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Complaining Strategies Used by Male and Female EFL Students

Case study: Third year Students of English at Bejaia University

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Linguistics at the University of Bejaia

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to our beloved parents, who have been our source of inspiration, who continually provide their moral, spiritual, emotional, and financial support. Without their love and assistance, this research would not have been made possible. Thank you for giving us the support to reach our dreams.

I also dedicate this Thesis to our friends who have been supported us throughout the process, shared their words of advice and encouragement to finish this important research in time. They also give us inspiration message every time. We will always appreciate all what they have done for us.

ZIDANI Manel

I dedicate this humble and modest work with great love sincerity and pride to my parents in first place. I'm so grateful for your unconditional support, it has been a cornerstone in my life that allowed me to follow my goal and embrace who I'm today.

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Abstract

This study examines the complaining strategies used by Algerian students. It investigates the influence of the participants' gender on their use of complaining strategies. The study also aims to find out if the social status of the interlocutor affects the participants' choice and use of complaining strategies. The population of this study consists of third year EFL (English as a foreign language) learners from the department of English at Bejaia university. The sample of the study consists of 12 males and 12 females from the same department. To collect data, the researchers used quantitative method through the use of a Discourse Completion Task (DCT). Data were analyzed in terms of semantic formulas and were categorized based on the classification of complaining strategies established by Trosborg (1994). The results of the study revealed that both male and female participants were similar when performing the complaints, and preferred the use of the strategy "expression of annoyance or disapproval" when performing their complaints. The findings also showed that the participants' gender did not have a significant effect in their use of complaining strategies. Furthermore, the study revealed that the social status of the interlocutor affects the participants' choice and use of complaining strategies.

Key words: Complaining Strategies, EFL learners, gender, Semantic Formulas, Social Status.

Table of Content

Acknowledgements.....	I
Dedication	II
Abstract	III
Table of Content	IV
List of Tables.....	VII
List of Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Initialisms.....	VIII
Definition of Key Terms	IX
General Introduction	1
1. Statement of the problem:	3
2. Research Questions	4
3. Aims of the study	4
4. Population and Study Sample	4
5. Significance of the study	5
6. Organization of the Thesis	5

Chapter One:

Theoretical Background

Introduction	6
1.1. Section One Pragmatics	6
1.1.1. Pragmatics	6
1.1.2. Speech Acts	10
1.1.2.1. Definition of Speech Acts	10
1.1.2.2. Levels of Speech Acts	10

1.1.2.3. Searle’s (1969) Model.....	12
1.1.2.4. Searle’s (1979) Taxonomy of Speech Acts.....	12
1.1.2.5 In/Direct Speech Acts.....	13
1.1.2.6. Context	14
1.2. Section Two: The Act of Complaint.....	15
1.2.1. Definition of the Act of Complaint.....	15
1.2.2. Classification of Complaints.....	15
1.2.3. The Directive Acts of Complaint.....	17
1.2.4. Types of Complaints	18
1.2.5. Characterization of Complaints-Responses	20
1.3. Section Three: Politeness Theory	21
1.3.1. Politeness Theory.....	21
1.3.2. Politeness in Complaining	23
1.3.3. The Influence of Gender on Communication Style	24
1.4. Section Four: A Selection of Previous Related Studies.....	28
Conclusion.....	33

Chapter Two:

Research Methods, Analysis and Interpretation,

Discussion of the Findings, Limitations of the Study, and Suggestions for Further Research

Introduction	34
2.1. Section One: Methods and Study Design	34
2.1.1 Methods and Study Design	34
2.1.2. Population and Sample	35

2.1.3. Instrument of the Study.....	35
2.1.3.1. Students' DCT.....	36
2.1.4.Data Analysis Procedures	36
2.2. Section two: Analysis and Interpretation of the Findings	36
2.2.1. Analysis and Interpretation of the DCT.....	37
2.3. Section three: Discussion of the Major Results, Limitations of the Study, and Suggestions for Further Research.....	55
2.3.1. Discussion of the Major Results	55
2.3.2. Limitations of the Study.....	56
2.3.3. Suggestions for Further Research	57
General Conclusion.....	58
References	48
Appendix	
Appendix 01 : Students' DCT	
Résumé	

List of Tables

Table 01: Participants' Gender.....	37
Table 02: Participants' Age.....	37
Table 03: Complaining Strategies Used by Males.	38
Table 04: Complaining Strategies Used by Males when Addressing Higher Social Status Interlocutors.	39
Table 05: Complaining Strategies Used by Males when Addressing Equal Social Status Interlocutors.	41
Table 06: Complaining Strategies Used by Males when Addressing Lower Social Status Interlocutors.	43
Table 07: Complaining Strategies Used by Females.....	45
Table 08: Complaining Strategies Used by Females when Addressing Higher Social Status Interlocutors.....	47
Table 09: Complaining Strategies Used by Females when Addressing Equal Social Status Interlocutors.....	49
Table 10: Complaining Strategies Used by Females when Addressing Lower Social Status Interlocutors.....	50

List of Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Initialisms

AEA: American speakers of English living in America

DCT: Discourse Completion Task

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

FTA: Face Threatening Act

FL: Foreign Language

ICs: Indirect complaints

JJJ: Japanese speakers living in Japan

JEA: Japanese speakers of English Living in America

L1: First language

L2: SSecond language

NSs: Native speakers

SAT: Speech Act Theory

SPSS: Statistical Package for Social Sciences

%: Percent

Definition of Key Terms

Complaining Strategies: According to Olshtain and Weinbach (1993), complaining can be described as a situation where the speaker (S) expresses displeasure or annoyance as a reaction to a past or ongoing action, the consequences of which are perceived by S as affecting her unfavorably.

EFL: According to Faizal (2011), English as a foreign language, refers to the use of English in regions where it is not the primary language.

Gender: “gender is conceptualized as plural, with a range of femininities and masculinities available to speakers at any point in time.” (Coates 2013, p.4)

Pragmatics: It focuses on the aspects of meaning that depend on or derive from the way in which the words and sentences are used. (Kroeger, 2018)

Semantic formulas: A semantic formula refers to “a word, phrase, or sentence that meets a particular semantic criterion or strategy, any one or more of these can be used to perform the act in question” (Cohen, 1996, p. 265).

Social Status: refers to the relative rank that an individual holds, with attendant rights, duties, and lifestyle, in a social hierarchy based upon honor or prestige (Britannica, 2023).

Speech act: Austin (in Cutting, 2008, p. 13) Speech acts refer to the actions performed in saying something.

General Introduction

General Introduction

General Introduction

Among the main thing that makes difference between individuals is the use of language, which is the most important tool for communication. According to Keraf (1997), Language is a means of communication between members of the community in the form of a symbol of sound produced by the speech organ. Basically, the language has certain functions that are used according to the needs of a person. That is, as a tool for self-expression, as a means to communicate, as a tool to organize and adapt to social integration in the environment or circumstances, and as a tool for social control (Keraf, 1997). Language is mainly used differently by both males and females. It can reflect societal perception of gender roles and identities.

Language tends to be a mirror and a reflection of a person's character indirectly. Differences in men and women's characteristics make the use of language distinct between men and women. Importantly, Gender is a multifaceted topic that deals with various aspects of identity, social roles, and cultural expectations associated with being male and female. According to Thomas et al. (2004, p.76), gender refers to the social and cultural expectations and roles associated with being male or female. These expectations can influence the way people speak and the language patterns they use. For example, there may be stereotypes or assumptions about how men and women should communicate, which can sometimes lead to discriminatory or sexist behavior. It's important to recognize these biases and strive for equality and understanding in our interactions. The birth of language and gender is often traced to the second wave of feminism in the 1970 and 1980. The perspective is known as Difference feminism was influential in the research of this period, it highlighted differences between men and women's speech. As West and Zimmerman (1987) said that gender is not something we are born with and not something we have, but

General Introduction

something we do. Gender can impact the perception and interpretation of speech acts, that are expressed in different ways based on gender.

Interestingly, Speech acts are fundamental aspects of communication. They refer to the actions performed through language. According to Yule (1996, p. 47) a speech act is the action performed by a speaker through their utterance. It goes beyond the literal meaning of words and focuses on the intention behind the speech. Speech acts can include making requests, giving commands, making promises, apologizing, complimenting and more. When individuals speak, they not only convey information but also perform actions and influence the social dynamics of a conversation. Searle (cited in Katz, 2015, p. 50) stated that there are five types of speech acts, namely, directives, representatives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Most of people can express negative feelings about different actions, that is called a speech act of complaint.

Complaint is among the speech acts which are the most common in humans' daily life interaction. It is a fundamental part of human communication or, a way for individuals to communicate their concerns, usually with the goal of seeking resolution or improvement. People may complain about things such as poor customer service, faulty products, unfair treatment or any other issue that they feel needed to be addressed. According to Traverso (2009), "the complaint is the expression of negative feelings relating to what speakers present as a complainable matter". It means that a complaint is when someone expresses negative emotions or dissatisfaction regarding something they perceive as problematic. It serves as a way for speakers to voice their concerns or grievances about a specific issue. Complaints can vary in intensity and can be direct or indirect depending on cultural norms and individual communication styles. They play a significant role in managing relationships and addressing issues that affect both positive and negative face needs. Yule (1996) said that "expressive speech act can be a statement of pleasure, pain, like, dislike, joy,

General Introduction

or sorrow". In other words, Expressive utterances can convey a range of personal feelings, emotions, giving voice to our experiences and inner states. They add depth and richness to our communication, allowing others to understand and connect with our emotional states. Emotions play a crucial role in how we express ourselves and relate to others in various social contexts.

People use this type of communication because of various reasons, such as Emotional regulation, mood, personality and social factors. In some studies, researchers found that when people complain in order to achieve a certain result, they are happier than people who complain simply for the sake of complaining (Kowalski et al., 2014). However, complaining serves for several important reasons, it can lead to positive change; when organizations or individuals receive feedback through complaints, they have the opportunity to make adjustments and rectify the situation.

1. Statement of the problem

Politeness is an important aspect of communication that involves showing respect, and consideration of social norms. It's about being courteous, using appropriate language. Lakoff (1975) in her book "*Language and Woman's Place*", argued that language used by women is "weaker" and more uncertain than the language used by men. That is, men's and women's language characteristics are different as they tend to behave linguistically different. This is mainly seen in their performance of the various speech acts. Accordingly, the current study sheds light on the speech act of complaint which is among the topics that need to be investigated and studied in Algeria, to report about how this speech act is performed by Algerians mainly because as the literature shows, there is a lack of studies concerning the topic under examination in the Algerian context, and no previous study has investigated the speech act of complaining at the university of Bejaia. Therefore, the present research aims at examining the use of complaining strategies by both

General Introduction

EFL male and female students at the university of Bejaia. We are also interested in finding out whether the gender of the participant has an effect on his/her choice and use of complaints by the participants. Furthermore, the study also attempts to find out whether the social status of the interlocutor has an effect on the participant's choice and use of complaint strategies.

2. Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

What are the strategies used by both male and female students to express a complaint?

Does the participants' gender affect their choice and use of complaining strategies?

Does the social status of the interlocutor affect the participants' choice and use of complaining strategies?

3. Aims of the Study

The present study aims at investigating the speech act of complaint by both male and female students. Moreover, it aims at finding out if gender affects the participants' choice and use of complaining strategy type. Finally, the present research attempts to find out if the social status of the interlocutor affects the participants' choice and use of complaining strategies.

4. Population and Study Sample

The population of this study consists of third year EFL students from the department of English at the university of Bejaia, during the academic year (2024/2025). Convenience sampling technique is applied for the selection of the population. A random sample of 24 students including 12 males and 12 females is selected for the present study.

General Introduction

5. Significance of the Study

This study is valuable for EFL teachers expected to be a source of information for Algerian EFL teachers and syllabus designer. The results of the study will help teachers, particularly, teachers of oral expression and speaking skill to minimize situations in which Algerian EFL learners are supposed to experience language misunderstandings, hence, avoiding communication breakdowns. Moreover, this study is significant in that it contributes to theoretical pragmatics through the case of Algerian EFL learners which shows how language varieties differ from one to another and from one context to another.

6. Organization of the Thesis

The thesis organization is significant since it helps the readers to understand and comprehend the thesis various parts and the whole research. This research starts with a general introduction introducing the topic under investigation. It contains the statement of the problem, research questions, aims of the study, population and Sample as well as the significance of the study. Moreover, the present work is divided into two main parts; theoretical and practical.

Regarding the theoretical chapter, it contains different sections which introduce the speech act of complaint. The first section is about pragmatics. The second one consists of the act of complaint. The third one presents politeness theory. The fourth one is devoted to the review of related previous studies.

Concerning the second chapter, it presents the research methods used in this study, the analysis and interpretation of the results, discussion of the findings, Limitations and suggestions for further research, and finally, the study ends with a general conclusion.

Chapter One:

Theoretical Background

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

Introduction

The present chapter is devoted to shed light on the different theoretical aspects related to the speech act of complaint. It is divided into nine sections; Pragmatics, speech acts, context, the act of complaints, politeness theory, politeness in complaining, the influence of gender on communication style, language and gender, and finally literature review. Each one of these aspects show clearly the topic of the conducting research.

1.1. Section One: Pragmatics

1.1.1. Pragmatics

Pragmatics was introduced by the American philosopher Charles Morris (1901-1979) as one of the three components of semiotics; the science of signs (semantics, syntax, pragmatics). Morris defined pragmatics as "the study of the relation of signs to interpreters"(1938, p. 6). This means that pragmatics focuses on how signs, such as words or symbols are understood and interpreted by individuals. It explores the connection between the signs used in communication and the people who interpreted them.

Morris (1938, p. 77-138) explained pragmatics in the following way:

- a- Languages are used by their speakers in social interactions; they are the first and foremost instruments for creating social bonds and accountability relations.
- b- Speech is part of the context of the situation in which it is produced; language has an essentially pragmatic character, and meaning is constituted by the pragmatic function of an utterance which means that speakers of a language follow conventions, rules and regulations in their use of language in social interaction. The meaning of words, phrases, and sentences is conveyed in certain kinds of situative contexts. Also, the speakers' uses of language fulfill specific functions in and for these speakers' communicative behavior.

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

c- Pragmatics understands and describes language as social action.

d- Core domains of pragmatics reveal that it is a "transdiscipline" within the humanities.

Accordingly, this implies that Language is indeed used by speakers in social interactions, serving as instruments for creating and maintaining social relationships. It is fascinating how languages have specific forms of use that contribute to these social dynamics. Additionally, speech is deeply influenced by the context in which it is produced, giving language its essentially pragmatic character. Meaning is shaped by the pragmatic function of an utterance, and speakers follow conventions, rules, and regulations in their language use during social interactions. Pragmatics truly understands and describes language as a form of social action. Pragmatics is considered a "trans discipline" because it draws from various fields within the humanities. It combines insights from linguistics, philosophy, psychology, and sociology to understand how language is used in real-life contexts. Instead of just focusing on grammar and structure, pragmatics looks at how meaning is influenced by factors like context, social norms, and the speaker's intentions.

According to Thomas (1995, p.22), "making meaning is a dynamic process." That is to say, making meaning is a dynamic process that involves the negotiation of meaning between the speaker and the hearer. So, pragmatics is about how meaning is created and negotiated through interaction. Moreover, Yule (1996, p. 3) views pragmatics as the study of meaning that is communicated by a speaker and interpreted by a listener. According to him, pragmatics is concerned with the following four dimensions of meaning;

- 1) The study of speaker meaning: Focuses on understanding the intentions and implications behind the words used.
- 2) The study of contextual meaning: Explores how meaning is influenced by the surrounding

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

context.

3) The study of how more gets communicated than is said. It refers to the study of how more gets communicated than what is explicitly said, where nonverbal cues and implied meanings come into play.

4) The study of the expression of relative distance: It examines how language can convey social and interpersonal relationships.

Crystal (1997, p. 301), stated that pragmatics aligns with the idea that it focuses on studying language, from the perspective of its users. It involves examining the choices that individuals make when using language, as well as the constraints they face during social interactions. Additionally, it considers the effects that language use has on other participants in the act of communication. Pragmatics truly takes into account the dynamic nature of language and how it shapes our interactions with others.

Moreover, Levinson (1983), views pragmatics as "an inferential process." That is, to understand language, we make inferences based on the context and background knowledge. According to Levinson (1983), pragmatics is about understanding how language is used in specific contexts. It's not just about grammar, but also about the intentions, assumptions, and goals behind our utterances. Pragmatics helps to interpret meaning beyond the literal word.

Leech (cited in Retnaningsih, 2013, p. 50) provided some aspects which are necessary to consider when someone tries to understand an utterance uttered by an addressee. They include:

a) Addresser and addressee

Leech refers to addressers and addressees as "speakers" and "hearers" respectively. They can be a matter of convenience of an utterance.

b) Context of an utterance

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

In pragmatics, the context of an utterance refers to the shared background knowledge between the speaker and the hearer. This context plays an important role in how the listener interprets the meaning of the speaker's words. It includes things like the physical setting, the relationship between the participants, and any relevant cultural or social factors. By considering the context, the listener can better understand the intended meaning behind the speaker's utterance.

c) The goals of an utterance

Different forms of utterances can be used to convey specific meaning and goals. Sometimes, different forms of speech can be used interchangeably to express the same purpose, while other times, the same form of speech can be used to convey different intentions. It all depends on the context, the relationship between the participants, and the desired outcome of the conversation. Language allows us to adapt people's speech to effectively communicate their goals.

d) The utterance as a form of act or activity: A speech act

Pragmatics focuses on the study of language, on a more concrete and contextual level compared to grammar. It examines how language is used in specific contexts, taking into account factors such as the speaker, the hearer, and the situational context of the utterance. Pragmatics helps to understand how language is not just about the words themselves, but also about intentions, meaning and effects behind them.

e) The utterance as the product of a verbal act

In pragmatics, an utterance is considered a form of speech act. Both the speaker and the hearer play a role in producing and interpreting utterances as part of a verbal act. The speaker uses language to convey meaning, while the listener interprets that meaning based on the context and shared understanding. It is like a collaborative process where both participants contribute to the

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

creation and understanding of the utterance. So, an utterance is not just a string of words, but a meaningful action in communication.

1.1.2. Speech Acts

1.1.2.1. Definition of Speech Acts

Yule (1996, p. 47) reported that speech act is an utterance that performs an action. It means that a speaker has a context to drive a hearer by his utterance. In conversation, people not only generate utterances such as incorporating grammatical structures and words but also perform actions through the utterances. The function of the speech act itself is to state the speaker's attention to the hearer, an action that is performed through language is called "speech act". Similarly, Austin (1962) defined speech act as the actions performed in saying something. In other words, speech acts are verbal actions that accomplish something, such as compliment, apology, request, congratulation, etc.

1.1.2.2. Levels of Speech Acts

Austin (1962) argued that every utterance performs some sort of act. It might, for example, describe a situation (e.g. Mohammed had a baby), ask a question (e.g. Is Nancy dating a chef?), make a request (e.g. Please pass the salt!), etc. Austin (1962) instead proposed a three-level categorization of synchronous acts one can do when uttering something: the locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act.

The locutionary act is the literal meaning of the utterance as portrayed by the particular lexico-grammatical elements. To illustrate, Austin stated that the locutionary meaning of "shoot her" is to be drawn from what is actually said by the speaker, i.e. shoot and her (1962, p. 101).

Speakers have some force (intention) in making an utterance, and what they intend to accomplish is called an illocution. Hence, the illocutionary act is the force that utterance has,

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

Illocutions like threats, promises, compliments, etc. are all functions performed by utterances to exemplify. Austin specified that the illocutionary force of shooting her might be an advice, urge, or an order.

That which is produced or occurs as an outcome of an utterance is called a perlocution. Hence, the perlocutionary act is the impact (uptake) that the speaker's utterance may have on the interlocutor. Considering the utterance "shoot her ", one may take the effect of being "persuaded" to shoot her (Austin, 1962, p. 102).

Austin (1989) further classified illocutionary acts into five categories taking into consideration English verbs. These categories are the following:

a. Verdictives: They "consist in the delivering of a finding, official and unofficial, upon evidence or reasons as to value or fact, so far as these are distinguishable. A verdictive is a judicial act as distinct from legislative or executive acts" (p, 153). For instance: convict, assess, and estimate.

b. Exercitives: They have to do with "the giving of a decision in favour of or against a certain course of action, or advocacy of it". (p, 155). E.g.: appoint, degrade, and demote.

c. Commissives: Their whole point, "is to commit the speaker to a certain action". (p, 157). For example: Promise, undertake, and propose to.

d. Behabitives: They "include the notion of reaction to other people's behavior and fortunes and of attitudes and expressions of attitudes to someone else's past conduct or imminent conduct". (p, 160) Such as: apologize, thank, and criticize.

e. Expositives: They "are used in acts of exposition involving the expounding of views, the conducting of arguments and the clarifying of usages and of references". (p, 161). E.g.: "I recapitulate", "I repeat that", and "I quote".

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

1.1.2.3. Searle's (1969) Model

In line with his teacher Austin, Searle (1969) opted to contribute to the notion that the smallest unit of human communication is not the sentence as a syntactic unit, but rather the performance of speech acts. Searle (1969) elucidated that the utterance act is a primary level at which there is a verbal production of linguistic items. The propositional act however, implicates referring and predicating. Understanding speech acts is crucial because it goes beyond mere words, encompassing the intentions and effects of communication:

Effective Communication: Recognizing speech acts enhances communication by interpreting the speaker's intentions, reducing misunderstandings.

