of these components is marginalized.

Pragmatics and cultural knowledge are two components required to communicate well with various people around the world. What is accepted in one culture may not be accepted in another. For example, Arab culture is unique and may have some points in common with Western culture. However, in Arabic culture, people must insist on inviting friends for a meal when they refuse the first time. This indicates hospitality and that the invitees are willing to join the invited party. This is not the case in Western culture, such as in the United States. People can invite their friends once, and if they refuse, this means that they are not willing to attend. There is no need for a second invitation. Being familiar with these two components is essential to avoiding miscommunication. According to Lin (2007), "For avoiding miscommunication caused by cultural difference, being familiar with diverse cultures and pragmatics is essential" (p. 91). Pragmatics refers to the language social skills that individuals use to communicate. Bardovi-Harlig (2015) defined pragmatics as the study of "how-to-say-what-to-whom-when" (p. 68). Taguchi (2015) defined pragmatics as the study of meaning that is created between interlocutors, which includes the linguistic and non-linguistic contexts of activities. What makes this field challenging is that it is culturally oriented (Borer, 2018).

This field commonly discusses speech acts, which include various conversational acts, such as requesting, apologizing, complimenting, greeting, and refusing. According to Kasper and Rose (1999), "communication action includes not only using speech acts such as apologizing, complaining, complimenting, and requesting but also engaging in different types of discourse and participating in speech events of varying length and complexity" (as cited in Lin, 2007, p. 93).

The key to any successful communication is the comprehension of these concepts, along with the speaker's intended meaning. However, the meaning of uttered sentences is not only affected by the form of words but also by the culture of the speaker (Mikhaleva &Tsepilova, 2015). The main goal is to engage both the speaker and the listener in a collaborative and meaningful conversation. Taguchi (2019) claimed the following:

Both experts and laypeople would agree that learning a second language (L2) involves more than learning grammar and vocabulary. Learning sociocultural conventions and norms of language use—what to say or not to say in a certain situation, how to convey intentions in a contextually fitting manner. (p. 1)

As a result, understanding the target speaker's culture, values, and beliefs is inevitable for performing communicative skills in that target language and leads to an effective learning

process. This study focuses on the speech act of request in communication, including the level of directness and request strategies and how EFL instructors perceive these written forms.

In this manner, it is critical to distinguish between semantics and pragmatics. Both fields are concerned with the meaning of sentences, but both explore the meaning in different ways. In other words, semantics looks into the actual meaning of utterances, while pragmatics deals with the intended meaning of utterances. Leech (2014) argued the following:

Both fields are concerned with meaning, but the difference between them can be traced to two different uses of the verb to mean:

[1] What does X mean? [2] What did you mean by X?

Semantics traditionally deals with meaning as a dyadic relation, as in [1], while pragmatics deals with meaning as a triadic relation, as in [2]. (p. 5–6)

Although these two branches are different, they complement each other and interrelate in many areas.

General pragmatics is divided into two aspects: sociopragmatics and pragmalinguistics. They are two different areas and exploring them provides benefits to this field. Sociopragmatics investigates the usage of language in society. This can be seen in the different perceptions of specific actions in different societies. In other words, it is related to specific social conditions. Leech (2014) argued that sociopragmatics deals with "...the way in which politeness is differently interpreted in (say) Chinese, Indian, or American societies, to realize that pragmatic descriptions ultimately have to be relative to specific social conditions" (p. 10). Sociopragmatics focuses more on the local usage of language than on the general conditions of language usage in a given society. Conversely, pragmalinguistics "can be applied to the study of the more linguistic end of pragmatics—where we consider the particular resources which a given language provides for conveying particular illocutions" (Leech, 1983, p. 11).

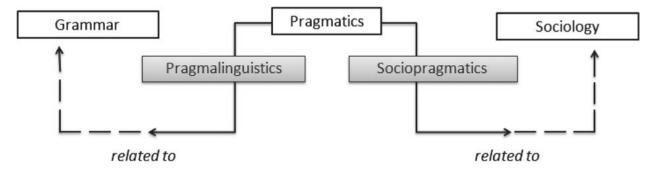


Figure 1: Pragmatics: general pragmatics, pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics (Leech 1983,

p. 11)

Cross-cultural differences that exist among different societies lead to various perspectives on pragmatics. In other words, what can be accepted pragmatically in one culture may not be accepted in another. As a result, learners need to be extremely cautious when they attempt to use a language that is not their own. One of the issues with which learners of other languages may struggle is the fact that they may expect their L1 pragmatic concepts and beliefs to be identical to the language(s) they are attempting to learn. Therefore, they tend to shift their own first language (L1) knowledge of their L1 pragmatic concepts and apply it to the second language (L2), which is known as negative transfer. According to Zhao (2019):

Negative transfer refers to the interference of the mother tongue; sometimes the mother tongue cannot promote learning a foreign language, to some extent even impeding the learner from mastering some new language knowledge; this transfer is called negative transfer). Negative transfer occurs when the learning task of the two languages is relative but different; the learner of a foreign language uses the expression and understanding of the mother tongue to replace the foreign language. (p. 942)

This occurs not only for beginners but also for most advanced learners. This can result in the inability to communicate appropriately with other speakers of the target language, as the norms of the two languages are dissimilar.

English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) instructors are encouraged to understand that teaching a language without its culturally based aspects is not beneficial if the goal is to promote successful learning and prepare learners to become better. Kramch (1995) stated that "Despite the advances made by research in the spheres of the intercultural and the multicultural, language teaching is still operating on a relatively narrow conception of both language and culture" (p. 83). Certainly, pragmatic competence is a skill that relies not only on syntactical and semantical aspects of a language but also on the intended meaning of the communication and the relationship between the individuals and the context of the communication.

As stated earlier, pragmatic competence is needed to communicate successfully in a language. Therefore, ESL and EFL learners are encouraged to put more effort into comprehending the pragmatic concepts of the target language(s) and to recognize the differences between their own L1 and the pragmatics of the context and culture they seek to learn, in this case, the Saudis who use English in a lingua franca context. By achieving this, EFL/ESL learners will be more capable of uttering sentences that sound more appropriate and polite-sounding and will avoid obstacles such as sounding impolite, when they form their speech act of requesting.

Statement of the Problem

Forming requests in e-mails among EFL students at the college level has always been problematic. Barron (2000, 2002, 2003), Biesenbach-Lucas (2006), and Crystal (2000) argued that "... both native and nonnative speakers are faced with uncertainties regarding styles and

politeness strategies in e-mail interaction" (as cited in Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011, p. 3193). In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, English is used as a foreign language, which means that people who speak this language do not use it in the Saudi community as a language of conversation or everyday speech. The lack of fluency in English and unfamiliarity with English cultural norms are other reasons that affect how these students construct their e-mails (Najeeb et al., 2012, p. 127). Therefore, many students struggle with the notion of composing adequate requests when uttering sentences in English. Spoken utterances are not the only case here, as written forms also seem to have the same issue, as explained in the literature. This may occur as students tend to transfer their spoken words into written forms. Sending e-mails to their instructors is no different (Balman & Lee, 2020; Daveci & Hmida, 2017; Leopold, 2015). Their language and tone in their e-mails are not always perceived as polite, thus causing numerous misconceptions and perceptions by instructors who receive e-mails. Misconceptions and errors usually occur because EFL learners do not fully comprehend the sociocultural aspects of the language (Yusuf, 2018). Most of these errors occur because learners do not fully comply with the pragmatic aspects of a given language (Borer, 2018). When these errors occur, EFL and ESL learners may feel discouraged and isolated when they are corrected or when they acquire the competence needed to distinguish what is correct or incorrect. Borer (2018) suggested that when EFL learners fail to comply with or respond to a compliment, the interlocutor may perceive this action as impolite, as the norm in American culture is to accept the compliment and then thank the interlocutor who gave the compliment. For Shoukani and Rezaei (2015), a lack of pragmatic competence in a given language may lead to miscommunication, which results in breaking the friendship bond between the speaker and the listener. Glater (2006) and Biesenback-Lucas (2007) hypothesized that "complaints from faculty regarding students' e-mails range from unreasonable requests and

impolite tone to inappropriate informality, inappropriate salutations, abbreviations, spelling, and grammar errors" (as cited in Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011, p. 3193).

Politeness strategies differ cross-culturally (Hawisher & Selfe, 2000), and all cultures use their politeness norms with regard to linguistic and non-linguistic norms (Brown & Levinson, 1987). These politeness strategies may be perceived and interpreted differently from the intention of the interlocutor based on the beliefs, perspectives, and cultural aspects of the hearer.

Currently, many researchers have attempted to study the similarities and dissimilarities between native English speakers and non-native English speakers (Alaboudi, 2020; Al-Gahtani & Roever, 2015; Al-Gahtani, 2017; Alqarawi, 2018; Altasan, 2016; Ghavamnia & Rezazadeh, 2012; Maros & Halim, 2018; Yuan & Wei, 2011). Many of them have advocated the universality of politeness theory (e.g., Yuan & Wei, 2011). Other researchers, such as Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), have critiqued this theory and claimed its non-universality. Other areas of speech have also been researched in some studies, such as most EFL learners using indirect requests (Chen & Chen, 2007; Megaiab et al., 2019; Sattar et al., 2009; Yuan & Wei, 2011) and EFL/ESL learners frequently using direct requests (Alfattah & Ravindranath, 2009; Ghazzoul, 2009).

To determine EFL instructors' perceptions of students' e-mails, Daveci and Hmida (2017) examined request forming as a speech act used in the e-mails of Arabic learners at an English university in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). They found that non-native and native speakers differed significantly in their strategies of forming their requests, consistent with other studies supporting this notion (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Ghavamnia & Rezazadeh, 2012; Yuan & Wei, 2011). It is crucial to highlight that e-mail correspondence between different cultures may lead to "face loss," as stated by Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 66). According to Goffman (1955), a face-threatening act (face loss) is explained as follows:

In our interactions with others, there are times when we fail in our attempts to take a particular "line" or present a particular face. Goffman used such phrases as "in the wrong face," "to be out of face," "shamefaced," and "threats to face" to describe situations where the face a person is attempting to maintain is challenged or undermined in some way. (as cited in Redmond, 2015)

Consequently, failing to follow these norms may lead to critical miscommunication.

However, in the study of pragmatics, requests as a speech act are quite common in the literature (Al-Gahtani, 2017; Al-Gahtani & Roever, 2012; Almasaeed, 2017; Deveci & Hmida, 2017; Ghazzoul, 2019; Webman Shafron, 2019). The majority of these studies have focused only on providing cross-cultural and intralingual similarities and differences between L1 and L2; in most cases, the L2 is English. Only a few studies have examined this phenomenon in terms of exploring the perceptions of EFL learners' e-mails from the perspective of their EFL instructors at Jazan University with college-level students. The current study explored only e-mails sent by EFL students to their EFL instructors and the EFL perceptions of the received e-mails in the context of using English as a lingua franca in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. To the best of our knowledge, no study has investigated this issue. Therefore, this study aimed to fill this research gap when searching for target students.

Purpose of the Study

This study followed the guidelines of a qualitative research design. Specifically, the study was conducted as a single case study. This study aimed to determine how EFL instructors perceive the e-mails of their EFL students studying at Jazan university in the Kingdom of Saudi

Arabia. EFL students encounter numerous problems when composing appropriate e-mails intended to be sent to their EFL instructors. They may not follow the etiquette of sending e-mails to an individual of a higher position. Therefore, EFL students may commit many mistakes when writing e-mails to their instructors. EFL instructors may perceive these e-mails as inappropriate. This study reflected on Saudi EFL instructors who taught English as a foreign language at Jazan University. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, English is commonly used as a lingua franca only for specific purposes. EFL students may not have the knowledge that enables them to compose emails effectively. Therefore, the study determined both the level of the directness level of the emails sent and EFL instructors' perceptions of their students' e-mails.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

When making requests via e-mail, as part of the learning process, EFL learners may encounter numerous obstacles (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). One of these obstacles is being able to sound and act in a manner appropriate to the context of making requests. However, as this process of learning continues, misconceptions and errors may continue, as learners still need to acquire the norms for forming polite requests.

EFL learners are encouraged to acknowledge the different unequal hierarchical positions and relationships. For example, as EFL instructors are in a higher position, EFL learners are expected to use status-congruent language that represents their lower status (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011).

This study aimed to explore EFL instructors' perceptions of e-mails compiled by EFL learners with regard to their degree of directness and request strategies. Thus, this would lead to a better understanding of this phenomenon. Moreover, EFL learners and instructors may benefit

from the results of this study in comprehending the issue of writing improper e-mails by EFL learners and sending them to their academic staff.

Although a few studies have attempted to analyze this issue from the perspective of EFL instructors, there seems to be no study conducted from the perspective of EFL instructors from this specific university in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Additionally, most studies in this arena have been conducted as quantitative studies. This represents a gap in the literature that needs to be filled. Thus, this study aims to fill this gap, as e-mails have become an essential part of the correspondence between academic staff and their students.

Theoretical Framework

Language learning is not purely a cognitive process. Therefore, considering other aspects when teaching a language is inevitable. These aspects are those in which pragmatics and sociolinguistics are used in the real world by native and non-native speakers. Therefore, understanding the obstacles and methods of how EFL learners form their requests when sending e-mails to their instructors through a case study is important.

To understand the tone and appropriateness of the sound of the e-mails sent by EFL learners to their EFL instructors, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) theory was applied. According to Blum-Kulma and Olshtain (1984), directness in requests can be classified into three types:

1- Conventionally direct strategy: In this type, interlocutors state/utter their sentence/request in a direct manner with little to no effort to mitigate the imposition their request may cause. For example, one may say, "Bring me that book."

- 2- Conventionally indirect: In this type, unlike the conventional direct strategy, interlocutors make an effort to save face from the imposition of their request on the receiver. For example, one can say, "Would you mind bringing me that book, please?"
- 3- Non-conventionally indirect: In this type, interlocutors use hedges or hints to request from others. In other words, one may rely on the receiver's comprehension to complete/do the request. For example, one may say, "I was wondering if going to the library would be difficult." Here, the interlocutor is not asking for confirmation of the statement but may be looking for someone to take the speaker to the library.

Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) method was applied to this study, as this theoretical framework is set to identify request strategies and the degree of politeness in the requests made through the e-mails of EFL learners within the determined context.

Although Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) theoretical framework is commonly used in spoken language, it was the most suitable framework to implement in my study. This framework provided me with the tools I needed to examine the proposed problems found in the literature and to suggest tools for examining the sentences produced by the target population. Based on the data in the literature, many studies have implemented this theoretical framework not only to examine spoken texts (Shafron, 2019) but also to study written forms (Alsulami, 2015; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Ghazzoul, 2019). The following paragraphs provide details about these studies.

In her study entitled "Level of directness and the use of please in requests in English by native speakers of Arabic and Hebrew," Shafron (2019) examined the implementation of the marker please and the power of social status in written forms in sentences produced by Hebrew L1 speakers and Arabic L1 speakers. She utilized Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) levels of directness as a theoretical framework to investigate the level of directness in implementing the request maker *please* in her cross-cultural study. The use of this theoretical framework helped determine which sentences were uttered frequently by native speakers of these two languages, thus answering the research question.

In *Linguistic and pragmatic failure of Arab learners in direct polite requests and invitations: A cross-cultural study*, Ghazzoul (2019) examined the reasons for the failure of Arabic speakers from different cultures to produce polite sentences in written form when requesting. Ghazzoul used Brown and Levinson's theoretical framework (1987) and Blum-Kulka's level of directness to test whether the proposed speech act theory and the theory of politeness were applicable to her study and whether the level of directness affected the level of politeness of Arab learners. Utilizing Brown and Levinson's theoretical framework helped Ghazzoul to conclude and reject the universality of speech act theory, while Blum-Kulka's (1984) level of directness helped her test the level of directness in the sentences uttered by the participants.

In *The effectiveness of social distance in requests*, Alsualami (2015) used Brown and Levinson's theoretical framework to measure the effectiveness of social distance in the spoken requests of Australian native speakers and Indonesian non-native speakers of English. Alsulami determined the extent to which the face-saving theory could be applied to the participants. As Alsulami attempted to understand the mechanism of making requests by the participants and the strategies they used when making requests in interviews, it was important to use Brown and Levinson's face-saving theory to answer the research questions. Based on the provided theoretical framework and the study results, social distance, power, and degree of imposition of the speaker on the hearer were found to play an important role in the participants' manner of forming requests.

Research Design Overview

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to provide insights into the directness level of the e-mails and EFL instructors' perceptions of these e-mails they received from their EFL learners in terms of being polite or impolite based on their own judgment. The study was conducted as a single case study to examine the phenomenon in its natural setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case I explored was in an educational setting at Jazan University, as reflected by the perception of the e-mails sent by EFL students to their EFL instructors. It is important to mention that English is usually used as a lingua franca in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Therefore, this case study only dealt with this educational context and only focused on the EFL instructors' perceptions of the e-mails they received from their own students at Jazan University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

This study investigated EFL instructors' perceptions of e-mails compiled by EFL learners from Jazan University. This qualitative case study provided detailed information about the emails received. Qualitative research provides researchers with an in-depth understanding of the issue under scope as it allows for an authentic interaction between the researcher and the participants in a natural setting (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). A case study explores a phenomenon in a natural setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018), and as a method, it empowers participants to tell their stories to the researcher (Karlson, 2016). A single case study approach is the most suitable approach to apply to this phenomenon. The aimed case here is the context (EFL classes at Jazan University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia). As this study only focused on particular participants and aimed at exploring EFL instructors in a specific setting, a single case study was used as the methodology. This is consistent with the problem, purpose, and research questions of the study and allows EFL instructors to share their experiences in receiving e-mails from EFL students and classify these e-mails based on their tone and language. A collective case study is undertaken when there are various cases and when the ultimate goal is to examine a phenomenon.

The participants in this study were 10 EFL instructors who had taught English for more than four years at Jazan University. For the purpose of the study, the selection process of the participants was based on experience and the condition of receiving e-mails from students. The EFL instructors were requested to participate voluntarily in the study to obtain their own perceptions of the e-mails they received. More details pertinent to the methodology of the study are discussed in Chapter 3.

Aside from interviewing the participants, reviewing the contexts of the e-mails and observation were other tools used to collect data. After data collection, an inductive analysis approach was used to analyze the data. In this approach, I allotted extensive time to reading raw data to create themes from the interviews and review the contents (Saldaña, 2016).

To fulfill the requirements for the trustworthiness of the study, the data were triangulated by collecting various sources of data through semi-structured interviews with EFL instructors, observations of the EFL instructors during the interview, and reviewing the e-mails of EFL students (document analysis). Triangulation of information strengthens the case study and ensures that the phenomenon being investigated is studied from different sources (Baškarada, 2014).

