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**An Investigation of Politeness Strategies Used by EFL  
Learners in the Realization of the Speech Act of Complaint**  
The Case of First Year Master Students at the University of Mohammed  
Seddik Ben Yahia-Jijel

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of  
Master in English Language Sciences

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## Dedication

*It is with great pleasure and deep gratitude  
that I dedicate this humble work to my dear father who is  
the source of happiness in my life, for his whole-hearted support and  
for his endless encouragement , to my beloved mother, whose constant love has  
sustained me throughout my life, to my dear husband, who has never left  
my side, I am truly thankful for having you in my life. I also  
dedicate this work to my brother Ahmed , my sister  
Rima, my family, my friends and all  
those who are dear to  
me.*

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## **Abstract**

This study investigated the politeness strategies used by foreign language learners of English at the University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia- Jijel, when performing the speech act of complaint. It also attempted to identify the strategies used by these learners in realizing complaints. This study also tried to find out the influence of the social distance and power on the choice of complaint strategies to achieve this aim, a discourse completion task (DCT) was used to collect data, it was administered to fifty (50) Master learners of English. The data obtained were coded and categorized following to Trosborg's (1994) taxonomy of complaint strategies, while politeness strategies were identified following Brown and Levinson's (1987) model. The results showed that these participants were direct when performing the speech act of complaint. The Findings also, revealed that social variables influenced the participants' choice of politeness strategies.

## **List of Abbreviations and Symbols**

%: Percentage

CP: Cooperative Principle

DCT: Discourse Completion Task

EFL: English Foreign Learners

F: Force

FL: Foreign Learner

FTA: Face Threatening Act

H: Hearer

IFIDS: Illocutionary Force Indicating Device

ILP: Interlanguage Pragmatics

L2: Second Language

MP: Model Person

NNS: Non-Native Speakers

NS: Native Speakers

S: Speaker

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

TL: Target Language

## **List of Tables**

Table 1: The Frequency of the Complaint Strategies Used by Participants in Situation One...	1
Table 2: The Frequency of the Complaint Strategies Used by Participants in Situation two...	78
Table 3: The Frequency of the Complaint Strategies Used by Participants in Situation three...	78
Table 4: The Frequency of the Complaint Strategies Used by Participants in Situation four...	78
Table 5: The Frequency of the Complaint Strategies Used by Participants in Situation five...	68
Table 6: The Frequency of the Complaint Strategies Used by Participants in Situation six....	89
Table 7: The Frequency of the Complaint Strategies Used by Participants in Situation seven..	70
Table 8: The Frequency of the Complaint Strategies Used by Participants in Situation eight...	68
Table 9: The Frequency of the Complaint Strategies Used by Participants in Situation nine...	45
Table 10: The Frequency of the Complaint Strategies Used by Participants in Situation ten...	78

## Table of Content

Dedication.....	I
Acknowledgements.....	II
Abstract.....	III
List of Abbreviations and Symbols.....	IV
List of Tables.....	V
Table of Content.....	VI
<b>General Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1. Background of the Study.....	1
2. Statement of the Problem.....	3
3. Aims of the Study.....	4
4. Research Questions.....	4
5. Research Hypotheses.....	4
6. Methodology of the Research.....	4
7. Organization of the Research.....	5
<b>Chapter One: Interlanguage Pragmatics.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Introduction.....	7
1.1. Interlanguage Pragmatic.....	7
1.1.1. Pragmalinguistic Competence.....	9

1.1.2. Sociopragmatic Competence.....	10
1.2. Communicative Competence.....	11
1.3. Pragmatic Failure.....	12
1.3.1. Lack of Linguistic Knowledge.....	15
1.3.2. Lack of Socio-Cultural Knowledge.....	15
1.3.3. Pragmatic Transfer.....	16
1.3.3.1. Positive Transfer.....	17
1.3.3.2. Negative Transfer.....	18
1.4. Raising Pragmatic Awareness .....	18
1.5. Language Socialization Theory.....	21
Conclusion.....	24
<b>Chapter Two: Politeness Theory.....</b>	<b>25</b>
Introduction.....	26
2.1. Speech Act Theory.....	26
2.1.1. Austin’s Work.....	28
2.1.1.1. The Locutionary, Illocutionary and Perlocutionary Acts.....	29
2.1.2. Searl’s Work.....	31
2.1.2.1. Classification of the Illocutionary.....	32
2.2. Politeness Theory: Definition .....	33