Social interaction: Speech acts are fundamental for navigating social situations, as they guide behavior, express emotions, and establish relationships.

Conflict Resolution: Recognizing the illocutionary force behind statements helps in resolving conflicts by addressing underlying intentions and concerns.

Cultural Competence: Different cultures may interpret speech acts differently. Being aware of this can foster cross-cultural understanding and prevent miscommunication.

Negotiation and Persuasion: recognizing speech acts is crucial in negotiations and persuasive communication, as it allows for a more nuanced understanding of the speaker's goals.

1.1.2.4. Searle's (1979) Taxonomy of Speech Acts

Searle (1979) further argued that the touchstones for differentiating one illocutionary act from the other are the illocutionary points (purpose of the act), direction of fit (the match between our words and the world), and the expressed psychological state (the sincerity condition of the act). These criteria, following Searle and Levinson (1983, p. 240), generate five classes of illocutionary acts:

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

a. Representatives (assertives): Commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition, it includes the statement of fact, assertion, conclusion, description etc.

b. Directives: Are attempts by the speaker to get the addressee to do something. They express what the speaker wants. They include; commands, orders, requests, suggestions, etc.

c. Comissives: Are types of speech acts used by the speakers to commit themselves to some future course of action. It includes; promise, threat, refusal, pledge, etc.

d. Expressives: speech acts that state what the speaker feels like; joy or sorrow, pleasure, pain, likes, dislike, etc.

e. Declarations: Bring immediate changes in the institutional (extralinguistic)state of affairs. Such as; “I now pronounce you husband and wife”.

Therefore, according to Searl’s (1979) classification of speech acts, the complaint speech act which is the focus of the present study belongs to the category of expressives, where the speaker can state and express his/her feelings and emotions.

1.1.2.5 In/Direct Speech Acts

According to Searle (1979), the three basic sentence types are: declaratives (e.g., You wear a seatbelt), interrogatives (e.g., Do you wear a seatbelt?) and imperatives (e.g., Wear a seatbelt!) which correspond to the three primary communicative functions: statements, questions and commands/requests, respectively. When there is reciprocal correspondence between the structure and the function, we have a direct speech act and when there is no such correspondence, as is often the case, we have an indirect speech act. The sentence “It’s cold inside” is a direct speech act if intended as a statement, and indirect if intended as a request (Yule, 1996. p, 55). The main reason behind the use of indirect speech acts is politeness. Yule (1996.p, 135) argued that actions such as requests, presented in an indirect way, e.g., “Could you open that door for me?”), are generally

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

considered to be gentler or more polite in society than direct speech acts such as “Open that door for me!”.

1.1.2.6. Context

Context is an important point to study speech acts, and pragmatics, particularly in relation to discourse (Cutting, 2002). In other words, in the study of speech acts, context plays a crucial role. It helps people understand how language is used in specific situations, and how meaning is conveyed through discourse. Pragmatics focuses on how language is used in social interactions and how context influences the interpretation of meaning. By considering the context, individuals can better understand the intentions behind someone's speech and the implied meaning of their words.

According to Nunan (2013, p. 7), “context refers to the situation giving rise to the discourse and within which the discourse is embedded”, which means that context has to do with the specific situation, or environment in which a conversation takes place. It includes factors such as the participants, their roles, the physical setting, and the social norms that influence the discourse.

Furthermore, Nunan (2013) categorized the context into two types: linguistic and non-linguistic context. The first one is related to the language surrounding the discourse, while the second one is associated with language or experimental context, within which the discourse takes place. That is to say, linguistic context refers to the language used in the discourse itself. It includes factors like the words chosen, grammar, and syntax. Non-linguistic context, on the other hand, encompasses everything else apart from language that influences the conversation. This can include things such as the physical environment, cultural background, and even the relationship between the participants.

According to Nunan (2013), the non-linguistic context includes the following:

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

- a-** The types of communicative events (e.g. conversation, lecture, joke, story, and sermon).
- b-** The topic
- c-** The purpose (Function, e.g. describing, stating, thanking, and praising).
- d-** The setting (physical aspects, such as location and time, and psychological aspects: emotional situation).
- e-** The participants and the relationship within them.
- f-** The background knowledge and the assumption of the participants.

Importantly, both types of context work together to shape the meaning and interpretation of the discourse.

1.2. Section Two: The Act of Complaint

1.2.1. Definition of the Act of Complaint

Complaints are expressions of dissatisfaction or discontent about a particular situation or experience. It is a kind of speech act, which is an expressive speech act. Trosborg (1994, p. 311-312), stated that complaint is “an illocutionary act in which the speaker (the complainer) expresses his /her disapproval, negative feeling, etc, towards the state of affairs described in the proposition (the complainable) and for which he/she holds the hearer (the complaine) responsible, either directly or indirectly”. However, Heinemann and Traverso (2009), claimed that any type of comment can be labeled as a complaint, if it has even the smallest amount of negative value. That is, complaints can be seen as a negative view of an event, it shows that complaints can come in various forms, and can be subjective based on individual perceptions.

1.2.2. Classification of Complaints

According to Boxer (1993), two categories of complaint can be distinguished in terms of their patterns and functions: direct and indirect complaint. In direct complaints, the addressee is

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

held responsible for the perceived offense, and is expected to acknowledge or change the undesirable state of affairs. In other words, when someone expresses a complaint, the person they're addressing is seen as responsible for the issue, and is expected to acknowledge or fix it. It's all about understanding the context and the intentions behind the expression of words. Boxer (2010, p. 163), claimed that direct complaints are called face threatening acts, and indirect complaints make solidarity in social interaction. A direct complaint, involves an explicit or implicit accusation, and at least one explicit or implicit directive (Clyne, 1994, p. 54). By stating or implying that the addressee is responsible for a perceived offense, direct complaints threaten the addressee's positive face. Moreover, by stating or implying that the addressee should undertake some action to change the undesirable state of affairs, the complaint impinges on the addressee's negative face, on their need to be unimpeded and autonomous (Daly et al., 2003). In other words, a direct complaint can definitely threaten the addressee's positive face, by implying that they are responsible for the perceived offense. And they can also impinge on the addressee's negative face, by suggesting that they should take action to change the undesirable situation. It's important to consider both aspects of face need in communication.

An indirect complaint is defined as " a long or repeated expression of discontent not necessarily intended to change or improve the unsatisfactory situation "(Clyne, 1994). That is, an indirect complaint is indeed a way of expressing discontent without necessarily expecting the unsatisfactory situation to be changed or improved. Unlike a direct complaint, the addressee is not seen as responsible for the issue or capable of fixing it. Data from a large study on indirect complaint among native speakers showed that indirect complaints are frequently employed as positive strategies for the purpose of establishing points of commonality (Boxer, 1993).

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

According to Brown and Levinson's (1987), direct complaint is "a face threatening act as it asks the addressee to remedy a complaint". Whereas, the indirect complaint is "not necessarily a source of solidarity building, more than a request that is hidden for it." This means that a direct complaint can be seen as a face-threatening act because it asks the addressee to remedy a complaint. On the other hand, an indirect complaint may not necessarily be a source of solidarity building, as it can be more like a request. There might be hidden meanings or intentions behind an indirect complaint that go beyond just expressing dissatisfaction.

1.2.3. The Directive Acts of Complaint

Trosborg (1994, p. 320) argued that there are three main functions of the directive acts of complaint. These are the following:

a- Request for repair: Is the first function of the directive act of complaint. In the majority of cases, the main aim of passing a moral judgment is made by complaint. In order to stop the complainees from doing the wrong action, the complainer demonstrates a complaint described in the complainable. It is considered as an incentive for the complainees to remedy the complainable. In other words, in many cases the main goal of expressing a moral judgment is to bring attention to a complaint and encourage the person being complained about to rectify the situation. By highlighting the complaint, the complainer aims to prevent the complainees from continuing the wrong action and seeks a resolution to the issue at hand.

b- Threat: Is the second directive act of the complaint. According to this function by issuing a particular threat, a complainer may select to attack the complainees' face openly. With an immediate result, she/ he often states an ultimatum. To express the threat, swear words are usually used by the speaker (Trosborg, 1994, p. 321). To put it another way, in this function, the complainer may choose to openly attack the complainees' face by issuing a specific threat.

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

Sometimes, the complainer may even state an ultimatum, aiming for an immediate result. It's interesting to note that swear words are often used by the speaker to express the intensity of the threat. This shows how complaints can vary in their tone and approach depending on the situation.

c- Request for forbearance: Is the third directive act of complaint. In this case, a complainer asks the complainee not to commit his or her mistake anymore, when performing this directive acts (Ibid, p. 322). That is to say in this case, the complainer asks the complainee to refrain from repeating their mistake. By performing this directive act, the complainer is expressing his/her desire for the complainee to stop committing the same error in the future.

1.2.4. Types of Complaints

Olshtain and Weinbach (1987) and Trosborg (1994) have developed two frequently used frameworks of the strategies used to perform complaints. Olshtain and Weinbach (1987) studied native and non-native speakers of Hebrew, and proposed the following classification:

Olshtain & Weinbach (1987) proposed five major strategies of complaining commonly used by speakers. They include:

1/ Below the level of reproach: the speaker avoids mentioning the offensive event or person.

2/ Expression of annoyance or disapproval: the speaker expresses annoyance about the offensive event, and person without direct reference to the offense.

3/ Direct complaint: the speaker expresses his complaint by using explicit reference to the offensive event and person.

4/ Accusation and warning: the speaker directly accuses the complainee of the offense, which may be a consequence for the offender.

5/ Immediate threat: the speaker immediately threatens the complainee by attacking him/her.

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

Trosborg (1994, p. 315) provided the following classification of complaint strategies; no explicit reproach, expression of annoyance and disapproval, accusations and blaming.

1/ No Explicit Reproach

Strategy 01: Hints

Example: we failed in the project because of someone in this group.

2/ Expression of annoyance or disapproval

Strategy 02: Annoyance

Example: what kind of person are you?

The group failed in the project because of you

Strategy 03: Consequences

Example: oh no! Now we failed in the project

3/ Accusations

Strategy 04: Indirect

Example: Is that you who didn't do his part?

Strategy 05: Direct

Example: you didn't do your part, right? The project failed

4/ Blaming

Strategy 06: Modified blame

Example: you should think about the whole group.

Strategy 07: Explicit condemnation of the accused's action

Example: How could you be careless all that during the preparation of the project

Strategy 08: Explicit condemnation of the accused as a person

Example: How trivial you are, you didn't do your part as you are working alone.

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

1.2.5. Characterization of Complaints-Responses

Richard and Schmidt (1996, p. 129), presented complaint responses in five types: Apology, Denial, Excuse, Justify, Challenge.

a. Apology

User: "I can't believe they messed up my order again. This is so frustrating!"

You: "I'm really sorry to hear that they made a mistake with your order. That must be incredibly frustrating. I apologize for the inconvenience caused. Is there anything I can do to help resolve the issue?"

b. Justify

User: "I can't believe they messed up my order again. This is so frustrating!"