The study was conducted at the College of Arts and Humanities at Jazan University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The target participants were EFL instructors who had taught EFL for

more than four years. The 10 EFL instructors were interviewed, and the contexts of the 10 emails received by the EFL instructors were reviewed. More details are discussed in the following chapters.

I selected the qualitative case approach as almost all the studies in the literature were quantitative. This qualitative case study advanced our understanding of EFL instructors' perceptions of the e-mails sent to them by their students. Examining these e-mails and classifying them as polite or impolite benefited the instructors and shed light on this issue. Moreover, the instructors' own efforts were enhanced to promote this topic among their EFL learners to avoid miscommunication or misconceptions about the intention of the e-mails based on their form and tone. This study also helped develop the literature for future researchers who might be interested in examining this phenomenon using the same idea of investigating the perceptions of EFL learners' e-mails from the view of EFL instructors in different contexts.

Research Questions

The following questions were designed to address the purpose of the study:

*RQ***1**: What is the level of directness embedded in some of the e-mails perceived by EFL instructors?

RQ2: What are EFL instructors' perceptions of the e-mails sent by their EFL learners in terms of appropriateness?

Definition of Key Terms

English as a foreign language (EFL). EFL refers to programs in which English is used only in classrooms and official settings without using it as a lingua franca or as a primary language in a society (International TESOL Association, 2017).

English as a second language (ESL). ESL refers to English programs in which English is the primary language and the language widely used in a given society (International TESOL Association, 2017).

First or native language (L1). This is the mother tongue of an individual. It is the first language a child learns from birth (Mizza, 2014).

Pragmatics. This is concerned with the meaning that exists between the speaker and the listener, who uses the linguistic and non-linguistic contexts of socially cultured activities (Taguchi, 2015). **Pragmatic competence.** It is a skill that enables individuals to successfully interact and interpret meaning in social interactions (Borer, 2018).

Second language (L2). It refers to learners' second language. It can also be used to describe any language that a learner knows beyond his/her first language, whether it is the learner's second language or fourth language (Mizza, 2014).

Sociolinguistics. It is a systematic study of the social uses of language. It proceeds by observing the way people use language in different social settings (Chambers, 2007).

Summary

E-mails are used as correspondence between academic staff and learners. Many EFL learners are requested to use them, as they enable the learners to communicate quickly with their instructors. However, writing e-mails in English, which is used as a foreign language, is not an easy task. Many students encounter difficulties when writing proper e-mails to academic staff. These difficulties may occur because of the cultural and linguistic differences between English and Arabic. Thus, this descriptive single case study aimed to deepen the knowledge of pragmatics by investigating this phenomenon from the perspective of the e-mails received by EFL instructors and their perceptions of these e-mails in terms of the request strategies and the levels of politeness and directness. To collect rich data and ensure the validity and reliability of the study, different methods were used to follow the triangulation suggestion for the research. The semi-structured interviews with the EFL instructors, observations, and document review were the data collection methods used in this study. The data were inductively analyzed to obtain the results of the study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

An Overview

This chapter provides a review of the literature and various studies that have underpinned the phenomenon of the speech act of request forming. The studies that have investigated this phenomenon from different perspectives are presented. First, it discusses pragmatic competence. Then, cross-cultural studies about speech act realizations. Studies comparing English with other languages are emphasized. Then, studies on interlanguage pragmatics and the ways in which some languages differ from each other in this specific speech act are presented. Fourth, studies on the intralanguage of forming requests are reviewed to provide insights into the appropriateness and implementation of such a technique when uttering/writing a request. Fifth, studies that have examined the phenomenon of forming requests by Arabic learners or in Arabic varieties are discussed. Research on the issue of alerts when forming requests, the difficulties Arabic learners may encounter when forming requests, and Arabic learners' proficiency levels in forming requests are also reviewed. Gender and its effect on how learners perform and utter their requests are examined. Sixth, this chapter underpins the notion of using requests in e-mails and presents a few studies that have addressed this topic. Following that, e-mails as a genre is discussed. Eighth, it tackles the concept of pragmatic competence and its relationship with performance and linguistic competence. The research gaps found in the literature are also presented. A summary concludes this chapter.

Pragmatic Competence

Pragmatic competence is defined as "the ability to use language appropriately in a social context, has become an object of inquiry in a wide range of disciplines including linguistics,

applied linguistics, anthropology, sociology, psychology, communication research, and crosscultural studies" (Taguchi,2009, p. 1). Pragmatic competence as a field relied heavily on many factors. These factors are like mind reading of other's mind and intentions, knowledge of logical rules, interpreting other's behavior, other's background knowledge, including the knowledge of social conditions (Ifantidou, 2014). Linguistic utterances and performance may not be performed successfully without the existence of pragmatic competence.

It is crucial to mention that linguistic competence is a vital element in pragmatic competence. Wherein, pragmatic competence is one element on which linguistic performance relies on to decode and comprehend utterances in communications. Ifantidou (2014) claimed that "linguistic competence is required for pragmatic competence to become manifest in verbal communication. But linguistic performance relies not only on linguistic competence, but also on pragmatic competence for invoking humans' inferential ability to process information, and utterances in particular" (p. 1).

Adding to this, one must differentiate between performance and competence. According to Chomsky (1965; 197; 2006), these two terms are not alike as competence refers to knowledge an individual has about a given language (innate), while performance refers to the actual usage of that knowledge when conversing with other individuals (as cited in Ifantidou, 2014, p. 1). Although these topics are intriguing, nevertheless, they are not the spotlights of this research and investigating them are not, at least in this work, is not intended.

Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP): The Case of Requests and Apologies in Different Languages Many studies have attempted to examine forming requests as a speech act and compare them with other languages in the world. These studies aimed to find similarities and differences in the target culture or language.

Most studies in this category aimed to find similarities and dissimilarities. Researchers have addressed this topic by questioning whether the studies followed Brown and Levinson's (1978) universal politeness theory. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) analyzed the written responses of participants who spoke various languages cross-culturally and from an intralanguage perspective (i.e., Australian English, American English, British English, Canadian French, Danish, German, Hebrew, and Russian) when these speakers offered their requests and apology. They found that language was not universal in their method of forming requests, contrary to the claim of the universality of politeness theory. Moreover, the participants' language differed in their manner of forming a speech act contextually.

Other studies explored the differences and similarities in written form among different EFL speakers and compared them with the speech acts of native speakers. Yuan and Wei (2011) confirmed that both Chinese EFL speakers and American participants used more common strategies when performing the speech act of requesting and that Chinese EFL speakers were affected by their L1 (i.e., they transferred information from their L1 and applied it to their performed output). The same results were found by Maros and Halim (2018), who revealed that Malay and English speakers had similarities and differences in the use of alerters due to the intercultural combination of the two languages. According to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) and Savic (2014) (as cited in Maros & Halim, 2018), alerters are

one of the major sociopragmatic aspects at the stage of initiating a

conversation. The term refers to the language used in initiating a conversation or the way of choosing the form of calls following the rules and the norms, which are based on several social variables including age, social status, social distance and context of the utterance.

This was not true in Ghavamnia and Rezazadeh's (2012) study, which compared the written forms of Persian speakers with those of Canadian speakers. They found that these two groups were not alike in terms of their frequency and type of strategies when performing their requests. Only the Canadians implemented conversation openers compared with the other groups and tended to introduce themselves first before making a request to others. Moreover, the Canadians used more indirect strategies when forming requests, whereas the Persians used direct strategies.

Nonetheless, transferring is not always a beneficial tool when studying forming requests. Kim (1995) studied the spoken performance of Korean participants and found that a negative transfer was implemented by Korean ESL participants. Kim (1995) concluded that native Korean ESL participants applied negative transfer in the directness level of their requests. Transfer from Korean was observed in non-native participants, along with apologies when forming requests. Kim's (1995) study also showed that non-native and native Korean participants used more indirect utterances.

Although some studies attempted to examine the similarities and differences in forming requests as a speech act between native speakers and other EFL speakers, other studies investigated the issue in a more detailed manner. Altasan (2016) reviewed two proficiency levels of Arabic EFL speakers when performing their spoken requests and compared them with those of native speakers in terms of using external modifications (supportive moves) and internal modifications (lexical and phrasal downgraders). Altasan (2016) revealed that advanced learners perform better than intermediate-level learners in using lexical and syntactical mitigators, and that both groups used fewer internal and external modifiers than native speakers. Altasan (2016) also found that pragmatic competence plays an important role in how polite and direct the requests could be performed and that EFL participants could perform syntactically and semantically correct requests but might lack the politeness presumed by native speakers.

Interlanguage Request Forming

Many studies have been conducted on interlanguage pragmatics in requests. This may be due to the fact that requests impose a high level of face threat act (FTA) on the receiver of the request and may endanger the requestee's face. This act (i.e., request) is performed by speakers to accomplish a task and/or attain an answer or do something for the producer of the act. Forming requests poses an extreme challenge to almost all L2 learners due to the differences in the practicalities and strategies followed by learners. For example, many strategies are considered, such as when they need to be direct or less direct in their requests or whether they need to use hedging.

In comparing languages, many studies have attempted to study speech acts, specifically requests, to identify similarities and dissimilarities among languages. Much research have been conducted to explore these areas and determine whether these languages share similarities.

Şanal and Ortaçtepe (2019) supported the challenges encountered by EFL/ESL learners in forming requests. They examined the written requests of Turkish EFL speakers and compared them with those of native speakers. They found that Turkish learners were not capable of forming requests appropriately or making proper refusals. Specifically, the Turkish EFL participants were less formal than native speakers.

In light of the strategy implemented by EFL speakers, Al-Gahtani and Roever (2013) compiled a study to reveal the differences between Saudi speakers and other speakers who studied Modern Standard Arabic in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in terms of implementing direct or indirect spoken requests. Their results followed a U-shaped pattern: learners started their requests by implementing more direct requests, followed by more indirect requests and finally by more direct requests. This finding supports the claim of Kasper and Rose (2002), who argued that the development stage is not universal, and that language has its own preference for the methods of implementing direct or indirect requests. By contrast, Chen and Chen (2007) compared the written form of Taiwanese EFL speakers with the written request form of American speakers. They found that the participants preferred only the conventionally indirect strategy, thus supporting the claim that the conventionally indirect method is preferred among languages. This was also supported by Karaöz and Isisag (2019) when they examined the written request strategies used by Turkish EFL learners and found that the participants tended to use more conventionally indirect strategies except when dealing with interlocutors of a higher position.

Social distance is another factor affecting how participants compose their requests. Alsulami (2015) examined and compared the spoken outcomes of an Australian participant with a non-native English speaker, an Indonesian participant. Social distance was found to play a significant role in how requests were formed by the participants. In social distance situations, the tendency to apply softer and more polite utterances were high. This supports the claim that social distance, degree of imposition, and the power of interlocutors affect how requests are formed in various situations. Transfer is another issue that can occur in language. This was observed by Kasanga (2006), who analyzed the written variety of South African English—also referred to as Black South African English (BSAE)—and discussed the transfer of syntactic forms from Sestho sa Leboa (North Sotho), a language of South Africa, to this specific variety of English. The results confirmed the existence of transferring strategies from L1 to L2 in the variety of BSAE of educated bilinguals. The study also showed the effect of cultural rules as a result of contact between the two languages.

Instructing learners and promoting lectures to learners is another topic that has been addressed by researchers (Harooni & Pourdana, 2017; Kaivanpanah & Langari, 2020; Taguchi, Nananuma & Budding, 2015). Taguchi, Nanauma, and Budding (2015) found that their participants performed well after receiving instructions and that their performance increased. This finding was also supported by Harooni and Pordana (2017), who found that the instructions given to the participants increased the positive influence on learners and advocated teaching them to EFL learners. Kaivanpanah and Langari (2020) revealed that their participants' performance increased when they received instructions and that their conceptual knowledge was enhanced upon receiving the necessary knowledge.

Indirect Request Forming (Intralanguage Requests)

Forming indirect requests is another area in which studies on requests have been conducted. Many believe that it is preferable to form indirect requests to avoid trouble and/or raising the FTA for both the speaker and the listener of the act. Many researchers have analyzed this idea in language, but they did not intend to compare request forming as a speech act with another language (e.g., comparing the Korean language with US or UK English). There are various topics in this area, and most of them advocate for implementing more indirect strategies when forming requests (Aliakbari & Gheitasi, 2014; Gagne, 2014; Shams & Afghari, 2011). In their study of strategies performed by Iranian EFL learners, Aliakbari and Gheitasi (2014) explored participants' awareness of writing requests with regard to formality, politeness, and directness. Their results showed that more than 95% of the participants used formal requests, more than 88.5% made polite requests, and 67.2% used indirect requests in their utterances. They also found a relationship among these variables, namely indirectness, politeness, and formality. These results were not different from those of other studies in terms of applying indirect requests. Gagne (2018) revealed that making direct spoken requests and imperatives was rare and that the indirect form was more frequent (e.g., *can 1 have x*). Shams and Afghari (2011) supported this result, as they found that Iranians used more indirect written requests when addressing other Iranians and that people with different cultures tended to apply more indirect strategies when addressing others.

Sunho and Yawisah (2019) examined the written request and politeness strategy of Native Dayanese in OKU, South Sumatra, and found that willing sentences were the most frequent among all other types of forming requests. Words such as *Majuat, Hijuat,* and *Padaiat* were also used frequently. *Majuat* was used when addressing interlocutors of a higher position, whereas *Hijuat* and *Padaiat* were used when addressing interlocutors of the same or lower status. In terms of politeness, Native Dayanese used negative politeness to sound pessimistic and apologetic.

Requests in Arabic varieties and L1 (Arabic) impact on L2 (English) outcome

Arabic EFL or ESL learners are no different from most EFL and/or ESL learners around the world when forming requests. They encounter many challenges in using preferred and correct ways of forming requests. Some cultures have their own methods of expressing requests, as observed in some studies.

Tag-Eldin (2018) analyzed alerters in the Sudanese Arabic variety when responding to written questions and the precursors implanted by the participants. The study examined the written responses of the participants and found that Arabic speakers used precursors more frequently than native English speakers. Precursors were implanted because they served religious, social, and pragmatic functions. One may say that their L1 (Arabic) impacts their outcome of the L2 (English) as English speakers do not usually use religious precursors in their speech, especially in requests. Moreover, the study found that selecting different alerters was governed by different contextual parameters.

The Yemeni Arabic dialect has gained the attention of researchers. Alfattah and Ravindranath (2009) examined the politeness strategies Yemeni speakers use when forming written requests. Yemeni Arabic speakers tended to use conventionally direct strategies, along with mood derivable and politeness markers. These findings contrast with those of Al-Marrani's (2018) study. This study revealed that Yemeni Arabic speakers implanted direct head acts mostly in hearer-oriented utterances in written form. The direct head was used in conventionally direct or conventionally indirect requests, as it served to reveal solidarity. Conversely, the participants who applied indirect head acts used various kinds of requests, such as "hearer-oriented, speakeroriented, inclusive, or impersonal." The reason for using these types was to show respect and to downgrade the degree of imposition on others.

Al-Gahtani and Roever (2018) examined the spoken requests of Saudi participants studying in Australia. They grouped the participants according to their proficiency levels (i.e., low to high levels). They found that the low-level participants made direct requests without inserting a reason or explanation, which was inconsistent with what almost native speakers do when requesting. This tendency revealed that the participants sought the interlocutors' assistance to perform well or the effect of their L1 on their outcome. Social context and power had an insignificant effect on the low-level participants but had a significant effect on the highly proficient participants.

The Iraqi Arabic variety has been studied for its methods of forming requests. Sattar et al. (2009) explored the strategies for forming and perceiving written requests of Iraqi postgraduate students studying English. Their study revealed that most participants used indirect request strategies in almost all situations. The most frequent types were *Can I* and *Could I*, which were used to mitigate requests on the hearer. Socio-linguistic changes were found in the semantic formulas. The participants' first language, in this case Iraqi Arabic, played a significant role in how requests were formed and did not adhere to English norms when requesting. Furthermore, dissimilarities were found between the produced forms of requests of the participants and those of native speakers, as the participants were incapable of producing requests that were consistent with those recognized by native speakers. Conversely, similarities were found in non-adherence to the norms of how requests should be formed.

The Libyan Arabic variety has received attention in the study of various methods of request forming. Megaiab, Wijana, and Munandar (2019) questioned the politeness strategy between Libyan learners and their lecturers in the classroom and found that both groups used politeness values when forming spoken requests. The results also showed that the conventionally indirect strategy was the most preferred strategy to avoid imposing on the hearers. The degree of power and social distance played significant roles in how the participants formed requests. Moreover, the more indirect the request was, the more polite it was perceived. Nevertheless,

conventional direct requests were also observed, and they were used to signal closeness in the relationships among interlocutors rather than the imposition of face. Direct requests were followed by markers and attention-getters to mitigate the requests and/or make them sound more polite.

Cultural aspects may also play a role in how requests are formed in society. In a crosscultural study, El-Dakhs (2018) compared the differences in the speech act of written requests between Egyptian Arabic and Saudi Arabic. The results supported variational pragmatics in the sense that each culture has politeness values that differ from each other.

Ghazzoul (2019) also examined cross-cultural differences. Specifically, she studied the cross-cultural failure of Arabic students to form polite written requests, despite the various backgrounds of the participants. All the participants preferred using conventionally direct methods to express their hospitality as it occurred in their L1. Conversely, participants from the UK used more conventionally indirect strategies when requesting and inviting. These norms were perceived by native Arabic speakers as "lacking in hospitality in invitation" and being pragmatically unclear in request forming.

Requests and Gender

Cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics are not the only areas that have been studied to recognize their roles and effects on forming requests. Other studies have been conducted to question the role of gender in forming requests and to determine the extent to which gender can play a role in forming requests appropriately.

Hashemian and Farhang-Ju (2017) examined the differences in forming spoken requests among EFL learners using synchronous computer-mediated communication. They investigated the politeness strategies of instructors and how politeness was interpreted similarly or differently based on gender and proficiency level in text-based synchronous computer-mediated communication. The results showed that gender did not play a role in forming requests. Conversely, proficiency level had an effect on the formation of requests, and its effect made a great difference. Önem's (2016) study did not agree with that of Hashemian and Farhang-Ju (2017). Önem (2016) examined the role of gender among EFL learners and found differences between male and female participants when forming written requests. Females were more inclined to add more details when requesting, which could be considered a face-saving strategy by providing details about the reason for the request. These results agreed with those of Tabar (2010), who compared and contrasted Iranian and Turkish Iranian participants to determine whether different genders could produce the same politeness level in written sentences. Moreover, Tabar (2010) found that the participants had different degrees of politeness; Iranian females were more likely to use indirect strategies than the male participants, and female Turkish speakers used more hints than Turkish male speakers.

History of E-mails

E-mails have become an important part of our lives. People have adopted e-mail technology in different aspects of their lives to either facilitate or employ easier ways of communicating with others. Having one e-mail account or more is now commonplace, as communicating through e-mail is as common as talking on the phone. Dürscheid and Frehner (2013) argued that "Thus, one may assume that most readers are familiar with sending e-mails and with their structural elements, which include the header, the body, and an optional signature" (p. 35).

The use of e-mails can be traced back to the 1970s (Barron, 2000). Back then, e-mails were restricted to governmental, business, and technical use only. Individuals were allowed to

create and use e-mails in the late 1980s (Dürscheid & Frehner, 2013). People began to use emails widely and discuss topics that were not appropriate to speak of on the phones. E-mails were also used to explain a topic in written form to make it easier for the recipient(s) to retrieve and consult it later. For example, instructors and teachers used e-mails to explain a topic so that students could refer back to it or provide steps to solve a question (Dürscheid & Frehner, 2013).

Currently, they are an essential part of academia, and their role cannot be denied. E-mails are important in today's world because of the convenience they provide in social interactions, and for some people, they can replace old-fashioned face-to-face interaction (Bloch, 2002). E-mails are "an ideal tool for building and maintaining social relationships" (Baron, 1998, p. 155), and they have "both the informality of speech and the ability to facilitate communication at any time or space" (Bloch, 2002, p. 119).

The pragmatic features of e-mails have not remained the same since they were started. There was a shift in the features, specifically "a shift of focus from medium-related to userrelated patterns of language use" (Androutsopoulos, 2006, p. 421). One aspect that was modified was e-mail dialogue (Dürscheid & Frehner, 2013). Individuals may receive and read e-mails simultaneously and follow the chain of many e-mails exchanged among these individuals. If one of them responds quickly to the last e-mail received, this individual can only add new information to the dialogue but not follow the same structure required to form an e-mail (Dürscheid & Frehner, 2013). Certainly, this may change if the type of communication is professional or between two or more individuals in an official institution or entity. Despite the advantages of e-mails, they are incomparable to face-to-face interactions in rectifying and eliminating miscommunication when receiving them. E-mails can also impose challenges on the receiver, as they do not convey gestures and facial expressions (Murray, 1995).

E-mail Communication and Genres

As e-mails have become an essential element in our technological lives, their role in passing messages and other information to the intended party may be overlooked. Therefore, people use them on a daily basis for various reasons, such as exchanging information about work, business, legal actions, and government documents, as a recent study showed that almost 60% of adult Americans use their e-mails on daily basis (Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2005).

One of the most debated topics is how technology changes the way we write every day. People usually perform more appropriate and formal actions when they write more than when they speak. However, this point is not firm. Some researchers have claimed that the differences between written and spoken forms are diminishing. According to Barron (2000), "... [i]n the fast-moving world of e-mail, content is far more important than spelling and punctuation" and concluded that "...the line between the spoken and written language continues to fade" (p. 259).

Although some studies have shown the differences between written and spoken forms, others have suggested the resemblance between written and spoken forms. Both types use formal and informal styles and polite and impolite sentences. Barron (2003) argued that "...[e]mail resembles speech" (p. 92). Therefore, the e-mail writing process is influenced by many factors, as is the case with spoken forms. Despite the fact many scholars argued for the same notion, others saw that speech and writing were further complex based on the studies they conducted (Bieber, 1988).

As any other type of written forms, e-mails could be shaped in many genres (Myka, 1997), and that genres of e-mails are still evolving (Crystal, 2001). Erikson defined genre as "...a patterning of communication created by a combination of the individual, social and technical

forces implicit in a recurring communicative situation" (2000, p. 1). Erikson further suggested that genres formed the content and the expectation of the communication, which led to a successful understanding of the production of the content (2000).

The genres used in e-mails are similar to those used in spoken form. Some of these genres are conversations, official digital documents, digital letters, memos with attachments, spam, and e-mail reminders/notes (Goldstein & Sabin, 2006).

As mentioned earlier that e-mail genres are not alike; the styles for comping them differ depending on the content of the e-mail, the purpose of it, and the recipient of the e-mail. For instance, one can use emoticons when sending an e-mail to a close friend or a member of the family. The same would not be appropriate in business e-mail, for instance. The tone in the business, academic, legal, and official e-mails is always to be maintained and respected. Dumbrava and Koronka (2006) argued, "we should keep in mind that tone in e-mail is so important that an inappropriate tone can cause a reader to ignore, delete, or overreact to your message".

As for instructors, they are encouraged to teach the proper methods for composing emails based on their genres. For example, when composing e-mails for academic purposes, one must start the adhere to compiling proper greetings. DuViver (2007) asserted that "start with the highest level of formality until the other person indicates otherwise" (p. 79).

For teaching the proper methods of writing the academic e-mail, instructors are suggested to teach these steps when teaching their students (Fillipone & Survinski, 2016):

1- Subject line: include a meaningful, precise, and clear subject.

- 2- Formal address: Use the proper title like Dr, Professor, Mr., Ms., etc.
- 3- Tone: Always mind your tone and select one that is adequate and suitable.

- 4- Content: keep your message clear and short. Long messages can be discussed in person in classes.
- 5- Response time: allow at least one day or two and never demand a response in a certain time.
- 6- Self-monitor: do not write things that you cannot say in person.
- 7- Emoticons: never used them in professional and official e-mails.
- 8- Editing: review your e-mail before sending it and check for mistakes and errors.

Of course, other genres may require other techniques. However, these guidelines work for most genres. In addition, although e-mails are used widely in everyday communication, writing proper e-mails is not sufficiently addressed in academic training.

Instructors and Students Power and Distance Theorization

The use of the internet, specifically e-mails, has gained much interest recently. Some researchers have shown a keen interest in studying speech acts, specifically requests, and appropriate methods for requesting through e-mail. A notable aspect is the e-mail exchange process between students and instructors. Exchanging e-mails can sometimes be problematic.

Most e-mails tend to be informal, but some researchers have lessened this concern. For example, Crystal (2001) did not consider informality in e-mails to be a problem, whereas Baron (2002) expressed concerns about the informality and causality levels of the e-mails sent by her students.

However, the social status differences between learners and instructors can be a significant factor in forming language during the e-mail exchange process. Owing to the social differences between these two parties (i.e., teachers and students), students are always encouraged to spend more time selecting the appropriate "... sociopragmatic choices concerning

forms of address, degree of formality, degree of directness, complementary closes, presence and amount of mitigation, and in general, choices concerning their writing style and strategies" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011, p. 3194). To add, EFL learners must follow the different levels of "power" and "distance" that exist between them and their EFL instructors. Bjørge (2007) revealed that students must select "sociopragmatic choices concerning forms of address and complimentary close when their usage shows considerable variation with respect to the level of formality" (p. 60-61). Not only this, but they are also requested to fully understand the unequal status between them and their instructors. Chen (2006) claimed that "status-unequal emails" is demanding not only in terms of linguistic ability, but also when it comes to understanding the target culture's norms and values" (as cited in Bjørge, 2007, p. 63).

Jazan University's context is not an exception to this rule. Based on my experience, students are still requested to deal with their professors with a great deal of respect. They are always advised to maintain respect due to the fact that their EFL instructors are in higher positions. This is also claimed through the regulations and policies of almost all departments at Jazan University. Breaking this law may endanger the admission status of the student(s) and may lead to dismissal from the university. This rule applies to both binary genders (male and female). It is an agreement all admitted students must agree upon before they are admitted to the university. Therein, students are always encouraged to employ different styles and strategies to mitigate the threat of face when requesting or when sending their e-mails to their EFL instructors.

Significantly, both male and female students, based on my experience at this location, did not reveal any differences in their style and format when it came to composing appropriate emails. Almost all of them faced challenges composing appropriate e-mails like most of the EFL learners around the globe, except in some situations where EFL learners revealed their mastery of forming e-mail requests in proper ways due to their proficiency level in English. This fact is discussed further in the following chapters.

E-mail Request Studies in Different Languages and Contexts

Having introduced the history of e-mails in academia and their role, this section examines studies conducted on e-mail requests in different languages.

Deveci and Hmida (2017) examined how forming written requests as a speech act was conducted in e-mails by native speakers and Arabic learners at an English-medium university in the United Arab Emirates. They also tested whether the instructions given in formal e-mail writing could enhance learners' level of writing e-mails and their pragmatic competence. The data were collected using written Discourse Compeletion Task (DCT). The results showed that non-native speakers of English did not use the required components applied by native speakers. The required discourse structure components were found in e-mails, except for the part of adding "thank you." In terms of the strategies for forming requests, the non-native and native speakers differed significantly from each other. Both native and non-native speakers used direct and indirect strategies when forming requests, with the former using direct strategies more and the latter using indirect strategies more. According to Leech (1983), "...the more indirect an illocution is, the more diminished and tentative its force tend to be" (p. 108). Therefore, the more indirect a speech act is, the more polite it sounds. In sum, both speakers differed from each other in terms of the production process of the discourse structure, strategy type, and modifiers used in sentences. Pragmatic instructions provided the participants with the improvement needed to enhance their awareness and request formation as a process.

Leopold (2015) examined the speech act of written requests in e-mails created by professional native English speakers in the United States. The results revealed that direct requests were used more than indirect requests and that these requests differed based on certain criteria, such as gender, status, social distance, and request category. Although the imperative voice was the most common among genders, statuses, and social distance groups, this strategy was not common in the e-mails of the frequent recipients who usually received e-mails from those groups. Moreover, "…senders often used more mitigators with recipients to whom they more frequently wrote direct requests, thus suggesting that the politeness of a request cannot be judged solely by the request strategy chosen" (Leopold, 2015, p. 1).

Balman and Lee (2020) examined e-mails sent by Indonesian learners to their Japanese professors using the English language as a lingua franca. Internal and external modifications were imposed to soften the threat of the requests. The results indicated that the Indonesian learners barely used internal modifications in their written requests in e-mails but relied heavily on external modifications to soften the imposition of their requests. Balman and Lee (2020) also concluded the following:

This strategy can indirectly modify the illocutionary force of the request, as the students ensure that they provide their professors with enough background information and justify the reason behind their request through grounder moves. The present study also shows a shift in students' communication style where brevity is highly preferable (p. 1237).

Research Gaps

English language learners must understand pragmatics and its components to communicate well with other speakers of the language (Bardovi-Harlig, 2015; Michaleva & Tsepilova, 2015; Taguchi, 2015; Vu, 2017; Yuan et al., 2015), while failing to achieve it may

result in many difficulties. One of the difficulties that EFL learners may face is the difficulty writing e-mails to their instructors. Some EFL instructors may perceive these e-mails, or at least their tone, as inappropriate, which is most likely not the intention of the EFL learners who send these e-mails. The problem here is that how EFL instructors receive these e-mails and how they perceive them in general are unclear. In other words, in some situations, EFL instructors perceive these e-mails as inappropriate, but they overlook this because they already know that their EFL learners are struggling, as reflected by their poor ability to write e-mails. Therefore, this study investigated EFL instructors' perceptions of e-mails sent by their EFL learners and how these e-mails differed from those of native speakers.

Studies have been conducted on this topic (Balman & Lee, 2020; Daveci & Hmida, 2017; Leopold, 2015), but only a few have discussed EFL instructors' perceptions of the target participants in the desired setting. Thus, the significance of this study is that it fills a gap in the literature on this topic.

The current study explored EFL instructors' perceptions of e-mail requests from their own students. As stated earlier, many studies have examined this notion from different perspectives, but only a few studies have analyzed instructors' perceptions of the requests made by their students and compared them with those by native speakers. Additionally, most of the studies that have investigated this topic have used the quantitative approach (e.g., Alaboudi, 2020; Alqarawi, 2018; Shafran, 2019), and only a few have used the qualitative approach to explore the perception of e-mail requests. Specifically, no study has attempted to analyze this phenomenon from the perspective of EFL instructors from Jazan University. Therefore, I am determined to explore this phenomenon from various angles.

Summary

This review of the literature presented the studies that have attempted to examine this topic in different contexts. Cross-cultural pragmatics has received much attention in the literature. In this sense, the differences and similarities among various cultures are still being investigated.

Another area of research is interlanguage pragmatics, which deals with learners' abilities to acquire and/or learn communicative skills in EFL or ESL. This is also observed in the indirectness of the requests, requests by Arabic learners and in other languages, requests and gender, and e-mail requests.

Although several areas have been investigated, researchers are still far from fully understanding the obstacles and instructors' perceptions of forming requests in e-mails of Saudi EFL learners, specifically Saudi learners of English from Jazan University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Only a few studies have examined the target students. Therefore, it is important to examine instructors' perceptions. By doing so, this study provides information about this issue as well as suggestions for dealing with it, not only for EFL instructors at this specific university, but also for other EFL instructors in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This adds to the literature on this speech act and may pave the way for future research on this phenomenon.

This chapter reviewed the empirical research on the topic being investigated. The following chapter discusses the methodology of the study and provides essential information about the different research methods: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. It also discusses the different types of each method and their criticisms.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter discusses the different aspects of the methodology of the study and provides in-depth information about how the study was conducted. Specifically, this chapter explained the research design used in the study (i.e., case study) along with other related aspects. Precisely, case study methodology's advantages and disadvantages, site, context of the study and population, materials and instrumentation (interview, observation, and documents review), reliability of the data, participants, study procedure, and data collection and analysis. Then, ethical assurance and researcher's positionality considered in the study are also discussed.

It is highly critical to address that this study drew from the work of a previous researcher (Muyesser, 2020), who investigated similar questions. The aim of following this dissertation was to overcome any setbacks that might exist while conducting my research. However, I decided to follow a qualitative approach rather than the quantitative one of Muyesser (2020) as this allowed me to better address my research questions.

Research Design

This study followed the guidelines of qualitative research to address the gap in the literature, as most of the studies on EFL instructors' perception of e-mails were conducted using a quantitative approach (Alaboudi, 2020; Alqarawi, 2018; Shafran, 2019). Qualitive research is "…suited to promoting a deep understanding of a social setting or activity as viewed from the perspective of the research participants" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018, p. 93). This approach implies on discovery, exploring, and description.

Qualitative research has many approaches in which the study can be conducted. Researchers can select their approaches based on the research goals, research questions, and purposes of their study. Bloomberg and Volpe (2018) argued that researchers must not alter their research to make fit for a specific research approach, they must rely on the problem they are searching to find the suited research approach.

Accordingly, I selected the case study approach to investigate EFL instructors who taught undergraduates in the EFL context at Jazan University. The case study approach was chosen as the methodology because this study focused only on a specific population and explored a specific case observed by the researcher during his teaching years. Thus, a case study was the most suitable. More details about the reasons for selecting this method are presented in the next section. The data were collected using various methods, such as observations, interviews, and document analysis. These three methods were used to follow the triangulation of a qualitative research method.

Triangulation is defined as applying different methods that are set to investigate the phenomenon intended to research from different perspectives (Flick, 2014). It aims to convince individuals who read the work that it has been composed carefully (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Triangulation in qualitative research can lead to more accurate data interpretation (Creswell, 2018). Moreover, triangulation is applied to reveal the relationship between qualitative and quantitative research, strengthen the qualitative study, and compose a qualitative study in an appropriate way (Flick, 2014). Thus, the findings were listed in categories and matched with the data collection method in matrix form to increase the transparency and credibility of the study.

The data were collected over a period of three months to avoid data saturation. The process of collecting data in each step is discussed in detail in the following section.

Case study

A case study is widely implemented in qualitative research. This methodology empowers researchers to answer why and how questions within the context they investigate (Baxter & Jack,

2008). Creswell (2018) defined it as "a design of inquiry found in many fields, especially evaluation, in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals" (p. 51). This method is usually limited by time and activity. In other words, researchers may appoint a specific time frame to conduct the research and complete it using various methods.

A case study design uses data sources, such as people and interactions among participants, through the lens of the case being investigated (Hyett et al., 2014). It examines a current phenomenon within its natural setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Moreover, Baškarada (2014) asserted that a case study is indisputably appropriate when used to provide in-depth information about a phenomenon. Further, Bloomberg and Volpe (2018) revealed that researchers employ a case study approach when they seek to find answers about cross-case and to compare and contrast the results that other research investigated regarding the same issue.

Therefore, one needs to determine when a case study approach is appropriate for research. A case study design is implemented when the focus of the study is to answer how and why questions, if the researcher cannot change the behavior of the participants of the study, if the researcher intends to uncover the contextual conditions that are related to the study, and if the boundaries of the context and the phenomenon are not clear (Yin, 2003).

As a methodology design, a case study usually addresses specific concerns. These concerns are conducting research rigorously, making non-research case studies clearer, making generalizations about the study when getting to its conclusion, managing researchers' efforts, and comprehending the advantages of the case study research (Yin, 2013).

Stake proposed that the case study approach has two types: intrinsic and instrumental (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Glesne (2016) suggested that an intrinsic case study led to a better

understanding of the case under investigation. The Instrumental case study aimed at providing generalizations about the issue under investigation. Also, Stake suggested that the primary distinction between these two types lied in selecting whether to conduct a single case study or multiple case study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Researchers may opt to conduct an instrument study, in which the researcher focuses only on one issue in one case, or an intrinsic study, in which the researcher focuses on the case itself, as it represents a unique issue.

Conversely, a multiple case study is used when the researcher wants to investigate the "...frequency of a particular phenomenon. This approach [multiple case study] is useful when cases are used for purposes of a cross-case analysis in order to compare, contrast, and synthesize perspectives regarding the same issue" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018, p. 109).

A qualitative case study was used because it was the most appropriate method for such research. Its goal is to describe or rebuild a problem that needs to be studied (Flick, 2014). Further, Flick (2014) argued that the main points the researcher should allocate were to identify the case you want to research, to explore what else is needed in the case, and what methodological approach to use.

I questioned a case by building on the problems and providing suggestions. I then developed a theory and questioned it. Since my intention was to research the level of directness that was embedded in the e-mails composed by EFL learners as well as the perception of these emails by EFL instructors at Jazan University in which English was taught as a foreign language and to provide an in-depth analysis of this phenomenon, the case study approach was the best option. As this research was conducted as a case study, generalizability would be difficult. This is one of the setbacks of using a case study in qualitative research. This problem occurs in almost all case studies. This notion is discussed rigorously in the following sections.

Advantages and disadvantages of a case study

Many studies have been conducted as case studies. According to Flyvbjerg (2011), most of the research nowadays was conducted in a case design. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge its own advantages and setbacks. Attaining such information can lead to the better development of a study and limit the setbacks of this design as much as possible. Therefore, this section discusses these concerns in detail, especially the advantages and disadvantages of a case study design.