You: "I understand your frustration completely. It's really disappointing when they make mistakes with your order. I apologize for the inconvenience caused. Let's work together to find a solution and make sure this doesn't happen again."

c. Challenge

User: "I can't believe they messed up my order again. This is so frustrating!"

You: "I feel you, it's super frustrating when they mess up your order. Sorry you had to deal with that. Let's figure out how to fix this and make sure it doesn't happen again!"

d. Excuse

User: "I can't believe they messed up my order again. This is so frustrating!"

You: "I totally understand your frustration. It seems like they made a mistake with your order, and that's definitely not acceptable. I apologize for the inconvenience caused. Let's see what we can do to make it right."

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

e. Denial:

User: "I can't believe they messed up my order again. This is so frustrating!"

You: "I totally get it! It's so frustrating when they mess up your order. Sorry you had to deal with that. Let's figure out how to fix this and make sure it doesn't happen again!"

1.3. Section Three: Politeness Theory

1.3.1. Politeness Theory

The politeness theory was originally established in 1978 by Penelope Brown and Steven Levinson, in their book titled "Universals in language usage: Politeness phenomena". In this theory, politeness is significant to achieve good communication. To have a successful communication, interlocutors should be polite. There are two parts of Brown and Levinson's (1978) work. The first part of their work is about a fundamental theory, regarding the nature of politeness and how it is practiced in interaction. The second part is about the list of politeness strategies. The first part of the work of Brown and Levinson (1978) speaks about the notion of Face. Face is divided into two parts, the positive face and negative face (Gill, 2005).

According to Yule (1996), A person's positive face is the need to be accepted by others, the desire to be liked, approved of, to be treated as a member of the same group, and to know that his or her wants are shared by others. This means that a person's positive face refers to their need to be accepted by others, to be treated as a member of the same group, and to know that their wants are shared by others. It's a fundamental aspect of social interaction and plays a crucial role in how we communicate and maintain relationships. Whereas, a negative face (Brown and Levinson 1978) is the need to be independent, freedom and not to be controlled by others. In other words, Positive face refers to a person's desire to be liked, appreciated, and respected by others. It involves the need for social approval, recognition, and inclusion. It's about maintaining a positive self-image

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

and feeling valued in social interactions. Whereas, a negative face refers to a person's desire for freedom, autonomy, and independence in social interactions. It involves the need to have control over one's own actions and decisions without feeling imposed upon or restricted by others. It's about preserving one's individual and personal space.

Politeness theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) reveals that politeness can be divided into two natures, which are positive Politeness and negative Politeness. In general, positive Politeness is a communication strategy where individuals aim to enhance positive social relationships and minimize potential threats to the positive face of others. It involves using strategies such as compliments, expressions of solidarity, and showing empathy to make others feel valued and respected. Positive Politeness aims to create a friendly and supportive atmosphere in interactions. Meanwhile, negative Politeness is also a communication strategy where individuals aim to respect the negative face of others by being more deferential and avoiding imposition. It involves using indirect language, hedging, and polite requests to minimize the potential threat to someone's autonomy or freedom. In other words, this theory highlights the two natures of politeness: positive politeness and negative politeness. Positive politeness focuses on enhancing positive social relationships and minimizing threats to others' positive face. It involves strategies like compliments, expressions of solidarity, and empathy to make others feel valued and respected. It aims to create a friendly and supportive atmosphere in interactions. On the other hand, negative politeness aims to respect others' negative face by being more deferential and avoiding imposition. It involves using indirect language, hedging, and polite requests to minimize the potential threat to someone's autonomy or freedom.

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

1.3.2. Politeness in Complaining

Linguistic Politeness and the topic of complaining are two interrelated topics (Shea, 2003). According to Brown and Levinson (1987), all speech acts can be categorized as face threatening acts. Another author who agrees with the statement is Vasquez (2011) who suggested that complaining is a face threatening act (FTA) because for him a complaint is directed to individuals who are responsible for some offenses or events. Orthaber and Marquez-Reiter (2011) reported that there are many forms of complaining, including the act of disapproving, criticizing and displaying uncontrolled negative emotions or insults. When somebody produces complaints there are two situations that may happen. The first one is when the speaker makes complaints in the form of expressing expectations that have not been met, the speaker has tarnished the hearer's positive face. The second situation is when the speaker makes complaints in the form of issuing orders or threats, the hearer's negative face may be damaged as a result of the communication. To understand more there are different forms of complaining acts, such as disapproving, criticizing, and displaying uncontrolled negative emotions or insults. When someone complains, two situations can arise. In the first situation, when the speaker expresses unmet expectations, it may tarnish the hearer's positive face. In the second situation, when the speaker issues orders or threats, it may damage the hearer's negative face.

According to Shea's (2003) research, there are differences in the way people perceive complaints, and it is highly influenced by one's own culture: the way people perceive and respond to complaints can be influenced by cultural norms and values. Different cultures may have varying expectations, regarding the appropriate way to express dissatisfaction or raise concerns. To understand more, politeness in complaining concerns expressing dissatisfaction or raising concerns in a considerate manner. It is important to use polite language, avoid personal attacks,

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

and focus on the issue at hand. Some common mistakes that people make when complaining include being overly aggressive, making personal attacks, focusing on the person rather than the issue, using offensive language, and not providing clear details or solutions.

1.3.3. The Influence of Gender on Communication Style

Communication has always been a necessity in human life. Through communication, the trade of thought among people, which directly contributes to the development of the quality of life itself, can be performed. The ability to percept utterances in communication can determine the actions followed. Communication can be conveyed through verbal and non-verbal means. Buck & Vanlear (2002) argued that there are two types of communication, they are verbal and nonverbal communication. They are seen as spontaneous, symbolic, and pseudo-spontaneous communication. Spontaneous communication is when messages are expressed naturally without much planning. Symbolic communication involves using signs or symbols to convey meaning. Pseudo-Spontaneous communication appears spontaneous but is pre-planned or rehearsed.

Before pointing out the differences between males and females during communication, their stages of development are critical in understanding the various forms of communication. The first perception of communication begins before the ability to speak. As young children observe the actions of others which help them identify who they are. At a young age children begin to form ideas about how they are supposed to act based on their observations. In other words, what takes place inside us is what we observe and regulate our attitudes and behavior.

Wood (2011) explained that men and women grow in different gender speech communities and thus develop different communication styles. She pointed out that a speech community exists when people share understandings about goals of communication strategies for enacting those goals, and ways of interpreting communication. Males grow up learning that the following

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

elements are essential to masculinity: do not be female, be successful, be aggressive, be sexual, be self-reliant, embody and transcend traditional views of masculinity (Wood, 2011). Inversely, females learn that appearance is important, showing sensitivity and care is a must, negative treatment by others is to be expected, superwoman abilities are anticipated, and there is no single meaning of feminine. Wood believes that through communication with others, we come to understand how society defines masculinity and femininity.

According to Wood (2005), gender roles are the source of differential communication between males and females. In her article entitled *Feminist Standpoint Theory and Muted Group Theory*, she introduced the theory of feminist standpoint. This theory claims that because women are repressed in society, their behaviors differ from those of men. According to this theory, patriarchy naturalizes conventional male and female divisions, making it seem natural, right, unremarkable that women are subordinate to men. Moreover, Wood (2011) also discussed the characteristics of feminine speech as well as those of masculine speech. The most important aspects of female communication revolve around the establishment and maintenance of relationships with others. Other feminine communication styles include establishing equality, supporting others, promoting participation, responsiveness, being personal and disclosing information, and tentativeness. While females are concentrated on learning about their communication partners, masculine speech is geared more toward accomplishing concrete goals, exertion of control, perseverance of independence, entertaining, and enhancing status. Men use communication to develop a higher status among peers by accomplishing instrumental objectives, communicating on command, being direct and assertive, abstractness and non-emotional response.

Men and women, have different approaches in their speech, while this can vary from one person to another, some studies suggest that women may tend to express more verbally and seek

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

emotional support. By contrast men may be more declined to express complaints to themselves or focus on finding practical solutions. The primary difference between them will be considered physiological reproductive organs and hormonal differences.

Language and gender serve a twofold function: it is both the means by which we construct the world and the tool by which we must interact with. It is through language that humans develop understandings of how they are and how those who surround them think and act. Developing such understandings allows them to differentiate between masculine and feminine, old and young, powerful and powerless, appropriate and inappropriate, etc. Gender refers to the social and cultural roles, behavior and expectations associated with being male or female.

Language is in us as much as we are in language. By connecting people to their genders, language becomes their genders. Not in the simplistic sense that all we have of our genders is language but in the sense that our representations of gender are inscribed in linguistic markers, functions and accounts as much as they are marked in clothing, hairstyles, and body movements.

Robin Lakoff is an American linguist who teaches Linguistics at the University of California. In 1972 Lakoff published an article entitled *Language and Woman's Place* which created a huge conflict between scholars, in which there were those who found it as an entire topic trivial, yet another category who considered it as a ridiculous manifestation of feminine.

Lakoff's article argued that women have different ways of speaking and interacting that both reflect a subordinate position or place in society. Women's language according to Lakoff is rife with such devices as mitigators and inessential qualifications, in addition, women use more tag questions than men.

Lakoff (1973) has developed the following three major theories about language and gender:

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

1. The dominance approach

In 1975, Lakoff published *language and women's place*. Lakoff (1975) argued that females were being brought up to use language that made them appear to be the weaker sex. According to Lakoff, women speak less frequently than men, as women would tend to give shorter responses like (mmm or yes), to show that they are paying attention. Furthermore, Lakoff identified that, when women speak they would speak in women's register with various characteristics including;

a: Hedging, for example; using indirect language such as “sort of”, “kind of” and “it seems like”.

b: Rising intonation in statements. “Go, this is really good”?

c: Empty adjectives, such as “adorable”, “divine”, “charming” and “lovely”.

d: Extra polite forms, such as “indirect requests”, “euphemisms”.

e: Tag questions, such as “nice weather, isn't it?”

Since the publication of *language and woman's place*, other linguists have produced studies that support and challenge her arguments.

2. Deficit theory

Lakoff (1975) in her book argued that the language used by women is weaker and more uncertain than the language used by men. She refers to this weaker form of language as woman's language. So why is women's language seen as weaker? She believes that the differences in language between men and women reflect their social status and the amount of the power they have in society. As a result, she believes that language that women use is weaker because it reflects their lower social status and lack of power in society. Lakoff also argues that the powerlessness of women is not only reflected in how they speak, but also in how men speak about women. This is because when men speak about women, they are often objectified and seen as reliant on men.