Advantages. This section discusses the advantages of a case study design as a methodology. George and Bennett (2005) argued that case studies are generally strong, whereas quantitative studies are weak. Moreover, George and Bennett (2005) identified four areas where a case study is preferred over quantitative methods. These areas were achieving high conceptual validity, fostering new hypotheses, its usefulness in examining the hypothesis within the contexts it questioned and addressing the casual complexity. To add, the case study approach is usually adopted because of the benefits it provides researchers who use it. Baxter and Jack (2008) argued that qualitative case study ease the exploration of the phenomenon within the context by applying different data collection methods, which lead to exploring the phenomenon from various angles to uncover and understand it.

Another advantage of utilizing this methodology is its ability to draw attention to what is being studied. Schram (2006) claimed that case study design as an approach provides the researchers with the power needed to learn from the single case they are investigating. Other studies have presented more advantages of the case study design. For example, Krusenvik (2016) stated that the case study design provides in-depth relevant data about the study one research, it relates directly to the usual experience of the participants in complex reallife situations, it details in-depth results that are not taken from the context and add strength to previous research.

Disadvantages. Like any other research method, the case study design has limitations. Acknowledging these limitations is important to avoid them and to develop a more acceptable design in terms of validity and reliability.

One of the limitations of the case study design is that researchers tend to collect more data for the study without the proper time to analyze them. In other words, researchers may be restricted by a limited time frame to complete their study but collect much information without having sufficient time to analyze and interpret it. This may lead to misrepresentation of the data. Crowe et al. (2011) argued that it is critical to avoid collecting much data that may not be needed; also, researchers are encouraged to set an adequate time for analyzing and interpreting the data in the best practice.

To overcome this limitation, this study collected data over a period of three months and then allocated suitable time for data analysis.

The case study is usually criticized for lacking scientific rigor and its limitation in generalizing results. Flick (2014) argued that the case study approach focused only on one case and resulted in finding results about this case under investigation. Moreover, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) presented the same argument about generalizability in case studies. One suggestion to overcome this problem is to compose multiple studies that could confirm the results (Flick, 2014). Nevertheless, these issues (Crowe et al., 2011) can be addressed by

including the use of theoretical sampling (i.e. drawing on a particular conceptual framework); respondent validation (i.e. participants checking emerging findings and the researcher's interpretation, and providing an opinion as to whether they feel these are accurate); and transparency throughout the research process. (p. 7)

Transparency is achieved by clearly representing the steps involved in the research process, such as data collection, the reason for selecting specific methods, the researcher's level of involvement, and his/her background (Crowe et al., 2011). The researcher also needs to explain how the results and conclusions will be reached, as this helps to assess the trustworthiness of the study.

Table 1: Potential pitfalls and mitigating actions when undertaking a case study (adopted from Crowe et al., (2011, p. 7).

No table of figures entries found.	Mitigating action	
Selecting/conceptualizing the wrong case(s),	Developing in-depth knowledge of theoretical	
resulting in the lack of theoretical	and empirical literature, justifying the choices	
generalization	made	
Collecting large volumes of data that are not	Focusing on data collection in accordance with	
relevant to the case or too little data to be of	the research questions while being flexible and	
any value	allowing different paths to be explored	
Defining/bounding the case	Focusing on related components (by either	
	time or space) to clarify what is beyond the	
	scope of the case	

Lack of rigor	Triangulation, respondent validation, use of	
	theoretical sampling, and transparency	
	throughout the research process	
Ethical issue	Anonymize appropriately as cases are usually	
	easily identifiable to insiders, informed	
	consent of participants	
Integration with the theoretical framework	Allow for unexpected issues to emerge and do	
	not force fit, test out preliminary explanations,	
	and clarify epistemological positions in	
	advance	

As shown in Table 1, researchers must follow these procedures to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the methods. I conducted this study as a single case study, which explored only EFL instructors' perceptions of EFL students' e-mails in Jazan University where English is used as a language for learning. Note that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia usually uses English as a lingua franca, which means that it is used only for specific purposes or when communicating with other speakers who use English for communication.

Site and Context of the Study

This study was conducted at Jazan University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This study was based on my experience as a lecturer for almost eight years at that specific university. I taught different courses at this university, such as writing, grammar, listening and speaking, translating from English to Arabic, and vice versa, introduction to linguistics, applied linguistics, and sociolinguistics. These courses were offered by the English Department of the Arts and Humanities College. This institution offers a bachelor's degree in the English language and teaching to students who finish the program. All students are required to complete their courses within a period of 4–6 years. The students' focus areas include English linguistics, English literature, and English teaching.

Upon acceptance into this department, students are required to start with basic English skills such as writing, listening and speaking, grammar, and vocabulary building. Other courses are also taught to beginners, such as Arabic skills, Islamic, and computer courses. After successfully completing these courses, usually after the fourth level for two years, students are then introduced to more advanced courses in literature, linguistics, and English teaching.

Students have the choice to select courses that match their preferences and focus. When reaching the eighth level, students conduct a research project, and if they succeed in that project, they can graduate with a bachelor's degree.

The number of students in this department is not fixed and can vary from one semester to another based on many factors, such as the availability of instructors and the spots offered for students during a semester. The number of students usually ranges from 1,050 to 1,100 per semester.

From 1970 to 2001, Saudi students were introduced to the English language from grade 7 to grade 12 (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). They spent six years studying English before going to college. During college, learning English was determined by their major. For example, if a student decides to study Arabic or Islamic studies, then he or she is no longer required to study English. However, this policy has recently changed. Saudi students are now introduced to English in primary schools (Elyas, 2008). They will continue to study it until they reach college level. Their major determines whether they still need to study English.

English is not an official language or a second language in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It is considered a foreign language. People sometimes use it for communication with non-native speakers of Arabic, especially individuals who come to the Kingdom to conduct business. Therefore, people usually do not speak English unless there is a need. However, as the Vision of 2030 has been introduced by the Crown Prince, the status of English has changed and has come to play a vital role in society and in the educational system. The Saudi government now encourages people to become fluent and expert in English as the demand to use it increases.

The relationship between academic staff and students follows the global norm instructors are considered to be of a higher position and learners are of a lower position based on the institutional power given to instructors. Therefore, students are encouraged to respect their instructors and maintain the social and academic distinction and power given to each party within the institutional walls. Learners must use appropriate and polite words and sentences when they address their instructors as much as possible. Failing to adhere to these rules may get students in trouble with the administration of the institution—in this case, the university's administration.

This setting was selected based on its accessible resources, including easy access to the university and the varied experiences of the EFL instructors who teach there. The university offers a bachelor's degree in English language and teaching after four years of studying various topics.

Researcher Positionality

As I have taught English to students at the college level, I have become aware of the issue of forming requests among students at Jazan university. I have taught at this specific university for more than eight years. I have taught basic skills courses for English students, as well as some courses that are in the linguistic field, such as sociolinguistics and introduction to linguistics. As being an academic staff at this institution, I have built many skills that enabled me to get closer to a few of the obstacles EFL learners might encounter at this university. Some of the obstacles I noticed were concerned with pronunciation, writing, grammar, and in some cases pragmatics. As an academic staff, I received many e-mails from my EFL learners that were about many topics.

However, what I noticed was the fact that EFL learners were not fully aware of how to compose e-mails successfully, or at least in the appropriate ways needed when addressing instructors. This led me to think about this problem and attempt to find solutions for it. From this point, my interest to investigate how EFL instructors perceived their EFL learners' e-mails and how they saw it in place of being appropriate or inappropriate evolved.

The academic staff come from different parts of the world, such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Yemen, Egypt, Europe, and Canada. As I have been teaching there for a while, I have built a close relationship with the academic staff, and we have come to know each other as close friends. Not only this, we also have shared many ideas that are related to teaching experiences as well as problems that our students encounter while studying English. All of these facts, being from the same institution and a close friend to the participants as well as knowing EFL students, mark me as an insider to this institution and research.

My experience enabled me to approach the participants in a professional manner. I asked the Saudi academic staff if they wanted to participate in my study. Upon their approval, I made the necessary arrangements for the meetings. My role during the interview was to state the questions and elaborate if needed. During the interviews, I also made observations to obtain the non-gestural behaviors of the participants. When the study was completed, I became more conscious of the different obstacles that could affect EFL learners. I also gained the understanding needed to increase EFL students' conscious levels and guide them to properly and effectively form requests.

Participants

To examine the research topic, only Saudi EFL instructors with experience in the EFL context participated in this study. I selected only Saudi participants because of their availability and because I wanted to follow the boundaries of the case I wanted to explore. Moreover, as I mostly shared the same culture with the Saudi participants, it enabled me to build a strong case and comprehend their perceptions of the e-mails sent to them by their EFL students. After the participants were selected, purposeful sampling was conducted. Researchers may select particular settings, persons, or activities deliberately when they aim to provide specific information relevant to their questions, which may not be attained without these choices (Maxwell, 2012). Purposeful sampling was performed because it assists in attaining rich information for the case under investigation, which leads to learning more about it, and this is the aim of any given research (Patton, 2002).

Ten Saudi EFL instructors who had at least four years of experience teaching English participated in the study. Due to the cultural restriction of dealing with women in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, only male instructors were selected. The participants were selected through a maximum variation process to obtain diverse participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The number of participants was limited to 10 due to many factors, such as the study design, scope of the study, data saturation, and time limitation. However, the issue of data saturation needs to be addressed. Data saturation means attaining successive data from various resources, which leads to redundancy (Maxwell, 2012). Thus, the participants were limited to 10 to ensure that adequate information would be attained and to avoid data saturation, which could affect the study in terms of the amount of data collected and the time required to analyze them.

All of them worked in the same department and institution, but their experiences were not alike. Most had at least four years of experience, with one participant having less than four years of experience. Participant MM held a Ph.D. in English linguistics from the United Kingdom. During his teaching experience, he taught many courses as a graduate assistant while studying for his Ph.D. These conditions convinced me to accept him as a participant.

All the participants were male, and no females were involved. The participants' reactions, body language, and facial expressions were recorded and observed as part of the data collection method. However, as women usually cover their faces due to religious and cultural restrictions, including them would be unfruitful in the observation and interview process.

All the participants majored in English and applied linguistics with numerous focuses, such as psycholinguistics, TESL, first and second language acquisition, computer-assisted language learning, Victorian literature, and Shakespearean literature. Some participants obtained their master's degrees in both English and English linguistics without focusing on one major, such as psycholinguistics.

Their ages varied, ranging from 28 to 37 years. The most important aspects were that they received e-mails from their students and their number of years of experience. Here, I mainly focused on the years of experience because I wanted to make sure they had the needed awareness to judge on the forms and tone of the e-mails they received from their students.

Name	Certificate	Year of Experience	Country of Graduation
MM	Ph.D.	2 years	UK
JH	Ph.D.	10 years	USA
YM	Ph.D.	10 Years	USA
FK	Master	8 Years	USA & UK
FG	Master	7 Years	Australia
KZ	Master	5 years	USA
HM	Master	8 Years	USA
AD	Master	8 Years	USA
AA	Master	12 Years	USA

The following table shows the participants, their certificates, years of experience, and country of graduation.

Table 2: Participants' demographics and qualifications.

Materials and Instrumentation

Three data collection methods were used to attain in-depth data for exploring the topic and for applying the triangulation required to ensure the study's validity and trustworthiness. These three methods were interviews, observation, and document review. Researchers may commit mistakes when interpreting their data, and for that, they are encouraged to perform triangulation to reveal new dimensions of social reality where people do not always act regularly (Gibbs, 2007). Moreover, these methods must be aligned with the research questions to attain the information required to answer them. These methods are explained in detail below.

Interviews

Interviews can suggest explanations (i.e., the "how's" and "why's") of key events and insights reflecting participants' relativist perspectives (Yin, 2018). Additionally, interviews are selected as the primary sources of collecting data as it provides the researchers with the rich data they need to compose their research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018).

Interviews are organized into three main categories: unstructured, semi-structured, and structured interviews (Creswell, 2018). This study applied only semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews allow researchers to ask follow-up questions when more explanations are needed to clarify a concept or idea provided by a participant. Semi-structured interviews include open-ended questions to be answered by all participants, and they allow researchers to add more questions for clarification (Creswell, 2018).

Before conducting the interviews, I obtained approval from the institutional review board (IRB) to interview the EFL instructors in accordance with the guidelines on human subject research. In the interview process, I assumed the role of a facilitator and only interviewed the participants using open-ended questions. The interviews were held according to the preferences of the participants and me, which meant applying all suitable measures for the interviewees and me. The interviews were conducted virtually through the Zoom platform for the convenience of the participants and the researcher. All participants were video recorded to make the observation process for the study possible and to retrieve information easily when needed. It is critical to highlight that I have attained verbal consent from the participants prior to video-record them. All of them agreed to participate and to be video recorded. Each interview session lasted 45–60 minutes.

Information disclaimers and consent forms were distributed at least one week before the interview sessions. The consent forms provided information about the research, its purposes, and how the data would be used. Upon receiving the consent forms, the participants were requested to read, date, and sign the form electronically before participating. If they had questions about the study, they were encouraged to approach me and raise their questions. The consent forms were sent early so that the participants would have sufficient time to review the information about the study in detail. A copy of the consent form is presented in Appendix D.

Linking the interviews to the research questions is critical to verify the study's purposes. Thus, Bloomberg and Volpe's (2018) matrix of aligning research questions with interview questions was applied (Appendix C). Using this matrix can help polish the interview questions and modify them as needed for the benefit of answering the research questions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018).

The EFL instructors voluntarily participated in the study. Those who did not want to participate were allowed to withdraw from the study. The participants were asked 16 open-ended questions, which explored the EFL instructors' perceptions of e-mails as the primary method for collecting data. The participants were asked to answer questions to the best of their knowledge. A copy of the interview questions is presented in Appendix A.

Nevertheless, strategies can be used to ease the threat of the interview sessions on participants. For example, sentences such as "Let's have a chit-chat about this topic" can be used instead of "I would like to interview you about this topic." Weinberg (1996, p. 83) argued that using such sentences could lessen the threat to participants (as cited in Leech, 2002). The interviewer should have a positive attitude when approaching participants as well as have the tendency to be friendly and curious (Leech, 2002). Moreover, starting with easy questions can

help make participants feel relaxed and more willing to participate in the interview. Creswell and Creswell (2017) stated that interviewee(s) should start their interviews with easy questions to break the ice, like asking participants to talk about themselves. Therein, I began each interview session by asking simple questions to break the ice and make the participants feel more relaxed to be able to share their thoughts more willingly. Another technique to make interviewees feel more relaxed is to explain the project again (Leech, 2002). Researchers can explain their topic and sort out their questions without guiding participants to their hypotheses (Leech, 2002).

Moreover, researchers are advised to organize their questions according to difficulty. They should start with the easy questions before moving to the more difficult questions (Leech, 2002). As such, my interviews were not guided and only focused on the questions of the study, and my questions were organized according to their difficulty level.

The main purpose of the interview questions was to provide detailed information about EFL instructors' perceptions of the e-mails sent by EFL students. To obtain the participants' experiences and attitudes about the topic, 16 open-ended questions aligned with the study's theoretical framework and research questions were asked. Bloomberg and Volpe's matrix of interview questions (Appendix C) was used to align the interview questions with the research questions. Matrices can assist researchers in exploring gaps in interview questions, evaluating them, and recognizing whether the interview questions are aligned with the research questions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). As the interviews were semi-structured, new questions and follow-up questions could be added to elaborate and/or add information to the participants' answers. The added information may be useful in developing specific themes that the researcher may need (Creswell, 2018). I took notes during the interview sessions and observed the non-verbal actions of the participants. This information was coded and then analyzed to create themes.

My role in this process was to ask the participants questions and facilitate the process if needed. If unclear information was provided, I would then ask the interviewee to elaborate and consider a follow-up if needed.

Observations

Observation is another tool used in the data collection process. It is applied to collect non-linguistic information from the participants and is part of the triangulation process. Observation also enables researchers to collect information that participants may hold back and may not share easily. Bloomberg and Volpe (2018) argued that observing the participants is a fundamental qualitative approach which is used to uncover complex interactions in real settings.

It is essential to highlight that observation and interviewing are not the same. During observation, I relied on my own view to describe what was happening in the setting, whereas during an interview, I relied on the participants' views of the issue under investigation. Bloomberg and Volpe (2018) suggested that observation and interview are not alike in that you rely on the interpretation of someone else to make sense of a point; this is not the case with observation when you rely on your own interpretation to make sense of the point you are investigating.

As a tool for collecting data, observation is organized into four types: observer, observer as a participant, participant as an observer, and full participant (Glesne, 2016). In being an observer, the researcher does not become involved with the participants and only obtains the information needed for the study. When observing, researchers are encouraged to keep with a post-empiricist paradigm and avoid interacting with the participants (Glesne, 2016). In the observer as a participant, the researcher maintains the main role of being an observer but may become involved and interact with the participants. In the participant as an observer, the researcher has more interaction and involvement as a participant and less as an observer. Lastly, full participants are simultaneously an investigator and interact with the members involved in the study (Glesne, 2016).

The observation process in this study followed the first type—observer. I only observed and collected data and did not become involved in the process. In this type, I was only allowed to observe without any involvement in the process. As stated earlier, observations are conducted while interviewing participants to save time, which is the norm for collecting data through observation (Glesne, 2016). Also, Glesne (2016) revealed that "...although I readily acknowledge that while interviewing, the researcher often makes observations and maybe participating in the social life of the community" (p. 65). In other words, the researcher's job is to observe and collect data.

Observations began at the same time as the interview. In the study, the participants were interviewed while also being observed. The 10 participants were observed to gather information, such as non-verbal actions of them while discussing the topic under investigation. Observation provided the opportunity to learn more about how the EFL instructors perceived the e-mails sent by their EFL students and their reflections on the e-mails.

Based on the length of the interview with the participants, each observation session lasted 45–60 minutes. The participants were assured that they would not be criticized for their attitudes toward the e-mails, their judgments, or their educational background. An observation checklist, as presented in Appendix B, was used during the observation.

Upon the beginning of the observation process, participants' facial expressions and body language were observed during the interview and while reading the e-mails of other students sent to other instructors. In other words, they were observed for any changes in their facial expressions or body language when reading the e-mails sent to other instructors. For example, participant MM received an e-mail from his student, who was requesting something from him. This e-mail was shown to participant HM, who had not seen this e-mail before, to observe his facial expression and body language in terms of the mechanism used in the e-mail.