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

3. The Difference Theory (1990)

As the title indicates, the difference theory is the idea that males and females really do converse differently. A big advocate of this theory is Tannen (1990) who believed that differences start in childhood, where parents use more words about feelings to girls and more verbs to boys. Males and females belong to different sub-cultures and therefore speak differently. Her book *You Just Don't Understand*, claims that there are six main differences between the ways males and females use language.

a: Status versus support: men see language as a means of asserting dominance / women see it as a means of empathy.

b: Information versus feelings: men typically communicate to give information, whereas women communicate to build up relationships or to work.

c: Advice versus understanding: men see language as problem solving; women see it as a means of empathy.

d: Orders versus proposals: men use imperatives; females use hidden directives.

e: Conflict versus compromise: men will argue; women will try to find a middle ground.

f: Independence versus intimacy: men use language to show their independence, while women use it to connect with others.

1.4. Section Four: A Selection of Previous Related Studies

The following section present some related previous studies about the speech act of complaint in different contexts:

Boxer's (1993) study analyzed the speech act sequence of indirect complaint/commiseration in conversational interactions between Japanese learners of English as a second language and their English-speaking peers. An indirect complaint is defined as the expression of dissatisfaction about

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

oneself or someone/something that is not present. It differs from a direct complaint in that the addressee is neither held responsible nor capable of remedying the perceived offense. Data from a larger study on ICs (Indirect complaints) among native speakers showed that they are frequently employed as positive strategies for the purpose of establishing points of commonality. The focus here is a contrastive view of IC responses by NSs (Native speakers) and Japanese learners. Consequences of non-substantive, non-commiserate responses on the part of the learners are explored in light of missed opportunities for sustained interaction that can lead to increased opportunities for negotiation of meaning in the L2 (speaker's second language).

Similarly, Shimada (2005) investigates the speech act of complaining, comparing the sociolinguistic behaviors of American speakers of English living in America (AEA), and Japanese speakers of Japanese living in Japan. The participants included 10 AEA's, 10 (Japanese speakers of English living in America) JEA's, and 10 JJJ's (Japanese speakers living in Japan). They responded to 12 complaint-provoking situations in DCT. The participants' written responses were categorized according to 14 pragmatic strategies in complaining. Interviews were also employed to elicit the participants' perceptions of complaining. Specifically, this investigation attempted to examine the frequency of complaining strategies used by the participants, the effects of social distance and relative status upon complaining, and the participants' cultural perceptions of complaining. The results indicated that the JJJ's employed complaining strategies more frequently than either the AEA or JEA. The JEA's occupied an intermediate position between the AEA's and JJJ's. The JJJ's showed greater social distance and relative status effects than the other two groups. All groups tended to employ complaints more frequently with familiar addresses. There was an overall tendency to use complaints most frequently with higher-status persons, as compared with equal or lower-status persons.

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

Sukyadi (2011) aimed to investigate the types of complaining strategies produced by the EFL learners of the English Study Program at Universitas Riau. The research was conducted in Pekanbaru. Research design used was a descriptive qualitative study accompanied by descriptive statistics. The participants of the research involved 36 EFL students of the English Study Program selected by using the cluster random sampling technique. The data were collected by using a DCT consisting of some situations in which students were requested to express their complaints. The result showed that the students mostly used direct complaint strategies. Subsequently, based on the overall strategies, the direct accusation strategy appeared as the strategy mostly employed by students in their daily interactions. It means that they preferred to give a direct and simple complaint by using a question to accuse the complainant directly. Moreover, they complain about something by using an Indonesian structural context as their L1 (speaker's first language), which was not appropriate in the English structural context as their L2. One of the strategies that were not used by the students was the direct strategy to condemn or curse the defendant's actions because it was claimed as a harsh accusation.

In the same vein, Al-Shorman (2016) compared the complaint strategies among two groups of Arabic native speakers, Saudi and Jordanian undergraduate students. The DCT was distributed to 150 male participants selected from the governorates of Irbid and Riyadh universities to participate. The findings of the study showed that Saudi and Jordanian university male students do complain to others using a wide range of strategies. Their complaints fell into four categories: calmness and rationality, offensive act, opting-out, and direct complaint respectively. It was also found that Saudi university students' complaints come first, while Jordanian university students' complaints come second.

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

Similarly, Kaharuddin and Hasyin (2020) are the main authors who were aimed at comparing the strategies of complaints made by college-educated native speakers of English and Indonesian. The method used was the qualitative method by involving 14 English native speakers and 30 Indonesian native speakers who were randomly selected. To collect data, researchers used a survey. The findings showed that ENSs (English Native Speakers) and INSs (Indonesian Native Speakers) used a variety of complaint strategies including reproach, annoyance, accusation, threat, explicit complaint, silence.

Likewise, Furthermore, Hassouneh and Zibin (2021) investigated the complaining strategies used by Facebook users and examined the similarities and differences between complaining strategies found on Zain Jordan and those in other studies in terms of types of complaining used and the linguistic features as well. The researchers built a corpus to include pragmatic information on the types of strategies used on Zain Jordan. The data were analyzed based on Olshtain and Weinbach' (1993) classification of complaint strategies. The results of the study showed that the majority of complaining strategies used on Zain Jordan were direct and there were ten strategies used by them, namely, expression of annoyance or disapproval, explicit complaint, demanding justification, request, joking, future action, accusation and warning, immediate threat, comparing with previous experiences, complaining with negative advice.

Al-Shboul (2021) aims at investigating the similarities and differences in the complaining strategies used between Jordanian male and female students at Al-Balqa Applied University. The researcher also examined how the participants' gender influences the complaining strategies produced by them. A modified version of the Discourse Completion Test was used as a data collection instrument. The results revealed that there are similarities and differences between the two groups of participants. Yet, they differed in their preference and frequency use of these

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

strategies. Results also showed that the social dimensions of social status and social distance of the addressee influenced the participants' responses in terms of the level of directness and their use of different politeness strategies. The study also revealed that gender influenced the choice of complaining strategies and politeness.

Moreover, Kharis (2022) in his study aims to analyze complaint strategies used by Indonesian and American customers on Instagram @indihome and @tmobile. The qualitative method is used in this study because this research produces descriptive data such as speech, writing and the behavior of each people, which has been observed with the totals of 250 citizens' comments in the comment column of those two Instagram accounts. The similarities between the Indonesian and American netizens are using the linguistics features to express complaints such as abbreviation, capitalization, and informal language. While the differences are that American netizens never use code-switching to express complaints because this country was included in the monolingual country. Thus, the Indonesian netizen tends to use code-switching to express their complaint because this country is included in the multilingualism-based country.

Later, El-Dakhs and Mervat (2023) aimed to examine how university students complain and how professors respond to their complaints. Data were collected from 40 undergraduate students and 40 university professors at a private Egyptian university using roleplays. The data were analyzed based on Trosborg (1995) and professors' responses based on Laforest (2002). The results showed that half of the students' complaints come in the form of requests for repair. This was followed by expressing disapproval, making accusations and casting blame. As for professors, they mostly partially accepted the students' complaints through justifying themselves, suggesting alternatives and setting conditions for future acceptance. Interestingly, the social variables of

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

gender and age did not generally have an influence on the realization of the speech acts of complaint and responding to complaints.

Conclusion

The present chapter "theoretical background" is divided into four sections. The first section deals with pragmatics which is a branch of linguistics. It looks at how speakers convey intentions, make requests, give orders and perform other speech acts. This section contains different aspects such as Definition of speech acts, Levels of speech act, Searle's (1969) model, Searle (1979) taxonomy of speech acts, In/Direct speech acts, and finally context. The second section consists of the act of complaint; it involves expressing dissatisfaction or discontent about something. This section includes various aspects namely definition of the act of complaint, Classification of complaints, the directive acts of complaint, Types of complaints, and Characterization of complaints-responses. The next one is politeness theory, it is a sociolinguistics theory that explores how people manage and maintain positive and social interactions through language because of the nature of complaint. It includes politeness in complaining, the influence of gender on communication style. Finally, section four deals with a selection of previous related studies.

Chapter Two:

**Research Methods, Analysis and Interpretation,
Discussion of the Findings, Limitations of the Study, and
Suggestions for Further Research**

Chapter Two: Research Methods, Analysis and Interpretation, Discussion of the Findings, Limitations of the Study, and Suggestions for Further Research

Introduction

As seen in the previous chapter, we have provided a theoretical background related to the speech act of complaint. The attainable literature helped us in gaining some clear understanding of the topic under study. In this chapter, we intended to practically test our research hypothesis and answer our research questions that will lead us to achieve our initial research objectives. For this reason, we decided to divide the chapter into three sections. The first section describes the research design, population and Sample, the data collection instrument and data analysis procedures. The second is about analyzing and interpreting the findings. The third section is about the discussion of the major results of the study, which provides answers to the research questions. Limitations of the study, and suggestions for further research are provided.

2.1. Section One: Methods and Study Design

This section is significant since it presents the methods and procedures followed for collecting and analyzing the data needed for this study. It provides a detailed description of the study design , population and sample, instrument of the study, as well as the data analysis procedures.

2.1.1 Methods and Study Design

Creswell (2008) defined research as " a process of steps used to collect and analyze information to increase our understanding of a topic or issue". The present study is mainly descriptive; it describes how EFL learners at Bejaia university perform the complaint speech act. According to Calderon (2006), descriptive research is as a purposive process of gathering, analyzing, and tabulating data about prevailing conditions, practices, processes, trends, and cause effect relationships, and then making adequate and accurate interpretation about such data with or

Chapter Two: Research Methods, Analysis and Interpretation, Discussion of the Findings, Limitations of the Study, and Suggestions for Further Research

without or sometimes minimal aid of statistical methods. Thus, in order to reach our goal, we opted for a quantitative analyses of data through the use of DCT as a research instrument. The use of quantitative method will provide a consistent analysis about our-subject under investigation. According to Creswell (1994), quantitative research is "an inquiry into a social or human problem, based on testing a theory composed of variables, measured with numbers, and analyzed with statistical procedures in order to determine whether the predictive generalizations of the theory bold true". Thus, quantitative method, with its statistics provided will allow us measure the desired aspects in our study and help us gain a detailed understanding of the subject under examination.

2.1.2. Population and Sample

The population of the present study is third year EFL students from the department of English at Bejaia university. The selection of this population is used on convenience sampling technique. The study's sample is made up of 24 third year students including 12 males and 12 females whose age ranges from 20 to 24 years. In the sample chosen, the number of males equals the number of females since the gender variable is taken into consideration in the study. We selected this sample because we think that third year students at this level have a considerable FL (foreign language) background which allows them to perform the complaint speech act in different situations.

2.1.3. Instrument of the Study

The current study examines the use of complaining strategies by male and female students. To collect data, a DCT was handled to 24 third year students including 12 males and 12 females.

Chapter Two: Research Methods, Analysis and Interpretation, Discussion of the Findings, Limitations of the Study, and Suggestions for Further Research

2.1.3.1. Students' DCT

A DCT was used as the study instrument. In pragmatics, a DCT is a tool that serves to elicit data about specific speech acts. DCT, according to Kasper and Dahl (1991) is "a written questionnaire containing short descriptions of a particular situation intended to reveal the pattern of a speech act being studied ". In this study, the DCT is used to examine the realization of the speech act of complaint and contained six scenarios. Six scenarios were created by the researchers and validated by the supervisor. The scenarios varied by the social status of the interlocutor. In other words, the participants had to address someone higher in status, someone equal in status, and someone lower in status. There were two scenarios for each status. That is, two scenarios for higher social status, two scenarios for equal social status, and two scenarios for lower social status. Furthermore, the designed DCT is divided into two sections, the first one is related to personal information including age and gender. The second part is about the scenarios to which the participants had to react to performing the complaint speech act.

2.1.4. Data Analysis Procedures

The data gathered through the DCT were analyzed and treated quantitatively, relying on tables including frequencies and percentages. Data were analyzed using Trosborg's (1994) classification of complaining strategies.

2.2. Section two: Analysis and Interpretation of the Findings

This section is considered as the most significant part of this thesis. The DCT results were analyzed quantitatively. Regarding the quantitative analysis, this was done using the Statistical Package for Social Science Software (SPSS) in order to generate numerical data including frequencies as well as percentages.

Chapter Two: Research Methods, Analysis and Interpretation, Discussion of the Findings, Limitations of the Study, and Suggestions for Further Research

2.2.1. Analysis and Interpretation of the DCT

The present part provides quantitative analyses of the data collected through the DCT. Overall, data were analyzed in terms of semantic formulas, and were categorized based on the classification of complaining strategies established by Trosborg (1994).

Part one: Personal Information

Table 01: Participants' Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	12	50%
Female	12	50%
Total	24	100%

The above table shows the gender of the participants (third year) from the department of English at Bejaia University. The sample includes two groups (12 males and 12 females), each constituting 50 % of the whole sample. The number of females is clearly equal to the number of males since this variable of gender is taken into consideration in the present study.

Table 02: Participants' Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
From 19-21	20	83.3%
From 22-24	4	16.7%
Total	24	100%

Table 02 shows that the students' age ranged from 19 to 24 years old, and hence divided into two groups. The first group ranges from 19 to 21 years old representing 83.3% of the total number

Chapter Two: Research Methods, Analysis and Interpretation, Discussion of the Findings, Limitations of the Study, and Suggestions for Further Research

of the participants. However, the second group ranges from 22 to 24 years old, representing 16.7% of the whole sample.

Part two: The Complaining Strategies Used by the Participants

Table 03: Complaining Strategies Used by Males

Categories of complaining strategies	Complaining strategies	F	%
No explicit reproach	Hints	2	4.7%
Expression of annoyance or disapproval	Annoyance	20	46.5%
	Consequences	6	13.9%
Total		26	60.4%
Accusations	Direct accusation	3	7%
Blaming	Modified blame	3	7%
	Explicit condemnation of the accused's action	9	20.9%
Total		12	27.9%
Total of complaining strategies		43	100%

Table 03 shows the complaining strategies used by males. As shown in the table, the males used different strategies, namely: “*no explicit reproach*”, “*expression of annoyance or disapproval*”, “*accusations*”, and “*blaming*”. The most distinctive result in this table is that the strategy of “*expression of annoyance or disapproval*” registered the highest frequency (26

Chapter Two: Research Methods, Analysis and Interpretation, Discussion of the Findings, Limitations of the Study, and Suggestions for Further Research

occurrences), accounting for 60.4% of all strategies used as compared with " *blaming* " which recorded twelve occurrences representing 27.9 % of all strategies employed, followed by " *accusations* " which recorded three cases, accounting for 7% of the whole strategies, then " *no explicit reproach* " which recorded the least frequency (2 cases), accounting for 4.7% of all strategies used. This implies that the male participants were more likely to use the second category " *Expression of annoyance or disapproval* " when performing the complaints. With regards to the males' use and choice of complaining sub- strategies, " *annoyance* " registered the highest frequency (20 cases), accounting for 46.5% of all sub- strategies used, followed by " *explicit condemnation of the accused's action* " , accounting for 20.9% of all sub-strategies used, then, " *consequences* " , accounting for 13.9% of all sub-strategies used, followed by " *direct accusation* ", together with " *modified blame* " , accounting for 7% of all sub- strategies employed, and finally " *hints* " which registered the least frequency (two cases) accounting for 4.7% for the whole sub-strategies used. Therefore, in the light of these results, we deduce that the male participants preferred to use the sub-strategy " *annoyance* " when performing the act of complaint.

Table 04: Complaining Strategies Used by Males when Addressing Higher Social Status

Interlocutors

Categories of complaining strategies	Complaining strategies	F	%
	Annoyance	8	53.3%

Chapter Two: Research Methods, Analysis and Interpretation, Discussion of the Findings, Limitations of the Study, and Suggestions for Further Research

Expression of annoyance or disapproval	Consequences	4	26.7%
Total		12	80%
Accusations	Direct accusation	1	6.7%
Blaming	Explicit condemnation of the accused's action	2	13.3%
Total of complaining strategies		15	100%

Table 04 shows the complaining strategies used by males when addressing higher social status interlocutors. The table shows that the participants used various strategies, namely: “*expression of annoyance or disapproval*”, “*accusations*”, and “*blaming*”. An interesting finding in table 04 this table is that the strategy of “*expression of annoyance or disapproval*” registered the highest frequency (12 occurrences), accounting for 80% of all strategies employed, as compared with “*blaming*” which recorded two cases, representing 13.3% of all strategies used, followed by “*accusation*” which registered the least frequency (one case), representing 6.7% of all strategies used. This indicates that when addressing higher social status persons, the male participants were more likely to use “*expression of annoyance or disapproval*” to perform the complaints. Regarding the males’ use and choice of complaining sub- strategies to address higher social status persons, the sub-strategy “*annoyance*” (Harry up and give me feedback as soon as possible), recorded the highest frequency (8 occurrences), accounting for 53.3% of all sub-strategies used, followed by” *consequences*” (I would make it clear for him that I' m out of time),

Chapter Two: Research Methods, Analysis and Interpretation, Discussion of the Findings, Limitations of the Study, and Suggestions for Further Research

which recorded four instances representing 26.7% of all sub-strategies used, then, “*Explicit condemnation of the accused's action*” (we need to be fast), accounting for 13.3% of the whole sub-strategies employed, and finally followed by “*direct accusation*” (you did not consider the feedback yet. Right?) recording the least frequency (one instance) representing 6.7% of all sub-strategies used. This shows that the male participants mostly preferred to use “*annoyance*” and “*consequences*” sub-strategies while performing their complaints for higher social status persons.

Table 05: Complaining Strategies Used by Males when Addressing Equal Social Status

Interlocutors

Categories of complaining strategies	Complaining strategies	F	%
No explicit reproach	Hints	2	11.1%
Expression of annoyance or disapproval	Annoyance	10	55.6%
Blaming	Modified blame	1	5.6%
	Explicit condemnation of the accused's action	5	27.8%
Total		6	33.3%
Total of complaining strategies		18	100%

Chapter Two: Research Methods, Analysis and Interpretation, Discussion of the Findings, Limitations of the Study, and Suggestions for Further Research

Table 05 shows the complaining strategies used by males when addressing equal social status interlocutors. The table shows that the respondents used many strategies, namely: " *no explicit reproach*", " *expression of annoyance or disapproval*", and " *blaming*". The most salient finding in table 05 is that the strategy of " *expression of annoyance or disapproval*" registered the highest frequency (10 occurrences), accounting for 55.6% of all strategies employed, as compared with " *Blaming*" which recorded six cases, representing 33.3% of all strategies used, followed by " *No explicit reproach*" which registered the least frequency (two cases), representing 11.1% of all strategies used. This indicates that when addressing equal social status interlocutors, the male participants were more likely to use " *expression of annoyance or disapproval*" to perform the complaints. Regarding the males' use and choice of complaining sub- strategies to address equal social status persons, the sub-strategy " *annoyance*" (either you help me or I will do it by my own), recorded the highest frequency (10 occurrences), accounting for 55.6% of all sub-strategies used, followed by " *Explicit condemnation of the accused's action*" (You behave as you don't have any work to do), which recorded five instances representing 27.8% of all sub-strategies used, then, " *hints*" (There is someone here who doesn't know the importance of teamwork), accounting for 11.1% of the whole sub-strategies employed, and finally followed by " *modified blame*" (There is no time to waist, we need to work together) recording the least frequency (one instance) representing 5.6% of all sub-strategies used. This shows that the male participants mostly preferred to use the " *annoyance*" sub-strategy while performing their complaints for equal social status persons.

Chapter Two: Research Methods, Analysis and Interpretation, Discussion of the Findings, Limitations of the Study, and Suggestions for Further Research

Table 06: Complaining Strategies Used by Males when Addressing Lower Social Status

Interlocutors

Categories of complaining strategies	Complaining strategies	F	%
Expression of annoyance or disapproval	Annoyance	2	20%
	Consequences	2	20%
Total		4	40%
Accusations	Direct accusation	2	20%
Blaming	Modified blame	2	20%
	Explicit condemnation of the accused's action	2	20%
Total		4	40%
Total of complaining strategies		10	100%

Table 06 shows the complaining strategies used by males when addressing lower social status persons. The table shows that the participants used various strategies, namely: " *expression of annoyance or disapproval*", " *accusations*", and " *blaming*". The most distinctive finding in table 06 is that both strategies of " *expression of annoyance or disapproval*" and " *blaming*" registered the same frequency; four occurrences accounting for 40% of all strategies employed, as

Chapter Two: Research Methods, Analysis and Interpretation, Discussion of the Findings, Limitations of the Study, and Suggestions for Further Research

compared with " *accusations* " which recorded two cases, representing 20% of all strategies used. This indicates that when addressing lower social status persons, the male participants preferred to use expression of " *annoyance or disapproval* " and " *blaming* " to perform the complaints. Regarding the males' use and choice of complaining sub- strategies to address lower social status persons, the sub-strategy " *annoyance* " (Either you help me or I will do it by my own), recorded the same frequency as " *consequences* " sub strategy (Suffer your consequences),two occurrences for each one, accounting for 20% for each one of all sub-strategies used, as compared with " *direct accusation* " (You are in the wrong path), which recorded two instances representing 20% of all sub-strategies used, then, " *modified blame* " (You will have time to enjoy with your phone; this can wait but your studies can not wait), accounting for 20% of the whole sub-strategies employed, and finally followed by " *explicit condemnation of the accused's action* " (It's your responsibility and you are going to regret with this kind of actions) recording the same frequency as " *annoyance* " and " *consequences* " (two instances) representing 20% of all sub-strategies used. This shows that the male participants mostly preferred to use four sub- strategies (annoyance, consequences, modified blame and explicit condemnation of the accused's action) while performing their complaints for lower social status interlocutors.