Documents

Observations and interviews are usually supplemented by a document review, as it provides valuable information about the participants' beliefs (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Documents "...broadly defined to cover a variety of written records, visual images, artifacts, and even archival data" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018, p. 319). Most documents are produced independently and thus offer valuable information that affirms the insights collected through other data collection methods (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). The document review process demands careful inspection of materials to interpret them properly (Creswell, 2018).

Thus, the data collection method was not limited to interviewing the participants and observing their non-verbal gestures but was also supplemented by a document review of the EFL students' 5 e-mails to determine their directness, politeness levels, and related issues and ensure a valid and suitable interpretation of the documents.

The process of collecting these e-mails was direct and based on their format. Five random EFL instructors were selected to provide the last e-mail they had received from their students. If this e-mail was short or did not qualify (e.g., containing only a short thank-you message), then the second to the last e-mail would be selected. The selection process was based on the requirement that the students must be at least in their sixth, seventh, or eighth level. These students were considered advanced learners and assumed to have acquired the necessary

knowledge to communicate properly in English. This helped to gain more attention to the issue under investigation.

Reliability of the Data

I enhanced the reliability of this qualitative case study using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria for qualitative studies: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility was ensured by triangulating the data collection methods of interviews, observation, and document review. After conducting the interviews and ensuring that the ideas and perspectives of the participants were obtained, I sent the interview transcripts to the participants for member checking and correcting any information that was misrepresented in the transcripts. The participants were invited to correct the transcripts and add their own clarifications when needed. Member checking is a credibility indicator that allows researchers to clarify the information provided by participants accurately (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). In member checking, participants review the researchers' explanations, interpretations, and findings to check their credibility and accuracy (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). This increases the validity and credibility of the data collection process, leading to the credibility of the research.

Credibility was ensured through a peer review of my observation notes. Bloomberg and Volpe (2018) suggested that peer review reduces the potential bias of a researcher when collecting the data. The goal of a peer review is to check the consistency between raters and reduce the bias of only including one researcher when collecting and analyzing the data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). The peer reviewer was a Ph.D. holder in linguistics who had a strong connection to Saudi culture and to both students and EFL instructors. The peer reviewer was experienced in this topic and came from the same university where this case study was

conducted. He was requested to review my coding and themes process and then provide his feedback.

A sample of the observation notes is provided in Appendix B. Credibility was also ensured through insights and suggestions from the dissertation's chair and committee members. Their feedback was taken into consideration, amended, and applied to ensure the trustworthiness of the data collection and interpretation process.

Dependability of the study was achieved by providing detailed and consistent information about the procedures used in the data analysis. Moreover, I maintained the cohesion of the study by aligning the purpose of the study, the research questions, the data collection methods, and the data analysis. Appendix C shows how the purpose of the study, research questions, and data collection methods were aligned. I created a data summary table to present the participants' insights related to the conceptual framework (Appendix H). This table was provided in accordance with Bloomberg and Volpe's (2019) argument that asserted the notion of data summary to highlight evidence from the study and support the researcher's conclusion.

Confirmability was ensured by explaining and providing details about the process I followed in collecting the data, interpreting them, and providing the results. To ensure the dependability and confirmability of this process, I preserved the interview records, transcripts, observation notes, and documents reviewed during the data collection process. To show the connection between the research questions and codes and how they led to the themes, I followed Bloomberg and Volpe's (2019) suggestion to create a table of the sample coding and theme development (Appendix G). To ensure confirmability, the researcher's effect on the subjectivity of the process and his attempt to eliminate any bias during the data collection or analysis were also acknowledged (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Transferability was attained through the purposeful sampling of the participants and by providing detailed information about the data. As mentioned previously, the participants were selected due to factors such as their experience and close attachment to EFL learners and the community of the study.

Unlike quantitative studies, this qualitative case study cannot be generalized beyond the context and community where it took place, such as other colleges or cities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Generalizing results is not the goal of conducting qualitative studies (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018), as they intend to attain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon (Yin, 2018; Creswell, 2018).

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed after collecting them. Glesne (2018) claimed that the data analysis process included organizing your data from the observation process, interview process, and document review to make sure you understood what you learned from your experience, and describing, comparing, creating explanations about it, linking your findings with the ones found in the literature, and possibly compose your theory, and how you would do this process varied.

Thus, inductive analysis was used to summarize the data. In inductive analysis, the data lead researchers to create a theory (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). I implemented in vivo coding process to do the coding. In this, codes can be produced in a word or short phrase that describes the sentence in which it occurs (Saldaña, 2016). Here, the exact words of the participants were used. The data were grouped into codes and then into themes using coding strategies and based on the theoretical framework utilized. As it was almost impossible to obtain codes and themes for the first time (Saldaña, 2016), the codes were refined many times to attain their best forms. In this study, the final codes and themes were formed through their enhanced concept of the topic to

obtain generalizations. These generalizations were organized and reviewed to explore the links between codes and then create general themes for the results. This ensures the trustworthiness and validity of the data (Azungah, 2018). The final codes and themes are presented in Appendix F.

A matrix was developed to summarize the data and organize the process of determining the results. I used Bloomberg and Volpe's (2018) matrix for the data summary in this study. The data summary is presented in Appendix H. Bloomberg and Volpe's (2018) consistency chart was also applied to confirm the consistency and interpretation of the results. Appendix J shows the consistency of the results and interpretations.

As far as it went with the observation process, I focused close attention on the nonspoken gestures and responses of the participants. To put it clearly, first, I requested the participant to read an e-mail that was sent to one of his peers. When any given participant started reading any given e-mail, he would have some reactions that indicated whether he was pleased or unpleased with the piece of writing he was reading. To even elaborate more, one of the participants was smiling when he was speaking to me. When he started to read a direct request email, he started to lean back, and his smile was no longer noticed. Further, his tone while reading that e-mail was indicating that he was not pleased with the language employed in that e-mail. In order to confirm my speculations, I directed a question to him about his attitude toward the email he read. He replied that the e-mail was not appropriate. I followed almost the same process, attaining participants' reactions and body language along with their confirmation of their attitudes toward the e-mails they read, with all participants I observed. The following table should serve as an example of the process.

Observation Checklist

Observations	Perception	Appropriateness	Notes/Examples
Conven. Direct	Offended. Impolite	Not appropriate	The participant sees it as an
			offensive e-mail, and he may get
			offended if it would have been
			sent to him.
Conven. Indir.	Х	X	Х
Non-Conven. Indir.	X	X	X
Reason for sending	X	X	Х
e-mail			

Participant's Name: AD Date: 05/9/2022 Observation Time: 3:00 PM

Ethical Assurance

As this study dealt with human subjects, approval was obtained from the IRB of both the University of New Mexico, where the researcher studies, and the Jazan University where the EFL instructors work. Upon approval, the researcher obtained the information needed to accomplish the study. Ethical practices were applied during the conduct of this study, such as maximizing all benefits from gaining information from the participants without harming them by any means. Bloomberg and Volpe (2018) argued that researchers are required to minimize the potential harm that can be put on participants when participating and conducting their research. To clarify the purpose of the study, what to anticipate, the role of participants, and the role of the researcher in the study, consent forms were distributed to the participants one week prior to their participation to ensure that they had the time to review and understand the study and their role in it. If any information was unclear, the participants were encouraged to reach out to the researcher for clarification. The consent form contained information about possible threats they could face while participating in the study. The participants were reminded of their own free will to participate in the study and were assured that they could terminate their participation at any time they desired. If they decided to withdraw, their information and responses would not be included to ensure the validity and credibility of the study or to follow the guidelines of ethical practices. A copy of the consent form is presented in Appendix D.

During data collection, the participants' information was protected and respected. Information related to their personal identification (i.e., name, e-mail, address, phone number, and date of birth) remained anonymous. It was only used for the study and remained confidential. Only the researcher had access to this information, which would not be shared with other parties for any reason. Moreover, the participants' information, interviews, recordings, and documents were kept safe in an encrypted removable drive. The recordings, interviews, and documents were reviewed by the researcher only during the conduct of the study. The recordings were transcribed and deleted after the transcription process was successfully completed. The transcriptions were password protected and saved in an encrypted removable hard drive.

Summary

This study addressed the problems in EFL learners' e-mails in terms of their level of directness, which could be perceived as impolite by EFL instructors. This study determined how

EFL instructors perceive the e-mails sent by their EFL students in terms of directness level and their own judgments about the e-mails.

A qualitative case study design was used to provide a rich description of the topic under investigation. Moreover, the case study design was the most suitable, as this study examined specific participants in a specific setting.

Data were collected through triangulation. That is, three methods (i.e., interviews, observation, and document review of EFL students' e-mails) were applied to collect data to increase the validity, credibility, and trustworthiness of the study. Rich data were collected and transcribed to create codes, which were then organized into larger segments to create themes. The themes were used to discuss the findings.

The participants were selected based on their experiences teaching EFL. Their participation was purely voluntary, and they were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time. Consent forms were sent a week before the interviews to ensure that the participants had sufficient time to review the information and decide whether to volunteer. Consent forms were collected prior to their participation in accordance with the guidelines of ethical practices.

Ethical practices were followed in this study. The participants' information, videos, recordings, and documents were kept safe in an encrypted removable drive. Only the researcher had access to this information. All of the participants' information was deleted upon successful completion of the study.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

This chapter discusses the results of the study in detail and highlights the most important aspects of the results. Examples of the participants' responses are also provided.

The results section provides more details about the trustworthiness of the data, the participants, the answers to the research questions, and the themes and codes gathered from the data analysis. To put it clearly, I provide detailed and related information about the participants in the study to shed light on some information related to and critical to reaching the conclusion of the subthemes/codes and main themes. For convenience, I provide a table containing all the themes and their subthemes/codes in Appendix F. I then present the research questions and discuss the themes/codes that answered these questions, as well as my insights into the related themes/codes in the same space. This makes the results and discussions more coherent and cohesive. Recommendations, suggestions, and limitations of the study for future research are also presented.

Research Questions

This study investigated two questions about the directness level of the e-mails and EFL instructors' perceptions of the e-mails sent by their EFL learners. The following sections discuss the answers systematically and extensively.

Based on these criteria, I was able to categorize the responses of the participants and code them in the suitable themes related. The following part discusses the themes I found form the data I collected.

General Themes

The following paragraphs discuss the codes/themes found in the data for each research question.

66

*RQ*1: What is the level of directness embedded in some of the e-mails perceived by EFL instructors?

EFL learners tended to use Arabic in their e-mails when they felt that they could make mistakes or were not confident about their English writing ability. Thus, they used Arabic in their e-mails to avoid mistakes caused by using English.

Some EFL learners used English to write their e-mails in English, and they were at the same level of study (i.e., the fifth level of their undergraduate study). These EFL learners were divided into two groups: those who did not care much about their proficiency in English and sent conventionally direct e-mails to their instructors and those who were proficient in composing their e-mails in English. The reasons for the grouping will be explained in the following sections.

The learners using a language other than English in their e-mails was not surprising. These learners were English department students, and they were expected to use English when sending e-mails, not Arabic, which is their first language. According to participant MM, "First, they all write e-mails in Arabic, in colloquial Saudi Arabic, and the... sometimes they have issues with the structure of the e-mail". Participant MM was indicting that some EFL learners not only had difficulties in composing their e-mails in English, but they might also encounter some obstacles in composing their e-mails in Arabic. Participant KZ also addressed this issue and argued that almost all the e-mails he received were in Arabic. I asked KZ if the e-mail was in English, and he replied, "It was in Arabic".

Some participants advocated the same concept of composing e-mails in Arabic, not in English. One of the participants struggled to provide a sample e-mail for the document review. He stated, "... that was like a quick sample, but I could go through the history of my e-mail to

find you more English e-mails. But, in general, the ones that were sent to me in English are very, very few..."

Conventionally Direct Requests

This section explains the most common style found in EFL learners' e-mails. Here, style means the three types introduced by Blum-Kulka et al. (1984): conventionally direct request, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect.

Based on the responses in the interview, almost all EFL instructors agreed that most of the e-mails they perceived were direct and straightforward. This was what I anticipated at the beginning of this study. They all used the conventionally direct type. Additionally, this was also proven by the document I reviewed. To make it even clearer, the following example showed the directness level embedded in one of the EFL learners' e-mails.

"Hello, I want to talk about attendance with a tablet in the lecture. You said that we cannot attend with a tablet, but I want you to allow me to do so because I bought the tablet to make it easier for me to carry books, papers, writing, etc. And you want me to write with you and do the homework, and the tablet provides all that, and I hope you will allow me to do that".

Most of the participants revealed that they mostly received direct e-mails. For example, according to participant HM, "Um, sometimes, somehow they are right in using the indirect style, but most of the time, they use the direct style. I can recognize what the student wants from the first sentence I read directly. I mean, yes, most of the time". Here, the participant was convinced that the learners attempted to form their requests indirectly, but most of them still sent their requests in a direct manner. Participant HM continued, "We have, we do have … yes, but most of the adults, maybe… They would ask directly without using words…" According to him,

this was observed in most of the e-mails he received from his students. Even if learners wanted to form indirect requests, they still ended up forming direct requests without even using words that would save the face of the receiver or mitigating words that might lessen the threat to the receiver.

This observation of using a direct style more frequently was also shared by participant MS, who stated that learners' methods of constructing e-mails seemed to be direct most of the time. "Um... they tend to be like... short... straightforward... full of mistakes... grammatical mistakes. And uh... I noticed some... or the majority of them, they would go to Google Translate. They write their questions in Arabic and then send you the... the translated version of their question". This matched with the results that I encountered in the observation process, too. One of the participants indicated that the level of e-mail he read was not appropriate and he would get offended if he would have received that e-mail.

However, there were cases in which EFL students sent indirect, polite, and suitable emails. They were proficient students compared with their peers, although both groups had not been introduced to pragmatic topics at their level. Their proficiency level was different from that of their peers for some reasons, such as playing video games and watching films. The reasons are discussed in detail in a designated section. More details about indirect requests are discussed in the following parts.

Reasons for the Direct/Impolite Style

As stated previously, most EFL learners wrote conventionally direct requests. During the coding process, I discovered some ideas addressing the issue of why EFL learners use a direct style. I discussed EFL instructors' beliefs about e-mails' level of directness and the reasons why EFL learners use the direct style in their e-mails.

The Influence of the first language

One of the subthemes that emerged from the responses of the participants was the first language's influence on English skills; that is, how Arabic, their first language, could have influenced the way learners made their requests. Four participants agreed that Arabic could have affected how the learners composed their requests. According to one of the participants:

Maybe... I think, maybe, the influence of the first language. But maybe because when we request something in Arabic... we directly say "عطني" [Give me]. "Give me something right away" is in an imperative form... They apply their native language or transform it into English in the same way they speak Arabic and then translate it into English. I think this is one reason. Maybe... I guess...

Participant KZ also agreed with the influence of the first language. He asserted the following:
You owe me. Yeah, I got, I got some e-mails saying that you owe me this and that... but taking into consideration that they are second language learners and, um... I'm not into linguistics... but I believe they are quite influenced by their first language. I understand it; I respond to their questions, but I never take it personally.

The same issue was also observed in the document review. Some participants stated that the learners' first language influenced how they formed their requests.

Although the majority of the participants did not specify how their first language could have influenced the outcome of the learners' requests in English, two participants expressed this belief clearly. Both participants had almost the same idea about the reasons for this influence. They argued that some EFL learners tended to write what they wanted to convey first in Arabic and then translate it into English without using the tools needed to mitigate the request itself or how it could be perceived appropriately by the receiver.

Foreign Language Effect

Another subtheme found in the participants' responses was the *foreign language effect*. A few participants argued against this. As the learners were studying English as a foreign language, they were not expected to form their requests as a native speaker would. According to participant AD:

They are trying to be, you know, so polite with us by using appropriate words, but sometimes they misuse some of the words. And this is due to, you know, using English as a second language... You know that there are so many differences between English and Arabic, the way we use, you know, the language between the two languages, as well as the two contexts.

Participant AA also shared the same idea. "There are many because, first of all, you know that our students learn English as a foreign language..." Some EFL instructors did not take EFL requests for granted. They did not even consider the requests inappropriate. In fact, they made excuses for the learners for not sending appropriate requests. According to participant HM,

No, I don't feel... offended actually. Because I know that it's not ... they're not native speakers of the language, and sometimes they make mistakes when they order or request something. So, I accept all of them.

To add, participant AD also advocated for the same notion. He argued:

English is not... you know often used in our daily life paces, you know... they don't communicate with anyone in English, this is the first thing.. let me say.. you know.. having for example very solid foundation in English language from the elementary school or the middle school or high school is one reason for those who are in the university to have their weak you know level or capacity of English language. So, the the weak

foundation is one reason for this, not often you know using language in our daily life paces and their their life paces is the other reason, not writing too much is one is one you know is one reason besides this mentioned reasons

Cultural Effect

Culture, as a subtheme, also influenced EFL learners' mechanisms of composing requests. Some participants found a great effect of culture on the ultimate outcome of the request forms. For example, participant AA reported the following:

They're not aware, as you know, of how cultural perspectives from one environment to another can be different. What is considered polite in one culture is not considered polite in another. So, a good way of enhancing this skill for students is to know how to be polite. So, you have vocabulary skills, linguistic skills, and cultural skills. What is polite, let's say, in the western hemisphere, and how it is different from the Middle East, for example. So, to me, it wouldn't be mostly cultural.

Yet, another participant, FG, also argued for the same claim, the background and culture effect on the outcome of the request forms. FG argued:

Well, that that is actually a point... it's in early stages where where student comes, I think, because of the background that he had through the high school secondary high school and then comes into university, the way he communicates is unformal. As as the years come by towards the end of the course or the degree, they become more formal and sophisticated.

This participant considered politeness to be culturally based when forming requests. Additionally, the environment may play a role in how requests are formed by learners. As learners came from an extremely harsh environment, some participants believed that this could influence how they perceive the world and how they use language accordingly.

According to participant JH:

I don't know but... I think it's a cultural thing. From their perspective, they think it's normal because they think it's their right, and they use direct language to make a direct order or something like that. They get to the point. They want the point. They do not use, I mean, read or something like that, or an indirect way to make indirect requests to request something, okay?

According to this participant, there was a lack of awareness of the significance of using more indirect methods of forming requests compared with direct ones.

Pragmatic Topics

One code that emerged was that pragmatic topics were not introduced to EFL learners before. This seemed to be a valid factor for most of the participants. Participant YM revealed the following:

We teach pragmatics...I teach pragmatics personally because I found it in the course but not in a satisfactory way. For example, I teach agreements and disagreements. I teach how to explain, and I teach how to construct opinions. Let me just remember some of these things. So, when you put these into pragmatic terms, they are related to speech acts one way or another. But, again, as I said, I'm not satisfied with the way we teach because they are bookish, so we go by the book.