Chapter Two: Research Methods, Analysis and Interpretation, Discussion of the Findings, Limitations of the Study, and Suggestions for Further Research

Table 07: Complaining Strategies Used by Females

Categories of complaining strategies	Complaining strategies	F	%
No explicit reproach	Hints	4	5.5%
Expression of annoyance or disapproval	Annoyance	35	47.9%
	Consequences	8	10.9%
Total		43	58.9%
Accusations	Direct accusation	1	1.4%
Blaming	Modified blame	22	30.1%
	Explicit condemnation of the accused as a person	1	1.4%
	Explicit condemnation of the accused's action	2	2.7%
Total		25	34.2%
Total of complaining strategies		73	100%

Table 07 shows the complaining strategies used by Females. As shown in the above table, the Females used many strategies, namely: "no explicit reproach", "*expression of annoyance or disapproval*", "*accusations*", and "*blaming*". The most distinctive result in this table is that the strategy of "*expression of annoyance or disapproval*" registered the highest frequency (43 occurrences), accounting for 58.9% of all strategies used, as compared with "*blaming*" which recorded 25 occurrences representing 34.2 % of all strategies employed, followed by "*no explicit*

Chapter Two: Research Methods, Analysis and Interpretation, Discussion of the Findings, Limitations of the Study, and Suggestions for Further Research

reproach” which recorded four cases, accounting for 5.5% of the whole strategies, then “*accusations*” reproach which recorded the least frequency (1 case), accounting for 1.4% of all strategies used. This implies that the female participants were more likely to use “*expression of annoyance or disapproval*” when performing the complaints. With regards to the females’ use and choice of complaining sub- strategies, “*annoyance*” registered the highest frequency (35 cases), accounting for 47.9% of all sub- strategies used, followed by “*modified blame*”, which registered 22 instances accounting for 30.1% of all sub-strategies used, then, “*consequences*” , recording eight cases, accounting for 10.9% of all sub-strategies used, followed by “*hints*” , which recorded four occurrences, accounting for 5.5% of all sub-strategies employed, then, “*Explicit condemnation of the accused's action*” , which registered two cases, accounting for 2.7% of all sub- strategies employed, and finally “*direct accusation*” , together with “*explicit condemnation of the accused as a person*” that registered the least frequency (one case) accounting for 1.4% for the whole sub-strategies used. Therefore, in the light of these results, we deduce that the female participants preferred to use the sub-strategy “*annoyance*” when performing the act of complaint.

Chapter Two: Research Methods, Analysis and Interpretation, Discussion of the Findings, Limitations of the Study, and Suggestions for Further Research

Table 08: Complaining Strategies Used by Females when Addressing Higher Social Status

Interlocutors

Categories of complaining strategies	Complaining strategies	F	%
No explicit reproach	Hints	2	10%
Expression of annoyance or disapproval	Annoyance	13	65%
Accusations	Direct accusation	1	5%
Blaming	Modified blame	3	15%
	Explicit condemnation of the accused as a person	1	5%
Total		4	20%
Total of complaining strategies		20%	100%

Table 08 shows the complaining strategies used by Females when addressing Higher social status persons. The table shows that the participants used different strategies, namely: "no explicit reproach", "expression of annoyance or disapproval", "accusations", and "blaming". An interesting finding in table 08 is that the strategy of "expression of annoyance or disapproval" registered the highest frequency (13 occurrences), accounting for 65% of all strategies employed, as compared with "blaming" which recorded four cases, representing 20% of all strategies used,

Chapter Two: Research Methods, Analysis and Interpretation, Discussion of the Findings, Limitations of the Study, and Suggestions for Further Research

then, " *no explicit reproach* " which registered two cases representing 10% of all strategies used, and finally followed by " *accusations* " which registered the least frequency (one case), accounting for 5% of all strategies used. This indicates that when addressing higher social status persons, the female participants were more likely to use " *expression of annoyance or disapproval* " to perform the complaints. Regarding the females' use and choice of complaining sub- strategies to address higher social status persons, the sub-strategy " *annoyance* " (please, I have no time to waste do it quickly), recorded the highest frequency (13 occurrences), accounting for 65% of all sub-strategies used, followed by " *modified blame* "(you should not treat me like that, I do all my best for your company), which recorded three instances representing 15% of all sub-strategies used, then, " *hints* " (I hope you can deliver my feedback soon),which registered two cases accounting for 10% of the whole sub-strategies employed, and finally followed by " *direct accusation* " (I keep asking, and I put pressure on him), together with " *explicit condemnation of the accused as a person* " (If you want to be a good boss, you must respect your workers, and give them their rights) recording both the least frequency (one instance) representing 5% of all sub-strategies used. This shows that the female participants mostly preferred to use " *annoyance* " while performing their complaints for higher social status interlocutor

Chapter Two: Research Methods, Analysis and Interpretation, Discussion of the Findings, Limitations of the Study, and Suggestions for Further Research

Table 09: Complaining Strategies Used by Females when Addressing Equal Social Status

Interlocutors

Categories of complaining strategies	Complaining strategies	F	%
No explicit reproach	Hints	1	3.7%
Expression of annoyance or disapproval	Annoyance	14	51.9%
	Consequences	6	22.2%
Total		20	74.1%
Blaming	Modified blame	6	22.2%
Total of complaining strategies		27	100%

Table 09 shows the complaining strategies used by Females when addressing Equal social status persons. The table shows that the participants used a variety of strategies, namely: “*no explicit reproach*”, “*expression of annoyance or disapproval*”, and “*blaming*”. An interesting finding in the above table is that the strategy of “*expression of annoyance or disapproval*” registered the highest frequency (20 occurrences), accounting for 74.1% of all strategies employed, as compared with “*blaming*” which recorded six cases, representing 22.2% of all strategies used, then, “*no explicit reproach*” which registered the least frequency (one case) representing 3.7% of all strategies used. This indicates that when addressing equal social status persons, the female participants were more likely to use “*expression of annoyance or disapproval*” to perform the

Chapter Two: Research Methods, Analysis and Interpretation, Discussion of the Findings, Limitations of the Study, and Suggestions for Further Research

complaints. Regarding the females' use and choice of complaining sub- strategies to address equal social status persons, the sub-strategy "*annoyance*" (It is difficult for me to finish on time), recorded the highest frequency (14 occurrences), accounting for 51.9% of all sub-strategies used, followed by "*consequences*" (I change the partner), together with "*modified blame*" (Organize yourself and try to help me) which recorded six instances representing 22.2% of all sub-strategies used, then, "*hints*" (It is a group work, we need more efforts) which recorded the least frequency (one case) accounting for 3.7% of the whole sub-strategies employed. This shows that the female participants mostly preferred to use "*annoyance*" sub-strategy while performing their complaints for Equal social status persons.

Table 10: Complaining Strategies Used by Females when Addressing Lower Social Status Interlocutors

Categories of complaining strategies	Complaining strategies	F	%
No explicit reproach	Hints	1	3.8%
Expression of annoyance or disapproval	Annoyance	8	30.8%
	Consequences	2	7.7%
Total		10	38.5%
Blaming	Modified blame	13	50%

Chapter Two: Research Methods, Analysis and Interpretation, Discussion of the Findings, Limitations of the Study, and Suggestions for Further Research

	Explicit condemnation of the accused's action	2	7.7%
Total		15	57.7%
Total of complaining strategies		26	100%

Table 10 shows the complaining strategies used by Females when addressing lower social status persons. The table shows that the participants used various strategies, namely: "no explicit reproach", "expression of annoyance or disapproval", and "blaming". An interesting finding in table 10 this table is that the strategy of "blaming" registered the highest frequency (15 occurrences), accounting for 57.7% of all strategies employed, as compared with "expression of annoyance or disapproval" which recorded 10 cases, representing 38.5% of all strategies used, and finally followed by "no explicit reproach" which registered the least frequency; only one case, accounting for 3.8%. This indicates that when addressing lower social status interlocutors, the female participants were more likely to use "blaming" to perform their complaints. Regarding the females' use and choice of complaining sub- strategies to address lower social status persons, the sub-strategy "modified blame" (work more and do more efforts), recorded the highest frequency (13 occurrences), accounting for 50% of all sub-strategies used, followed by "annoyance" (your studies are more important than losing time in your phone), which recorded eight instances representing 30.8% of all sub-strategies used, then, "consequences" (Now, you regret it), together with "explicit condemnation of the accused's action" (change your behaviour and work more) accounting for 7.7% of the whole sub-strategies employed, and finally followed by "hints" (nothing is more important than studies) which recorded the least frequency (one case) accounting

Chapter Two: Research Methods, Analysis and Interpretation, Discussion of the Findings, Limitations of the Study, and Suggestions for Further Research

for 3.8% of the whole sub-strategies used. This shows that the female participants mostly preferred to use the “*modified blame*” sub-strategy while performing their complaints for lower social status persons.

Part three

The Effect of Gender on the Participants' Use of Complaining Strategies

According to table 03 the male participants mostly tend to use “*expression of annoyance or disapproval*”, when performing their complaining. As shown in table 3, “*expression of annoyance or disapproval*” recorded the highest frequency, accounting for 60.4% of the whole strategies used. Moreover, in terms of the sub-strategies chosen, we notice that male participants preferred to use the sub-strategy “*annoyance*” to perform a complaint. Similarly, according to table 7 the female participants tend to prefer “*expression of annoyance or disapproval*”. According to this table, “*expression of annoyance or disapproval*” were the most frequently used, accounting for 58.9% of all strategies employed. Furthermore, with regards to the females' use of the sub-strategies, we notice that the female participants prefer to use the sub-strategy “*annoyance*” to perform a complaint.

As a result of these findings, we conclude that both males and females tend to prefer the “*expression of annoyance or disapproval*” to perform their complaints. Therefore, it can be said that gender had no effect on the participants' choice and use of complaining strategies.

Chapter Two: Research Methods, Analysis and Interpretation, Discussion of the Findings, Limitations of the Study, and Suggestions for Further Research

Part four

The Effect of Social Status of the Interlocutor on the Participants' Choice and Use of Complaining Strategies

According to tables 04, 05, and 06, there are more similarities than differences in the strategies used by the male participants to perform a complaint when addressing equal, higher and lower social status interlocutors. As shown in the tables of both equal and higher social status, "*expression of annoyance or disapproval*" registered the highest frequency. In equal social status, "*expression of annoyance or disapproval*" recorded the highest frequency, accounting for 55.6% of all the strategies used. Likewise, in higher social status, the "*expression of annoyance or disapproval*" registered the highest frequency, accounting for 80% of all the strategies employed. Moreover, in terms of the sub-strategy used, we notice that the male participants preferred to use "*annoyance*" in both equal and higher social statuses. As for the lower social status, "*expression of annoyance or disapproval*" and "*blaming*" registered the highest frequency, accounting for 40% for each strategy. With regards to the sub-strategies chosen, we notice that male participants preferred to use "*annoyance*" and "*modified blame*" to perform a complaint in lower social status.

Importantly, the male participants tend to prefer "*expression of annoyance or disapproval*" with the preference of the sub-strategy "*annoyance*" when addressing both higher and equal social status interlocutors. However, they opted to add "*blaming*" (modified blame) when complaining to a lower social status person. This indicates that the male participants have the tendency to be more indirect and mainly show respect to both equal and higher social status interlocutors, expressing just their annoyance and disapproval of the situation. However, they were more direct when addressing lower social status interlocutors as they tended to blame them.

Chapter Two: Research Methods, Analysis and Interpretation, Discussion of the Findings, Limitations of the Study, and Suggestions for Further Research

Accordingly, in the light of these findings, we conclude that the social status had an effect on the males' use and choice of complaining strategies.

According to tables 8, 9, and 10, there are more similarities than differences in the strategies used by the female participants to perform a complaint when addressing equal, higher and lower social status interlocutors. It is shown that equal and higher social status registered the same use of strategy which is *"expression of annoyance or disapproval"* that has the highest frequency. In equal social status, *"expression of annoyance or disapproval"* recorded the highest frequency, accounting for 74.1% of all strategies used. Similarly, in higher social status, *"expression of annoyance or disapproval"* also registered the highest frequency, accounting for 65% of all strategies used. Moreover, in terms of the sub-strategies used, we notice that the female participants preferred to use *"annoyance"* in both equal and higher social statuses. However, in lower social status, *"blaming"* registered the highest frequency, accounting for 57.7% of the whole strategies employed. Concerning the sub-strategies used, the female participants preferred to use *"modified blame"* when complaining with a lower social status person.

Interestingly, the female participants tend to prefer *"expression of annoyance or disapproval"* with the preference of the sub-strategy *"annoyance"* when addressing both higher and equal social status interlocutors. However, when complaining to a lower social status person, the female participants preferred to opt for *"blaming"* with the sub-strategy *"modified blame"*. This indicates that the male participants were more indirect when addressing both equal and higher social status interlocutors, expressing just their annoyance and disapproval of the situation, Nevertheless, they were more direct when addressing lower social status persons as they tended to blame their interlocutors.

Chapter Two: Research Methods, Analysis and Interpretation, Discussion of the Findings, Limitations of the Study, and Suggestions for Further Research

Therefore, in the light of these findings, we conclude that the social status had an effect on the females' use and choice of complaining strategies.

2.3. Section three: Discussion of the Major Results, Limitations of the Study, and Suggestions for Further Research

2.3.1. Discussion of the Major Results

This sub- section summarizes the study's major results obtained through the used research instrument (DCT), and thus provided answer to our research questions and reach our study aims. Moreover, the current result findings are compared to other related studies in literature.

Importantly, the present study aimed at exploring the complaining strategies used by Algerian EFL males and females by taking two social variables into consideration; gender and social status.

Concerning the first research question which is about finding out the complaining strategies used by both male and female students, the results of the study showed that the male participants used different complaining strategies, namely; "*expression of annoyance or disapproval*", "*blaming*", "*accusations*", and "*no explicit reproach*". The strategy "*expression of annoyance or disapproval*" recording the highest frequency (26 occurrences), accounting for 60.4% of the whole strategies used. Similarly, with regards to the strategies used by females, the findings indicated that they used several strategies namely; "*expression of annoyance or disapproval*", "*blaming*", "*no explicit reproach*", and "*accusations*". The strategy "*expression of annoyance or disapproval*" registered the highest frequency (43 occurrences), accounting for 58.9% of all strategies used.

As for the second question which seeks to find out whether the participants' gender has an effect on their use and choice of strategy, the findings of the study revealed that both male and

Chapter Two: Research Methods, Analysis and Interpretation, Discussion of the Findings, Limitations of the Study, and Suggestions for Further Research

female participants were alike in their performance of the complaints, hence, gender did not seem to have an effect on the participants' choice and use of complaining strategies. This result does not conform to Al-shboul's (2021) study that revealed that the participants' gender influenced the choice of complaining strategies and politeness. This may be due to many factors such as the social norms, values, and gender norms of the participants in questions.

With regards to the third research question which attempts to explore if the social status of the interlocutor affects the participants' use and choice of complaining strategies, the results of the study showed that the social status of the interlocutor had an effect on the participants' choice and use of strategy type. This result is consistent with Al-shboul's (2021) study, when investigating the similarities and differences in the complaining strategies used between Jordanian male and female students at Al-balqa applied university, and which indicated that the social dimension of social status and social distance of the addressee influenced the participants' responses in terms of the level of directness and their use of different politeness strategies.

To sum up, the findings of the present study helped us achieve our study objectives and provide answers to our research questions.

2.3.2. Limitations of the Study

Undoubtedly in any research, obstacles make it a difficult task for the researcher to accomplish the aims of his/her study. As a result, the first limitation of our study is a lack of sources, particularly related books in our library at the university of Bejaia. Second, the study is limited to third year EFL students at the university of Bejaia. Thus, the findings of the present study cannot be generalized to learners of other levels or other Arabic varieties or nationalities Third, the participants' lack of responses in the DCT that presented some difficulties to do our analysis.

Chapter Two: Research Methods, Analysis and Interpretation, Discussion of the Findings, Limitations of the Study, and Suggestions for Further Research

Fourth, another limitation is the use of the written DCT instead of the oral DCT which may hinder the participants from being spontaneous in their responses as they would in real life situations. Thus, asking students to generate written representations of what they would ordinarily express orally in various real-life situations may affect the veracity of the results.

2.3.3. Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the findings of the present study, it can be assumed that there are various factors that can determine the use and choice of the complaining strategy types. Therefore, further examination of the topic under investigation and related research is needed in the Algerian context. Moreover, it is suggested for future researchers interested in the speech act of complaint to consider and shed light on certain social variables such as age and social distance which were not examined and taken into consideration in this study.

General conclusion

General Introduction

General Conclusion

The current study examined the complaining strategies employed by EFL male and female learners. The case study was third year EFL students from Bejaia university's Department of English.

The study's main goal is to shed light on the different complaining strategies employed by EFL male and female students. Moreover, it aims to find out whether gender (of the participant) and status (of the interlocutor) affects the use and choice of the complaining strategy type.

The present thesis is divided into two chapters. The first chapter is about theoretical background in which we attempted to provide a comprehensive overview and explanation of the different aspects related to our subject of investigation which are organized into four sections. The first one is about pragmatics, the second consists of the act of complaint, the third one is about politeness theory, and finally, section four which consists of a selection of previous related studies. The second chapter represents the research methods, analysis and interpretation, and discussion of the findings, which are presented in three distinct sections. The first section consists of the methods and study design, and includes an explanation and a full description of the sample, as well as data collection tools and procedures. The second section presents the analysis and interpretation of the findings. Finally, the third section shows and discusses the study's main results, provides the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research

The current study is based on a quantitative method through the use of a DCT which was handled to 24 students including 12 males and 12 females. The DCT provides-quantitative data about the speech act of complaint as realized by the learners.

Interestingly, the analysis of data and the results obtained through the DCT allowed us to answer the research questions and attain our study objectives. The results of the study indicated

General Introduction

that male and female participants use a variety of strategies when realizing the speech act of complaint. Male were found to use the following strategies: "*expression of annoyance or disapproval*," "*blaming*", "*accusations*", and "*no explicit reproach*" with *expression of annoyance or disapproval* recording the highest frequency as compared with the other strategies, indicating that the male participants' preferred the use of "*expression of annoyance or disapproval*" when performing a complaint.

As for females, they were found to use the following strategies: "*expression of annoyance or disapproval*", "*blaming*", "*no explicit reproach*", and "*accusations*" where they were more likely to use "*expression of annoyance or disapproval*", implying that the female participants' preferred the use of "*expression of annoyance or disapproval*" when performing a complaint. Therefore, according to the results of the males' and females' strategies used when realizing the complaint speech act, it is concluded that the gender of the participants as a social variable does not have an effect on the participants' choice and use of complaining strategies. Furthermore, the study revealed that the social status of the interlocutor affects the participants' choice and use of complaining strategies.

Finally, the study ended up by providing the limitations met during the process of investigation in addition to suggestions for further research that would enrich and contribute to the existing literature about the speech act of complaint, particularly in the Algerian context.

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Appendix

Appendix 01

Students' DCT

Dear students,

We are conducting an academic research for our thesis purposes. We would appreciate if you could answer and react to the following situations. Your answers will be used for data collection purposes. Thank you in advance for your collaboration.

The researchers

Part One: General Information

Age

Gender

Part Two: Scenarios

- 1) Your lecturer takes much time to give feedback to your thesis draft. You are worried about wasting time. In this situation, what would you say to your lecturer?

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- 2) You noticed that your partner does not give you much information and notes about a construction project in an architectural company where you both work. He makes it difficult for you to finish on time and plan your schedule. If you were in his place, what would you say to him?

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- 3) Sometimes you feel like you are always the one who makes efforts in your thesis preparation than your friend who does not work seriously. It would be great if you could work together to finish on time. What would you say to your friend in this situation?

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- 4) You are the old sister and you noticed that your young sister uses her phone in an excessive way and she does not give importance to her studies. In this situation, what would you say to her?

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- 5) Your students who are most of the time absent and rarely attend class did not work well in the exam and got bad marks, what would you say to them?

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6) Imagine you are working in a clothing manufacturing company. The boss of this company treats you in a bad way and he offers you a small salary after a long delay. If you are concerned with the issue, what would you say to the boss?

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Thank you for your cooperation

Résumé

Cette étude examine les stratégies de plainte utilisées par les étudiants Algériens. Elle étudie l'influence du sexe des participants sur leur utilisation de stratégies de plainte. L'étude vise également à savoir si le statut social de l'interlocuteur affecte le choix et l'utilisation des stratégies de plainte par les participants. La population de cette étude est constituée d'apprenants EFL (anglais langue étrangère) de troisième année du département d'Anglais de l'université de Bejaia. L'échantillon de l'étude est composé de 12 hommes et 12 femmes d'un même département. Pour collecter des données, les chercheurs ont utilisé une méthode quantitative grâce à l'utilisation d'une tâche d'achèvement du discours (DCT). Les données ont été analysées en termes de formules sémantiques et catégorisées sur la base de la classification des stratégies de plainte établis par Trosborg (1994). Les résultats de l'étude ont révélé que les participants, hommes et femmes, étaient similaires dans l'utilisation des stratégies de plainte et préféraient utiliser la stratégie "expression de mécontentement ou de désapprobation" lors du traitement de leurs plaintes. Les résultats ont également montré que le sexe des participants n'avait pas d'effet significatif sur leur utilisation des stratégies de plainte. En outre, l'étude a révélé que le statut social de l'interlocuteur affecte le choix et l'utilisation des stratégies de plainte par les participants.

Mots clés : Sexe, Stratégies de plainte, Statut social, Formules sémantique, Apprenants d'Anglais langue étrangère.