To provide yet another example of the significance of introducing pragmatic topics in class, along with advice, YM shared the following:

Okay. So, I have done it, and actually, I still do. It's not only that I have done it. I regularly do it based on needs and on how I feel the need. The best way to judge these needs is through the e-mails that you receive, that I receive. So I can judge if they're doing okay, or if they need more advice on things... So advising is probably the best word that is...

These examples showed the significance, from the perspective of the participants, of introducing pragmatic topics earlier and the need to learn suitable methods for approaching their EFL instructors.

Perfect E-mail Style Based on the Participants' Views

In discussing their views about EFL learners' e-mails, some participants also argued about how EFL learners should compose their e-mails. Only two participants expressed their ideas about receiving indirect e-mails or about how e-mails should be formed, despite the fact that there were questions in the interview that addressed this type of e-mail.

Participant AA revealed that he received well-structured e-mails from his students, although he found some mistakes in these e-mails.

Most of them... well, in general, when students send me an e-mail in English, it tends to be well-structured... you won't find a lack of vocabulary skills or grammar skills. You will find trivial mistakes but nothing that would concern me... easy to understand, easy language, simple language.

This response shows that some students were able to send conventional indirect e-mails with excellent vocabulary and style. Nevertheless, as they were EFL learners, the participant was still able to find mistakes, but they were not significant to him. What mattered was finding the language appropriate and easy to understand.

Participant YM claimed that he received indirect e-mails from his students. "I believe there is indirectness in there, oh, I'm yeah..." This indicates that the indirect style was not completely absent from the e-mails, as shown in the following section.

Participant YM asserted that learners should use the indirect method when sending e-mails to their instructors. Specifically, he addressed all the information on how e-mails should be structured.

Okay, now I'll tell you... So what I expect is a full-fledged e-mail. What I mean by that is that a student should first use his or her university e-mail. Second, he should put a very clear and effective subject title, or whatever there is. Third, when we come to the body of the e-mail, he should use, like, suitable terms and labels, either "Dear Professor," "Dear Doctor (name), or "Dear Dean or Vice Dean." He should start his e-mail with a few words of greeting and a bit of preface on the subject matter before going directly into the matter. He should finish his e-mail with a thank you and put his full name and university ID number or at least tell me what course you are in... and his section, like a group, so I'll know the whole thing... However, what I receive is... yeah, and in one way or another missing collectively are some of these things... no, this is the first part of your question. Now, for the second part of your question—did I do something to correct that? Or, if I may, if I'm correct, that's the second part of your question, right?

This shows that learners should follow a general outline when writing e-mails. Institutional e-mails should be used instead of personal e-mails. E-mails should contain the learner's name, the topic, his/her university ID number, titles, opening sentences, the issue to be discussed, a *thank you*, and the learner's name. This participant was the only one who extensively explained how learners should construct their e-mails. This participant had a Ph.D. in linguistics. He spent most of his time studying in an extensive English language program, and he obtained his master's degree and Ph.D. in the United States, where he wrote many e-mails to his instructors. Moreover, he used to teach pragmatics in which he addressed the issues of politeness and directness. He also held a workshop for EFL learners about this topic, that is, being polite in composing suitable and indirect e-mails at his institution. When I introduced the topic to him, he was so surprised that we shared the same beliefs about this topic and how we both saw it as a problem. He mentioned that this topic was also introduced to him by one of his instructors when he was studying for his Ph.D. His professor at a US institution was convinced that this topic would be of great importance and needed to be introduced not only to EFL learners but also to native learners, as he saw how they struggled in writing proper e-mails to their instructors. Based on these factors, he was able to see the problem and provide suggestions on how to solve it. I created a section for his suggestions, along with the others, which I will discuss later.

Politeness Markers

Previously, insights into how EFL learners should compose their e-mails were discussed. One participant explained the necessity of using politeness and appropriate words/markers. Participant AA asserted that students should use markers that indicate politeness in their e-mails. He stated that "…in general they do use a standard language that indicates politeness. They use phrases such as "please, if I can," "if it's okay," and "sorry for bothering you…" This shows that EFL learners used some politeness markers, such as *please, okay?*, and *sorry for bothering you* when making a request. However, I argue that this is not the case for all learners. This participant was the same one who argued that psychology is a motivator for learners to use these markers. This is not always true. Although some EFL learners used politeness markers, they usually misplaced or misused them. This suggests that EFL learners knew that they needed to use these markers to make their e-mails more appropriate and acceptable.

EFL Learners' Reasons for Writing Polite E-mails

Some EFL learners were exceptionally professional in speaking and writing e-mails in English. It is important to discuss the reasons behind such a level of professionalism and mastery of the language. As Participant YM mentioned, "See, when I get a... appropriate e-mails, I usually get them from specific individuals." I had to create extended interview questions to address this issue specifically. The reason for these questions was to obtain the EFL instructors' views about them. Additionally, I wanted to know if these EFL learners had done something that led them to master this professional level. Based on the EFL instructors' reflections, several factors led the students to this level. These factors are discussed in detail in the following paragraphs.

One factor is the belief that these elite students had a good education or at least had excellent capability in the English language. According to participant AA:

Well, most of the people who would send e-mails me in English are people who, to some extent, have good capability in the language... but just to sum it up, people who send me e-mails in English are capable of using the language.

To him, these students are confident in their knowledge of the language, allowing them to compose e-mails and communicate with their instructors in English. Based on my experience, this is true, as I witnessed it when I was teaching at this institution. If learners knew that they would make a mistake when writing in English, why would they bother to send an e-mail in English and reveal themselves as deficient learners? Moreover, they might not want to embarrass themselves when they compose e-mails in English. This was revealed to me by a group of students who believed in me and who were comfortable in revealing their concerns about this issue when I introduced the topic of the best way to compose e-mails in English. This argument was also supported by the majority of learners who attended that course with me.

Participant JH had the same beliefs.

Most of them do not use appropriate language or formal language to communicate with their teachers... only a minority use the formal way... maybe that depends on their education or their background and where they come from ... the students came from, so it depends on that.

His view addressed education as a factor that led these students to send nearly perfect e-mails. He was sure that only education could enable these students to master the English language and in methods of composing e-mails in English in the best way.

It is important to mention that one of the factors that helped students master English is their peers. Some participants revealed that when playing online video games, some learners communicated with other gamers in English to reach their goals. English was the lingua franca language, and it was used extensively. To communicate with other gamers around the world, learners needed to master different aspects of the English language, such as how to request politely or the different methods of using politeness markers and/or politeness mitigation to lessen face threats when requesting from other gamers. This argument is true, as I had some students who had perfect English language skills when I taught a course that required them to write and speak in English. They used the language appropriately, which was quite surprising to me, although they were at the beginner level. At this level, they were only supposed to be starting to learn the language and its basic concepts. However, they answered in an almost flawless manner when I asked them some questions. They were able to answer culturally based questions effectively. This was not the only case I observed. They also answered the questions with confidence and used different accents in their responses, such as American, British, and Australian accents. When I asked them how they managed to acquire such accents, they mostly agreed that they had learned from their peers who played with them online. Watching foreign films also helped them learn about the language and its aspects in a professional manner. However, as these topics are beyond the scope of this study, I am not able to discuss them further.

Another reason for requesting indirectly was the fact that emotions might affect on the use of indirect requests. Some participants expressed that learners tended to use indirect methods to guarantee the approval of their requests. The learners might not have a positive attitude toward their EFL instructors, and yet they used indirect strategies only to have their requests approved. This deals with the psychological status of the learners and how it influences the methods of implementing requests, which is beyond the scope of this study.

To provide an example of this belief, participant AA stated, "First impression shows he's being polite, but you'll never know someone's inner feelings. He could be saying "please" but in a mocking way. I know it's philosophical but..." Thus, some EFL instructors looked for excuses to explain why the learners failed to use indirect methods of requests. The reason for this is that some EFL instructors did not get offended by the direct method. They looked for a reason to accept the direct method or at least ignored the method used and focused only on e-mail content. This topic is discussed in detail in the following sections.

Teachers' Observations and Suggestions

The ultimate goal of any research is to find solutions or answers to a problem. Although this study aimed to investigate EFL instructors' perceptions of e-mails sent by EFL learners, I could not avoid finding solutions and suggestions to this issue. Fortunately, the participants were keen to share their insights into how to solve this issue. The existence of this issue among EFL learners at this specific institution was acknowledged. Participant AA saw the need to change the learners' styles. He defended this belief when I asked him about it.

Interviewer: Sure. So, from your own perspective, do you think the students' level of appropriateness should change? If yes, how?

AA: It definitely has to change."

This shows that the desire to enhance learners' abilities was one of his goals when teaching related topics. Participant HM provided detailed suggestions on how to change the learners' level of appropriateness.

The level of appropriateness may change one day if someone, for example, corrects their mistakes by telling them. Maybe... but if they didn't like um... have a lot of knowledge about reading whatever in linguistics specifically, if they don't improve their knowledge about speech acts and whatever theories they're studying, then they wouldn't change actually.

Participant MM suggested instructing learners effectively and introducing topics to address this issue. He believed that introducing topics to students during their study period could enhance their understanding of the need to address their instructors appropriately. According to participant MM, "Yes, but this depends on the amount of instruction they receive. If they receive direct instruction... I think they will learn." I agree with this idea. Based on my experience, some students were able to enhance their skills in composing e-mails when I introduced and explained this topic to them. Participant FK suggested the following: "...be the same as, yes, it's achievable, but you have to teach them, tell them, or direct them to improve their communication skills. So, it's achievable." Also, FK suggested the same claim where he argued "OK. Well, um... I think they you know the majority of teachers they don't think about this topic, emails you know just they... but if it's you know it's if it's important for the person to increase the awareness of their students...". These comments show that introducing these topics to EFL learners is a must. This can help them improve in composing appropriate e-mails. However, this is not the only solution. Some students were able to compose appropriate e-mails, even if they had not been introduced to these topics before. I will discuss this topic in another section.

Yet, AD added another suggestion to EFL learners. He claimed:

Um... try to tell them that you are... you have to be so you know specific word with your teacher, you have to be so polite, uh try to distinguish and divorce the two mentalities of Arabic and English. You know sometimes, for example, with Americans for example, you have to be so direct. In our main language I mean in our culture, you have to be for example you have to use some politeness words.

This shows the need to separate the two cultural backgrounds they have and start composing their e-mails in a more suitable style.

Nevertheless, instructing EFL learners explicitly was not the only suggestion provided. Other participants advocated for implicit teaching. In other words, EFL instructors are requested to reply in formal e-mails. This sends an indirect method that learners are requested to use formal e-mails when approaching their instructors. FG hypothesized that "I would say keeping the language when you're talking to your students formal, and when replying, keep it as formal as possible so they know how to say... the giving the same behavior or the same attitude you receive a back".

RQ2: What are EFL instructors' perceptions of the e-mails sent by their EFL learners in terms of appropriateness?

The EFL instructors' responses differed. The majority believed that most EFL learners' e-mails were not appropriate because of their directness level and the absence of necessary parts, such as the title, the *thank you* section, the reason for communication, and providing a topic in the subject heading. Other EFL instructors argued that the target EFL learners were still in the learning process stage. Therefore, they should not expect perfect or almost perfect e-mails. Thus, they did not focus on the appropriateness level of the e-mails but rather on the content. This group of EFL instructors came after the first group that shared the same beliefs. The third group, which received both inappropriate and appropriate e-mails, was in the middle. This group received appropriate and inappropriate e-mails from their proficient and non-proficient students, respectively.

Perceptions of EFL Learners' Direct E-mails

This section discusses EFL instructors' perceptions of e-mails sent by EFL learners. The responses were not similar. I confirm that the majority of EFL instructors found the language of the e-mails sent to them inappropriate because they had direct requests. These e-mails were not appropriate to send to instructors or to any individuals of a higher position. In the following, I provide some examples of their insights and responses to the questions I raised during their interviews, observations, and documents I reviewed.

Not Offended by Direct Requests

Many of the participants claimed that they did not get offended by the direct requests they received from their EFL learners. For example, participant JH revealed, "I think most of the time, it's not, I mean, as I've said, the tone is not that aggressive, but it's not the appropriate way to... to communicate with teachers." When I asked him about his perception, JH indicated he was not offended by the e-mails he received from his students. To illustrate, I provided one of the e-mails sent to participant KZ. The participant wrote, "I think this is not an appropriate way to communicate with teachers. I am not offended by it but... it is not appropriate". The teacher refused the student's request, as instructed by the office. The student sent another e-mail in response to his instructor. He wrote, "I want you to allow me to do so because I bought the tablet to make it easier for me to carry books, papers, writing, etc." Although the student used direct language in both e-mails, which I personally consider inappropriate, participant KZ did not feel insulted or offended by them. He responded to the student as he understood his literacy level and, therefore, was not offended. This was also observed when I introduced him to the e-mail of one of his peers. Participant KZ's facial gestures did not change at all when he was reading on the EFL learners' e-mails.

Offended by Direct Requests

Although this belief was common among the participants, it was not always the case. Some participants were offended when I showed them some of the e-mails sent to their peers. I observed participant JH when I showed him an e-mail sent to participant YM. I requested participant JH to read this e-mail and reflect on the language and tone used in the e-mail. JH was not happy with the e-mail tone. Participant MM also explicitly stated that he would be offended if he received such an e-mail. His facial expressions changed while he read the e-mail. He was also uncomfortable with the way the learner approached his instructor, as the learner did not begin the e-mail with a greeting or at least address his instructor by his title. This was also supported by some claims from the interview. The following is an example of this notion: Interviewer: So, did you get offended by those kinds of... I mean... not appropriate... with direct methods as you have stated?

JH: Yes. I... I, I don't remember the case but I'm I think once I got an email from students asking me to remove him from and or take some absences from him take off some absences, but I don't remember exactly what language were the words so I... I remember I got offended.

Although both participants MM and JH were also from the same environment, they were still offended. They suggested that instructors should make their students aware of this problem and explicitly introduce these topics to familiarize their students with this issue and enhance their capabilities as English language learners. Their suggestions were aligned with those of other EFL instructors, in that EFL learners should be introduced to pragmatics and suitable methods for writing e-mails. They also asserted that this topic should be introduced to EFL learners as soon as possible to avoid miscommunication caused by the fact that EFL learners have not mastered it or have not been introduced to it any sooner before reaching the undergraduate level. More suggestions and recommendations will be presented later.

Neutral Perception of Direct Requests

Thus far, we have discussed two types of EFL instructors' perceptions of e-mails sent by their students: not offended and offended. This section discusses the third type of perception: The EFL instructors did not bother to look at the style, language, or the way EFL learners composed their e-mails. They only saw e-mails as a way to convey the message and nothing more. According to participant AA, "Oh, to be honest, I've never been offended. I've never felt offended by any e-mails sent by students. I only see them as a message to read and do as such." I observed the same idea as the other participants during the interviews. Some of them stated that they saw e-mails as a means to convey a message. As the EFL learners wanted to make a request for something, they sent an e-mail to their instructor, who, in turn, replied to the e-mail with his response. The instructors did not look deeply into the structure of the e-mail and other related matters. This was also supported by the observation process of the participant FK. FK revealed that he never got offended, and his emotions remained the same while reviewing the designated e-mail.

However, one participant had a unique response when I asked him about his position regarding the e-mails he received. Tone can be used to determine the suitability of e-mails, but this did not matter to participant AA. He said that defining the tone of an e-mail could be used to indicate whether or not he was offended. However, he said:

I still find it difficult to determine the writer's tone. You know, you could be could be distracted because when you're using WhatsApp or writing e-mails, sometimes you use simple language, so the tone cannot be defined.

Participant AA argued that he would not judge EFL learners' e-mails because it was impossible to see their facial expressions or identify the tone of their language while writing e-mails. I find this participant to be completely different from the rest of the participants. He looked at every single question I asked from a psychological and philosophical point of view. He opened many avenues about topics related to the pragmatic field that I had not looked at before. He also gave me many ideas that needed my attention. Thus, I had to look for more information about these ideas and set up another interview with him to discuss them further. During the second interview, we discussed the topics further, and many new topics emerged. Unfortunately, the new topics were beyond the scope of this study, so I did not include them in the study.

Perception of Indirect/Polite E-mails

Although the topic was mostly about the perception of direct e-mails sent by EFL learners, some students had mastered the proper way of sending appropriate/polite e-mails to their instructors. The following examples supported the claim I raised about the existence of some indirect e-mails among EFL learners. The first example was from one of the documents I reviewed. A student sent this e-mail to his professor:

Good morning doctor XXXX,

Hope your are doing great. I'm sorry, I can't attend to our today's class. I have prepared my topic for the presentation; I will talk about phrases and what tests we should apply to put sentences in brackets as one phrase.

Morphology & syntax, group/XXXX

ID/XXXXXXXX

Sorry for bothering you, hope you have a good day.

The same notion of sending appropriate indirect e-mail was also found in the observation process. One of the participants, FA, was introduced to an indirect e-mail sent by an EFL learner, and he indicated that e-mail was appropriate and valid.

The EFL participants were pleased to perceive such indirect requests from their students. One of them claimed that he was happy with the level of competence some of his students revealed. Not only that, but he also suggested that the number of students who could compose emails could increase if proper measurements were applied appropriately.

Discussion

Upon revealing the results provided in this chapter, many mysterious points were uncovered. To put it clearly, I came to understand many of the points that I was uncertain about. This part was set to elaborate and explain the results I found in my study. I divided these explanations based on the questions of the research.

First, majority of the students at Jazan University experienced critical difficulties when it came to composing appropriate e-mails. One of them was the inability to form their request in English. Although their major was English, their capabilities were limited. Therein, they tended to compose their e-mails in Arabic language and send it to their EFL instructors as they did not want to show their limited fluency in composing English e-mails. The reasons for this norm varied. Based on my teaching experience in this location, I had some learners who clearly stated that they avoided using English in their e-mails because they did not want to be seen as belowthe-level learners. They also wanted to sound more professional, with the capability of mastering the English language and using it in the way they wanted. Thus, their method for requesting from their instructor(s) in English could not be compared with that in Arabic. Therefore, they composed their e-mails in Arabic only, or they might compose their e-mails in Arabic first and then transfer their messages into English by using translation websites. With Arabic, they could use mitigating words and ensure that their requests were written well. This is consistent with the studies found in the literature, such as Kim (1995), Kasagna (2006), and Şanal and Ortactepe's study (2019), who found that transferring from L1 to L2 caused EFL learners to make mistakes when forming requests in the target language(s).

Next, conventionally direct was the most frequent style among EFL learners in this institution. The majority of learners wrote e-mails using the direct style and that they tended to make many grammatical mistakes when composing their e-mails. These mistakes could stem from their limited English writing skills, using English as a foreign language, cultural aspects, and not introducing pragmatic topics in their classes as much as needed. One of the reasons for

composing direct style e-mails was that they learned and used English as a foreign language. One can advocate for the belief that communication is a needed process in order to elevate one's competence skills in any given language(s). As such, these EFL learners did not have the opportunity to practice the language outside of their classes or outside of the institution. Therein, this created learners with limited English skills in both skills: speaking and writing. However, there were some exceptions where EFL learners mastered the needed skills to appropriately composed e-mails. Those learners had the chance to practice the English language through communication with their peers inside and outside of the classes as well as through videogaming. Some of them also received good education inside or outside their country. This opened the chances for them to test and use the language in a more successful manner.

Culture also played a critical rule in the outcomes of the e-mails EFL learners composed. What is accepted in one culture may not be accepted in another culture. This is consistent with El-Dakhs (2019), who found that culture plays a significant role in the methods of performing requests among EFL learners. Learners may accept the idea that direct requests are preferred to indirect requests because the learners' culture forces them to use direct requests when requesting from an individual of a higher position, in this case, their EFL instructors. Although this is not entirely true in the culture of the learners in the study, many used direct methods more than indirect ones. Although this seems an intriguing topic, it is beyond the scope of the current study. This is an interesting topic that can be studied in the future.

Yet, the need to bring up the pragmatic topics, topics of speech acts, cultural differences, and politeness was a must. Learners needed to be introduced to these topics carefully and extensively. Moreover, learners should be encouraged to raise questions and receive feedback on pragmatic knowledge about these topics. This would help learners understand the different aspects of language and the mechanisms of using language in an acceptable manner. This idea is consistent with previous studies (Taguchi, Nananuma & Budding, 2015; Harooni & Pourdana, 2017; Kaivanpanah & Langari, 2020).

As far as it went with the second question, the majority of the participants indicated they did not get offended by the direct style of e-mails they received. To understand why instructors should not be offended by inappropriate language, we should remember that the EFL instructors were from the same environment as the students, and this made them more aware of the challenges their students faced and their students' capabilities and limitations. Thus, even if the EFL instructors considered the learners' e-mails inappropriate, not all were offended by the level of appropriateness.

The same was not true as some of participants indicated they got offended by those direct e-mails. The saw that these EFL learners came to this institution to learn a language. So, why would them not learn it or practice it in a good manner? This reflected on the background of those participants. They had been taught by English speaking professors and they earned their certificates from a country where English the first language. Therein, their expectation were high.

Still, there was another group who indicated that they had neutral perception of the emails they received. There were some reasons behind having such a perception. One of them was that they focused only on the content, even if the e-mail was sent in a direct way and without using proper titles. They never judged the e-mails they received from their students. I was surprised by this type of instructor, who only saw e-mails as a way to convey a message. I thought that they could either be offended or not be offended by the EFL learners' style of composing e-mails, but not with these participants. Their only belief was to focus on the message and reply to it, and that was it. They did not indicate if they were offended or not offended, which marked them in this category, the neutral category. Thus, I asked them more questions about how they reached this point of not judging their students or their methods of writing emails. Almost all of them agreed that emotions, respect, and attitudes could not be conveyed in the messages or e-mails sent to EFL instructors.

An individual may have a great deal of respect for an instructor, but because he is an EFL learner, for example, his/her way of writing e-mails may not be effective in showing this respect. This is how these participants observe their students. Thus, they never judged their EFL learners based on their methods or styles of writing e-mails to their instructors. Although in previous sections, it had been clarified that the relationship between instructors and learners was not alike, EFL instructors here appeared to diminish and overlooked all of these facts due to some factors, like knowing their EFL learners' intentions, their incompetence in composing English e-mails in appropriate ways as well as the EFL learners' cultural effect on their competence in creating proper e-mails. This seems to be an interesting idea for future research. Nevertheless, more data are needed to discuss it further.

Summary

This chapter was sought to represent the results I found in my research. My research consisted of two major questions, what was the direct level of the e-mails sent to EFL instructors, and what was their perception of such e-mails.

As for question one, conventionally direct was the common norm among EFL learners at Jazan University. This occurred due to various reasons, among them was the usage of their first language (Arabic), using English as a foreign language, cultural effect on the outcome of the composed e-mails, and not introducing pragmatic topics earlier to the EFL learners. Nevertheless, there were some exceptions where EFL learners mastered the needed skills to compose appropriate and perfect e-mails. Many factors led to this outcome like communicating with their peers inside or outside of their classes or through video-gaming, and good education inside or outside of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Question two tackled the issue of the perception of the e-mails. EFL instructors' responses were not alike. The majority stated that they did not get offended by those e-mails, and the rest stated either offended or had neutral perception.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Further Studies

The EFL instructors' perceptions of EFL learners' e-mails were not alike. The instructors differed in their attitudes toward the e-mails they received from their students. The learners' ability to compose appropriate and acceptable e-mails relied heavily on various factors. Among them is the need to raise awareness of pragmatic competence. Failing to fulfill this may result in an undesired outcome. Pragmatic competence, which is the ability to utilize language successfully in various settings, affects communication inside and outside the ESL classroom (Hilliard, 2017). Therefore, it is recommended that EFL instructors promote pragmatic topics and skills to EFL learners (Hassaskhah & Ebrahimi, 2015).

Recommendations for Practice

This section provides insights and recommendations based on the results of the study. The results varied in terms of directness level, which was based on Blum-Kulka's (1984) theoretical framework. In this framework, request strategies are divided into three levels: conventionally direct, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect. The proposed recommendations for practice are based on the findings and grouped into EFL instructors' practice, EFL learners' practice, and institutional practice.

EFL instructors' practice

As the findings of this case study reveal important data, EFL instructors are encouraged to promote pragmatic topics in class and to their EFL learners. This can help EFL learners build their students' awareness and ability in the target language, thus enhancing their potential and skills in forming requests in either spoken or written settings. This belief was supported by some of the participants. They believed that promoting these topics to learners would enhance their abilities.

Moreover, EFL instructors need to correct their students' mistakes or draw their attention to suitable/varied styles of using the language appropriately. Correcting their mistakes and demonstrating the correct methods of using the language can enhance learners' abilities and make them more aware of the appropriate methods for forming requests to their instructors or for use later in their daily lives. Further, EFL instructors are encouraged to introduce topics to EFL learners that discuss writing proper e-mails. Some of the topics they may introduce are implementing the proper tone in the e-mails, using titles, focusing on conveying the messages appropriately and so forth.

EFL learners' practice

The results do not only put all efforts on EFL instructors solely; they also recommend that EFL learners do their part. The benefit of this practice is that it elevates their awareness and knowledge about pragmatics. It also helps expedite the learning process in the long and short term.

Learning various methods and styles of composing effective requests can be attained through communicating with peers, instructors, and others. Other settings, such as playing video games and chatting with native speakers, enable them to learn pragmatic concepts.

Unquestionably, learners are also encouraged to attain the significant etiquette that deals with the how e-mails shall be composed. Learners are to understand initially the purpose of composing their e-mails, requesting, raising complaints, etc. In other words, they are to understand why they shall send an e-mail to their EFL instructors. Therein, determining the purpose is vital for the e-mail composing process. Nevertheless, irrespective to the purpose of the e-mail, implementing the right tone in the e-mail is yet another crucial point they need to highlight. Implementing the right tone is crucial when composing e-mails. Taylor (2005) advocated that "Make your writing positive, stimulating and interesting, add some feeling and a personal touch. This will help people get to know the real person behind the message." (as cited in Prasad, 2020, p. 10).

Lastly, e-mails' writing process are always advised to preserve precise, short, tone-friendly, and clear. (Prasad, 2020, p. 10).

Institutional practice

EFL institutions are also encouraged to raise the awareness of EFL learners attending their institutions. Departments are encouraged to tailor their curricula appropriately based on the needs of their EFL learners. Adding email writing skills units and addressing these vital topics in the curriculum is always appreciated. This will promote the competence needed to compose emails appropriately. Moreover, EFL institutions should promote seminars and workshops on pragmatic aspects and deal with all hardships that EFL learners may encounter during their studies. This can help fill the gap in EFL students' learning of pragmatic issues. It is recommended to use the latest materials, such as books and learning equipment, in the learning process.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although many studies have been conducted to define pragmatics and uncover its various aspects, less attention has been given to examining the perception of the pragmatic aspect of forming requests in the EFL context. Raising awareness about the importance of pragmatic topics among EFL learners can help develop knowledge to avoid harm or miscommunication between EFL learners and EFL instructors. This case study contributes to pragmatic knowledge and increases awareness of the significance of these topics in today's learning process. It also contributes to advancing the field of pragmatics by providing information about EFL instructors'

perceptions of the e-mails they have received from their EFL learners at Jazan University. Additionally, It provides information about the level of directness that is embedded in the reviewed e-mails, which enriches the literature about this phenomenon.

Further, this case study provides some opportunities for future research. First, future research should include both ESL and EFL learners in their investigations. The findings of this study revealed that some EFL learners were able to send appropriate e-mails and use various politeness markers in their e-mails. This was due to their ability to communicate with native English speakers through online chatting, phone calls, and online gaming. Therefore, including participants from these groups may lead to a better understanding of the issue.

Additionally, this study followed the case study approach, which was guided by the suggestions and recommendations of qualitative research methods. Only Saudi EFL instructors from Jazan University in the southern part of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia were selected. Therefore, generalizing the findings to other parts of the Kingdom is impossible. Further, the results of the study may not be applicable to other contexts, such as ESL. To confirm the findings of this study, many case studies are recommended. Also, applying other research approaches may lead to different results and a better understanding of the topic.

This case study only included male participants due to religious and cultural restrictions. Recruiting male and female participants is encouraged, as this may reveal different results.

Attempting to answer all the issues in the field of pragmatics is impossible. Thus, some boundaries were set to guide how the study would be conducted. One of the drawbacks of case studies is that researchers are always keen to answer general questions or accomplish many objectives simply by conducting one study (Baškarada, 2014). For this reason, setting boundaries for this study was important. Other researchers may focus on other topics outside these boundaries.

Next, the study can be extended by including more participants. All the participants in the current study were from the same department. Having participants from other departments within the same institution may lead to significant results. Additionally, having non-Arabic speaking instructors would also be an intriguing topic. Further, in this regard, EFL learners may only incorporate English in their communication, which results in attaining more data for the study. Not only that, but the results of the study may also change because of including varied EFL instructors with varied backgrounds and cultures. Moreover, the document review process consisted of only five documents. Adding more documents is highly recommended.

Further, little research has been done on the perception of e-mails sent by EFL learners. It was challenging to find studies on this topic in the literature. Conducting more research in this area can help enrich the literature and pave the way for future research in this area.

In addition, theoretical and conceptual approaches should be connected. Learning how to use a language is not equal to using it as needed. Therefore, it is recommended that other theoretical frameworks be used to investigate this topic further. This may lead to better investigations of this issue from various angles.

Conclusion

Pragmatics is a field that needs to be addressed more in class for EFL learners. The significance of this field of linguistics stems from the need to understand the mechanism of communicating well in an EFL setting. Failing to comprehend this field may lead to miscommunication among EFL learners themselves and between them and their EFL instructors.

The problem addressed by this single case study was that EFL learners tended to compose e-mails that were not appropriate for sending to their EFL instructors. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the perceptions of these e-mails and the attitudes of EFL instructors when receiving these e-mails.

The findings revealed that the majority of the EFL instructors were not offended by inappropriate e-mails sent by their EFL students. This attitude was due to several reasons. The EFL instructors came from the same environment as the EFL learners. This allowed them to see that the learners did not intend to insult them in their e-mails. They also claimed that the environment itself could have affected their methods of composing e-mails. Additionally, the EFL instructors argued that transferring and translating from Arabic, which is the EFL learners' first language, into English was another factor that led to the inability to compose appropriate e-mails. Although most of the EFL instructors were not offended, two participants were offended by the lack of professionalism in e-mails. They argued that, as these students were learning English, they should learn all of its aspects, including pragmatics and methods of writing appropriate e-mails in English.

As stated earlier, my interest of pragmatics relies on the fact that I am deeply profound to elucidate the best practices in overcoming EFL learners' obstacles when learning English, more precisely, in the norm of composing and sending appropriate e-mails to their professors. Based on the results of my study, some EFL instructors advocated for the necessity of teaching pragmatics to EFL learners as soon as possible. This recommendation matches with the suggestions introduced earlier in this chapter.

Crafting this research and approaching the results of it is significant in supporting theories and claims that tackle this issue in the literature. Not only this, but it also aids to better

understanding of this issue. Therein, it may lead to successfully comprehending all necessary practices to teach pragmatics in classrooms in general and writing e-mails in precise.

Although this case study was supported by previous research, it also provides opportunities for future research. Future studies may benefit from adding more data. As the current study included only five documents to review, which was considered a limitation of the study, future research might consider adding more documents to the review. Moreover, female participants should be included in future studies, as doing so may produce different results. ESL learners can also be included in future research, as this single case study focused only on EFL learners. Including ESL learners is an interesting avenue for future studies. Conducting research on other aspects of pragmatics is recommended. For example, politeness and the understanding of specific contexts can be examined.

Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Questions

General Questions

- 1. How long have you been teaching English?
- 2. What courses have you taught so far?
- 3. Have you ever come across pragmatic topics in your classes?
- 4. What do you think of pragmatic teaching in your classroom?

Types of E-mails Received

- 5. When do students contact you and why?
- 6. What sort of communication do you use to communicate with students?
- 7. How can you describe their e-mails?
- 8. What can you say about the level of appropriateness, the level of the directness of the language used?
- 9. How did you find the tone of the e-mails? Do you get offended by it? Why/how?
- 10. How would you respond to their e-mails? How did you correct them, if you did?
- 11. Did you see any enhancements? How?
- 12. What do you expect the reasons behind it?
- 13. Have you done any explication to this topic in your class? How did they respond?

Suggestions

- 14. From your perspective, do you think that the levels of the appropriateness of the students may differ? How?
- 15. What are your suggestions for teachers who are teaching English?

16. What other suggestions need to be provided by teachers to ensure the appropriateness of the language used in emails?

Appendix B: Observation Checklist

Course Name:

Date:

Observation Time:

Observations	Perception	Appropriateness	Notes/Examples
Conven. Direct			
Conven. Indir.			
Non-Conven. Indir.			
Reason for sending			
e-mail			
<u>Abbreviations</u> Conven. Direct: Conver	ntionally Direct		
Conven. Indir.: Conven	tionally Indirect		
Non-Conven. Indir.: No	on- Conventionally	y Indirect	

Interview Questions	Breaking the ice	1- What is the level of	2- What is EFL
		directness that has been	instructors' perceptions
		embedded in some of the	of the received e-mails
		e-mails perceived by EFL	sent by their EFL
		instructors?	learners in terms of its
			appropriateness?
How long have you been teaching			
English?	\checkmark		
What courses have you taught so			
far?			
Have you ever come across			
pragmatic topics in your classes?	\checkmark		
What do you think of pragmatic			
teaching in your classroom?	\checkmark		
When do students contact you and			
why?	\checkmark		

Appendix C: Research Questions/Interview Questions Matrix

What sort of communication do			
	,		
you use to communicate with	\checkmark		
students? Which one			
How can you describe their e-			
mails?		\checkmark	\checkmark
What can you say about level of			
appropriateness, level of directness		\checkmark	\checkmark
of the language used?			
How did you find the tone of the e-			
mails? Do you get offended by it?		\checkmark	\checkmark
Why/how?			
How would you respond to their e-			
mails? Do you correct them?			\checkmark
What to do you expect the reasons			
behind it?			\checkmark
			V
Have you done any explication to			
this topic in your class? How did			\checkmark
their responses?			
From your own perspective, do			
you think that the levels of			

(Bloomberg & Volpe (2019)

Introduction:

My name is Hamzah Kuriri and I am a Ph.D. student at the University of New Mexico-Main Campus (UNM). I am conducting this research that aims at investigating the perception of EFL e-mails by EFL instructors at a university in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This project is a fulfillment to finish my doctoral degree. Your participation in this study is absolutely voluntary and would like to emphasize that it is also enormously significant. I am requesting to attain your consent to take a part in this study and to use your information only for the sake of the study. It is important that this study may require you to spend some time in an interview session and no direct benefit may be added to you. However, your participation may result in a better understanding of the study I am conducting which result in enhancing our EFL students. An alternative to this study is simply refute participating, which will be respected in all means. I am here to address your questions and concerns during the informed consent process.

PRIVATE INFORMATION

Certain information will be collected for the sake of the study. Demographic information, and educational experience will be collected. Additionally, I will collect some e-mails between you and your students to study the desired norm. Moreover, I will be doing observations to attain the non-verbal gestures about your perception of the e-mails received. With gaining this information, I can assure that I will do more than expected to protect your information. I will keep all of the information anonymous and will not gather any personal information (cell phone, e-mail, address, employee number, date of birth). I can assure you that all information will be kept in a safe place (removable encrypted USB) and the only individual who will look into it is only me

for the research purposes only. Your interview and recordings will be kept in a safe place and will be destroyed upon finishing my project. With all of these efforts, I must say that there is a small chance that the private information may be released accidentally. This chance is small but it can exist. As such, please do consider this before signing the consent form.

Activities:

Upon participation in this study, you will be requested to:

Individual interview: You will be asked 11 open-ended questions that relate directly to the topic I am exploring. The interview session may last between 45-60 minutes. One important issue to bring is that I am not here to criticize your teaching methods, nor am I here to criticize how you perceive EFL e-mails from your EFL students. All gathered information will not be shared with any other individual and will not be used to affect on your current position. Upon agreeing to participate, I will approach to you requesting you to provide a suitable time that meets your conveniences you and me to meet and do the interview. You will have the choice of whether turn on your camera or turn it off. I will audio- record the session to gather data needed for the study. **Observations:** To explore better the questions of my study, I will be also observing your nonverbal gestures in order to fully understand the desired topic. I will carry this process synchronously as I conduct the interview. I want to assure that I am not here to criticize you or criticize how you deal with your students. With this being said, I want also to assure you that I will not share this information with our college as not to affect on your current position. **Document Review:** To further explore this phenomenon, I am going to request you to review

and share some of the e-mails that have been sent to you. I will not ask you to disclose the information about the sender of the e-mail or to release any other related information that may recognize this student. This process will be only used to explore the directness level as well as

the appropriateness of the received e-mails. The information obtained will not be shared with the college and will not be used to affect on any area or whatsoever on the sender of that e-mail. Of course, you may approach to the sender of that e-mail and let him/her know about the study and then check on the possibility of using that e-mail as a data.

Eligibility: Only Saudi EFL instructors with at least 4 years teaching experience are eligible to participate in the study. If you do not meet with these conditions, you are not eligible to participate.

Benefits: If you decide to participate in the study, no direct compensation will be offered.Having said that, the results of the study will enhance and increase our awareness of the phenomenon which leads to uplift our students' conception about this phenomenon.Risks: Although all disclosed information will be kept in a safe place, there is a small chance that your private information may be released accidentally. As such, please be aware of it before

deciding to participate.

Congeniality: All disclosed information will be kept encrypted in a safe place and will not be shared with any individuals outside of the concerned circle. The concerned circle is me, as a researcher, and my dissertation chair, Dr. Emma Trentman. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) may request to research and review your information for the sake of assuring the appropriateness of the procedures of conducting studies with human subjects. I will keep your data for a period of 7 years. Then, I will delete all data after that period.

Contact information:

If you have any question or concern pertinent to the procedure of conducting the research, you are always welcome to communicate with me at: <u>Hkuriri@unm.edu</u> and/or my mobile phone

505-363-2840. My dissertation chair and the supervisor of this study is Dr. Emma Trentman, and she works at the University of New Mexico. You can contact her at <u>etrentman@unm.edu</u>. If you have any questions or concerns pertaining to your rights in this research, please contact the IRB at the University of New Mexico at IRBMainCampus@unm.edu or 1-505-277-2644.

Voluntarily participation:

The participation process in this study is entirely voluntary. If you decide that you do not wish to participate or if you want to stop participating after you start, there will be no penalty to you.

Future Research:

All information collected in this research may NOT be used for any research in the future, even after removing all identifiable information.

Signature:

Your signature on this document indicates that you have read the consent form and understand all parts of it. It also indicates that you agree to voluntarily participate in the study. You will be given a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Participant Signature	Printed Name	Date
Researcher Signature	Printed Name	Date

Appendix E: E-mails Guidelines and Blueprint for Academic Use (with Examples)

Guidelines for Writing Proper E-mails

There are many tips and suggestions one can suggest for better e-mail composing. The following parts are guidelines one must follow when writing e-mails.

First, it is advised to start your e-mail with the proper title and greeting that suits the situation. Films Media Group (2019) advocated for the same issue and suggested that individuals were recommended to use proper tone and titles. Further, "When writing to an unknown business acquaintance, it is best to stick to the conventions of traditional business letters by using 'Dear" (DuViver, 2007, p. 79).

Moreover, one needs to determine his/her audience (Films Media Group, 2019). You are not advised to send a straightforward e-mail to your professor/instructor without having politeness markers and face-mitigating tools, for instance.

To add, keep your messages short, precise, and formal. This is always recommended and leads to not losing the purpose of the message. Kuney (2013) advised to only write short messages. Kuney (2013) also asserted that "Be brief, to the point, and separate each subject into a separate paragraph to focus the client's attention" (p. 62). Also, DuViver (2007) suggested not to make your e-mail informal or spontaneous.

Further, one is always recommended to proofread the e-mail and check for errors/mistakes before sending it. Kuney (2013) argued that proofreading was an essential step before sending any e-mails. Also, make sure to use the proper salute before sending your e-mail. For instance, do not send "Good morning" when the time pasts 4 pm. By minding these time differences, you will be sound professional (Kuney, 2013).

E-mail 1

Dear Dr. (or Professor)_____,

Good (morning, afternoon, or evening). I hope you are doing well and enjoying your time. I

would like to kindly request you to _____. The reason behind this request stems from

Please let me know if that is possible.

Regards,

Your name

Student ID

Phone

Email

E-mail 2

Dear Professor _____,

Good (morning, afternoon, or evening). I am here to kindly let you know that my computer is currently displaying an Error 1600 message and I am having trouble submitting my essay. I am wondering if it is ok if I get a 12-hour extension and submit it by noon tomorrow so I can go troubleshoot my computer? Alternatively, I can bring you a printed version of the assignment to your office on my way to my 10:30 class tomorrow morning. Please let me know if that is possible.

Thank you.

Best,

YOUR NAME

E-mail 3

Dear Professor _____,

I am very sorry to let you know that I am currently in the hospital and will be having my appendix removed at 7 am tomorrow. I will not be in class on Monday and will need to reschedule my midterm exam, if possible, as I will be resting at home. I expect to return to campus in two weeks.

Please let me know what you think.

Best,

Your name

E-mail 4

Dear Professor _____,

Good day. Hope all is well. I have noticed on the course website that I received a 10/100, or 10%, on Homework 9. Can you please confirm if this is the correct grade? If yes, is it possible to stop by your office to discuss it a bit further, please?

Thank you in advance.

Yours,

YOUR name

E-mail 5

Dear Professor _____,

Good (morning, afternoon, or evening). I hope this e-mail finds you very well. I would like to kindly ask you some questions about my homework, please. On Question 9 of Homework 6, I have some difficulties in recognizing the accurate sound of the syllable. Do you have any tips on how to solve this? Alternatively, we can talk about this in your office hours if you prefer to do so.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Best,

Your name

E-mail 6

Dear Professor X:

My name is *Peter Anteater*, and I am very interested in becoming involved in research in *Subject Area*. I am a *X* year student with a GPA of *X*. I have taken *Courses* and *Additional Experiences*. My goal is to *Goal*.

I have reviewed your faculty profile and am interested in the work that you have done. I was intrigued by your journal article, *"Article Title."* It *Additional Information about Topic*. I would like to get involved in research in this area because it will help me to better prepare for *Goals*.

Would it be possible to meet with you to further discuss *Topic* and my possible involvement in research? I am available *Days and Times*. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Peter Anteater

Student ID

Address

Phone

Email

From: UC Irvine Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program

E-mail 7

Dear Professor _____,

Hope all is perfect with you. I would like to kindly ask you about my project, please. For Project

2, is it okay if I work in a group with this friend and not this other person? This friend is used to

reading things out loud for me, and we will be more successful if we don't have to spend valuable project time trying to troubleshoot assistive technology and instead can focus on learning the material.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Thank you.

Regards,

Your name

E-mail 8

Subject: Possible undergraduate research opportunities

Dear Professor X,

I am a (year, major) at (university) and I am writing to ask about opportunities for undergraduate research in your lab beginning (time period). I have conducted undergraduate research on (topic) with (names) in (program or class). (Expression of interest in the topic). I would like to continue a path of research on (topic) and would ultimately allow me to (career goal). I am especially interested in your previous work on (describe a paper or talk).

I have attached my CV and unofficial transcript to this e-mail, but if there is additional information that I have not included that you would like, I would be happy to provide it to you. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Email address

From: Generalized from an email to a UCSC professor

https://ugr.ue.ucsc.edu/email

E-mail 9

Hello Professor. ____,

I hope you had a great weekend!

I am a student in your course and section number (specify if it is an online class).

I was hoping you could clarify something for me. (*Ask your question and list what steps you have already taken to find the answer (such as looking in the syllabus)*. Please let me know.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thanks,

-Full name

From: https://getsmartsoon.com/how-to-email-your-professor/

E-mail 10

Hello Professor _____,

I hope you had a great weekend!

I am a student in your course and section number (specify if it is an online class).

Describe why you need to meet with them. I was hoping we could meet and discuss it during your office hours. I checked the syllabus, but I do not see if your office hours are over Zoom or by appointment only. Please let me know when and how I can reach you during your office hours. Thank you!

I look forward to hearing from you.

Much appreciated,

–Full name

From: https://getsmartsoon.com/how-to-email-your-professor/

E-mail 11

Subject: Need Letter of Recommendation

Hey [Mr./Ms.] [Professor's name],

I was wondering if I could get a letter of recommendation from you. I'm applying for [job/school/scholarship/etc.], and it's due next week. Please let me know if you can do this. [Your name]

From: Northwestern University

https://www.northwestern.edu/academic-support-learning/academic-strategies/find-strategiesfor-success/emailing-faculty.html

E-mail 12

Effective

Subject: Informational Meeting

Dear [Professor/Dr.] [Professor's last name],

My name is [your name]; I am in your [class title] class. I would greatly appreciate the chance to meet and speak with you about [topic you are interested in—professor's research, career path, etc.], as I [am interested in the topic/am looking to potentially pursue this line of work/have a background in the topic/etc.]. Would it be best for me to come in during your regular office hours, or would you be available to meet for a one-on-one appointment? I am available [dates and times during which you are available], and would love to get coffee, meet in your office, or meet at some other convenient location for you.

Thank you,

[Your name]

From: Northwestern University

https://www.northwestern.edu/academic-support-learning/academic-strategies/find-strategiesfor-success/emailing-faculty.html

Email 13

Subject: Question about [Specific Class Topic/Homework Assignment/Reading] Dear [Professor/Dr.] [Professor's last name], My name is [your name]; I am in your [class title] class. I am having trouble understanding [specific class topic/homework assignment/reading]. Unfortunately, I have a regular conflict with your office hours, but would greatly appreciate some guidance on this. Would it be possible to set up a time to meet with you, at your convenience? I am available [dates and times during the week during which you are available].

Thank you,

[Your name]

From: Northwestern University

https://www.northwestern.edu/academic-support-learning/academic-strategies/find-strategiesfor-success/emailing-faculty.html

Email 14

Dear Professor (name),

My name is (your name), and I'm in your (insert details) class. First, I would like to apologize personally and explain why I have been unable to (insert what you need an excuse for).

II would like to reassure you that this won't happen again.

Kind regards,

(Your name)

From: https://www.flowrite.com/blog/how-to-email-a-professor

Email 15

Dear Professor (name),

I'm in your class (insert details) and would like to request an extension for my current assignment. I'm struggling to complete the assignment in time because (insert reasons).

I would like to reassure you that if you grant me this extension, I will ensure I deliver the assignment for this date.

Please feel free to contact me, and I look forward to receiving your reply.

Many thanks,

(Your name)

From: https://www.flowrite.com/blog/how-to-email-a-professor

Email 16

Dear Professor (name),

I'm really enjoying the class (insert details). I wanted to know whether there were opportunities for me to earn extra credit this year?

I'm highly committed and want to achieve as much as I can. So please let me know if there are

any extra credit opportunities and how I can access them.

I'm excited about your reply.

Thanks,

(Your name)

From: https://www.flowrite.com/blog/how-to-email-a-professor

Email 17

Dear Professor (name),

I'm currently failing your class (class name) and wanted to speak with you about what I can do to put things right.

Could you spare some time to sit down with me and discuss my current progress and provide some feedback on areas I can improve? I would welcome your expert guidance in helping me to get back on track.

If you are willing and able to help me, please email me back with a suitable date and time for us to meet.

Many thanks,

(Your name)

From: https://www.flowrite.com/blog/how-to-email-a-professor

Email 18

Dear Professor (name),

I recently emailed you to request (add information).

I'm just following up to see whether you received this email. If so, can you please let me know

when I can expect a reply?

Many thanks,

(Your name)

From: https://www.flowrite.com/blog/how-to-email-a-professor

Email 19

Dear Professor (name),

My name is (name), and I'm currently studying in your class (insert class name).

I would like to ask you a question that I would welcome your feedback on. (Insert question)

Thank you for taking the time to read and respond to this email. Your considered feedback and insight are welcomed.

Kind regards,

(Your name)

From: <u>https://www.flowrite.com/blog/how-to-email-a-professor</u>

Email 20

Hi Professor (name),

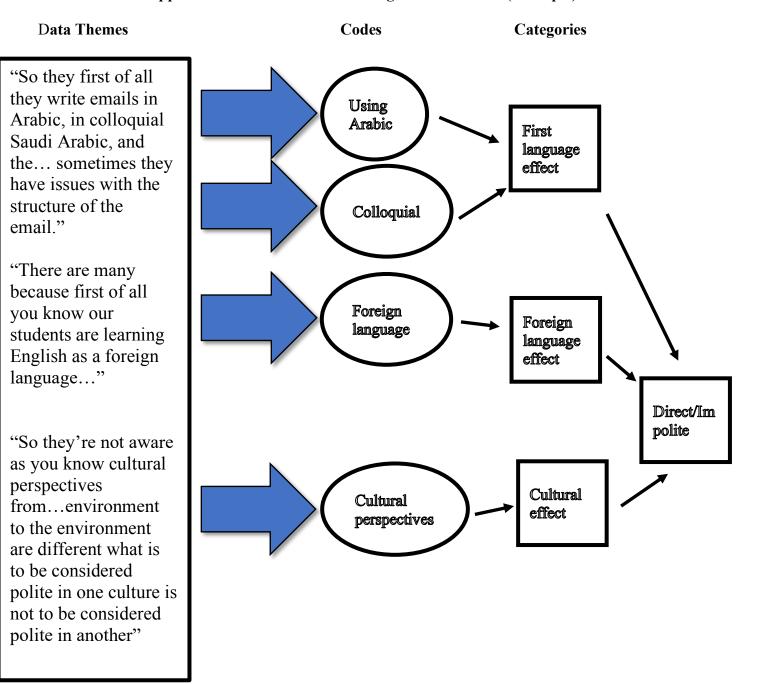
I recently received a grade for my (paper/assignment/exam), and I would like to understand why it was so low?

I know you're busy, but I would welcome any information and guidance you could provide me. I believe this will help me to improve in the future.

Kind regards,

(Your name)

From: https://www.flowrite.com/blog/how-to-email-a-professor



Appendix F: From Codes and Categories to Themes (Example)

Saldaña (2016)

Appendix G: General Coding and Themes Development Table

RQ1: What is the level of directness that has been embedded in some of the e-mails perceived by EFL instructors?

Direct/Impolite E-mails	Indirect/Polite E-mails
Codes:	Codes:
1. The conventionally Direct Requests:	1. Perfect E-mails style based on participants'
- Direct E-mails.	views.
-Reasons for Direct E-mails:	2. Politeness markers.
- The Impact of the First Language.	3. Reasons for the existence of polite e-mails
- Foreign Language Affect.	among EFL learners.
- Culture Affect.	- Good Education.
- Pragmatic Topics.	- Peers Interaction.
	- Learner's Emotions Affect (Inner Feelings).

RQ2: What are EFL instructors' perceptions of the received e-mails sent by their EFL learners in terms of their appropriateness?

Not offended by Direct	Offended by Direct	Neutral Perception of
Requests	Requests	Direct Requests
1. Never got offended.	1. Not appropriate.	1. OK e-mails.
2. Put emotions aside.	2. Not suitable.	2. Not judging.
3. Culture sharing.	3. No titles used.	3. Focusing on the content.
4. Same position as the	4. Should use proper	4. Still learners.
students before.	language.	5. Reply to the e-mails
	5. Should learn styles.	without corrections.

(Bloomberg & Volpe (2019)

Appendix H: Data Summary Table

	RQ1			RQ2	
			\langle		
Participants	Direct	Indirect	Not offended by	Offended by	Neutral perception
	Requests	requests	direct requests	direct requests	of direct requests
MM	\checkmark		\checkmark		
JH	V		\checkmark		
YM	\checkmark		\checkmark		
FK	\checkmark		\checkmark		
FG	\checkmark		\checkmark		
KZ	\checkmark		\checkmark		
HM			\checkmark		
AD	√				
AA	\checkmark				
MS					
Total	$8\sqrt{80\%}$	$2\sqrt{20\%}$	$7\sqrt{7} = 70\%$	$2\sqrt{20\%}$	$1\sqrt{1} = 10\%$

(Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019)

Abbreviations:

RQ1: Research Question 1.

RQ2: Research Question 2.

Appendix I: Road Map of Findings

Finding 1: The majority of participants indicated that almost all e-mails they received were conventionally direct. Many reasons played roles in the arena and led to this unfortunate outcome.

- The impact of deploying Arabic in their English texts, either through translating into Arabic and then to English, or relying heavily on their knowledge in Arabic and then format their English sentences based on that knowledge solely.
- Some participants argued that since English was learned as a foreign language, this made it more challenging to outcome more indirect e-mails.
- Culture was also another item that played a role in the outcome of the conventionally direct requests, according to participants.
- Some participants expressed that inner feelings would be another reason for forming conventionally direct requests.
- Not introducing pragmatic topics earlier was also brought in as a reason for the conventionally direct requests.

Finding 2: There were some exceptions to this norm. Some students were able to conduct conventionally indirect e-mails. Their abilities were not alike to their peers due to some factors. One of them was that they were composed to English more extensively.

- They were communicating with either native speakers of the language or other partners who were experts in English.
- Some of the students stated they had been exposed to pragmatic topics earlier, which enabled them to comprehend these topics and apply them when needed.

Finding 3: Participants were not alike when discussing their perception of the e-mails they received from their students.

- The majority of them (7 out of the 10) asserted that they did not get offended by the conventionally direct request they received from their students due to a group of reasons.
 - 1. Understanding that they learn English as a foreign language.
 - 2. They never judged the style, but they only focused on the content, even if it was inappropriate.
 - 3. They shared the same culture as their student. Hence, they knew the challenges.
 - 4. They had been in the same spot their students were at when they sent their emails. Therefore, they knew they were at the learning process and thus, they had these difficulties.
- A few participants (2 of 10) claimed they got offended by the conventionally direct requests.
 - 1. Not appropriate to send it to an instructor.
 - 2. Not suitable for academic setting.
 - 3. No titles used.
 - 4. Should use proper language.
 - 5. Learners should learn different styles when sending e-mails to their instructors.
- Only 1 (1 of 10) had neutral perception of the e-mails sent to him.
 - 1. Not judging.
 - 2. Only focus on the content.

(Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019)

	Findings	Interpretations	Conclusions
1.	The majority of	Many reasons might affect	EFL learners must know their
	participants indicated that	the outcome of the e-mails	weak points, or EFL
	almost all e-mails they	sent to EFL instructors.	instructors shall bring them to
	received were		them, and hence learn how to
	conventionally direct.		overcome them. By doing so,
	Many reasons played		they may be able to deploy
	roles in the arena and led		suitable e-mails.
	to this unfortunate		
	outcome.		
2.	There were some	Although students were	EFL learners' extensive
	exceptions to this norm.	coming almost from the same	exposure to the language and
	Some students were able	environment and level of	speakers of English is
	to conduct conventionally	education, some EFL learners	recommended. Learners can
	indirect e-mails. Their	performed well in the way	learn new and appropriate
	abilities were not alike to	they form their e-mails.	style of composing e-mails.
	their peers due to some		
	factors. One of them was		
	that they were composed		
	to English more		
	extensively.		

Appendix J: Consistency Chart of Finings, Interpretations, and Conclusions

3.	Participants were not	Perceptions of the e-mails	Instructors vary in their
	alike when discussing	were not the same. Some	perception of the e-mails. The
	their perception of the e-	ignore inappropriate styles,	majority were not offended,
	mails they received from	some were offended, and a	although there were cases
	their students.	few did not approve or	when they did.
		disapprove them.	

(Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019)

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