2.3. Politeness: Conceptualizations and Theories.....	35
2.3.1. The Social Norm View.....	36
2.3.2. Conversational-Maxim View.....	37
2.3.2.1. Lakoff’s Rules of Politeness.....	38
2.3.2.2. Leech’s Politeness Principle.....	39
2.3.3. The Conversational-Contract View.....	41
2.3.4. The Face-Saving View.....	42
2.4. Politeness Strategies.....	44
2.5. The Sociological Factors Influencing the Choice of Politeness Strategies.....	45
2.6. The Speech Act of Complaint.....	46
2.6.1. Complaint Strategies.....	48
Conclusion.....	49
<b>Chapter Three: Methodology, Data Analysis and Results.....</b>	<b>50</b>
<i>Section One:</i> Methodology.....	50
Introduction.....	51
3.1. Research Paradigm.....	51
3.1.1. Instrument.....	52
3.1.1.1. Discourse Completion Task.....	52
3.1.1.2. Description of the Discourse Completion Task.....	54

3.1.2. Population and Sampling.....	56
3.2. Analysis Procedure.....	57
3.2.1. Coding the Data.....	57
3.3. Limitations of the Study.....	60
<b>Section Two: Data Analysis and Results.....</b>	<b>61</b>
Introduction.....	62
3.1. Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analysis .....	82
3.2. Discussion of the Results.....	86
Conclusion.....	90
<b>General Conclusion.....</b>	<b>91</b>
Recommendations for Further Research.....	93
References.....	94
Appendix	
Discourse Completion Task	
Résumé	
ملخص	

## General Introduction

### 1. Background of the Study

The notion of pragmatic competence led to a growing recognition in the literature of the need to examine language learners' development of pragmatic competence. Increasing amount of interest in the language learners' pragmatic development has given rise to a new area of research known as interlanguage pragmatics, which receives due attention throughout the study.

Within interlanguage pragmatics, researchers have directed their attention to second/foreign language learners' ability to realize communicative functions and how this ability is acquired. Subsequently, a number of studies have been conducted on speech act production with a focus on knowledge of linguistic forms and their knowledge of social and cultural norms to perform different speech functions. Searle (1990, p. 16) claimed that speaking a language is performing speech. By performing a speech act, people produce certain actions such as thanking, requesting, apologizing and complaining. Thus, speech acts are important elements of communicative competence, and speakers of a language need to know how to carry out speech acts to function in communicatively appropriate ways. This significance of speech acts has generated interest in research in certain aspects of speech acts in foreign and second language learning.

Among the speech acts investigated, complaint has been found to be rather complex to produce, because making appropriate complaints relies heavily on sociocultural knowledge and flexible selection of linguistic forms to convey disapproval and frustration and to avoid as much as possible impairing the relationship with the hearer. Therefore, the present study, intentionally focuses on the speech act of complaint and the sociological factors affecting the

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selection of politeness strategies when complaining. That is because of the unique characteristics of this kind of speech that, according to Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), involve the face threatening act and considered as conflictive acts (Leech, 1983) that should be avoided because they show the negative feelings of the speaker (S) and tend to threaten the face of the hearer (H), while concerning the sociological factors, Wardhaug (1992) asserts that the social structure may either influence or determine linguistic structure and or behavior.

To investigate what type of complaint strategies foreign language learners use and whether these strategies are different from native speakers, many researches have been conducted. For instance, Olshtain and Weinbach (1987) studied the speech act of complaint as produced by native and non-native speakers of Hebrew. The researchers developed five categories of speech acts that were based on severity of the complaint for a specific scenario, in which one colleague had waited for another colleague, who arrived late to a scheduled appointment. They found that both groups, regardless of first language, made use of each strategy, while, at least for this particular scenario tending to prefer the middle of the scale disapproval, complaint and accusation, rather than the extremes of the continuum, avoiding being either too soft or too confrontational.

In a study by Murphy and Neu (1996), American native speakers and Korean non-native speakers of English were given a situation in which they had to show their disapproval about a low mark to their professor. They found that the choice of strategies is affected by the cultural values and norms of the participants. The main difference between the speech act sets produced by these two groups was in the semantic component of the sets: Koreans employed a criticism component in the speech act set, whereas Americans did not. This result shows that in the same situation, people with different languages perform the same speech act sets

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differently. This difference could be attributed to the different cultural norms between American and Korean students.

Moon (2001), on the other hand, investigated the speech act of complaint as produced by native and nonnative speakers of English through a Discourse Completion Task. The data were analyzed based on the notion of the "severity of the complaint". The results of this study show that non-native speakers do not always make complaints in an appropriate way as native speakers do. They have a tendency to make explicit and direct complaints while native speakers prefer implicit complaints. Additionally, in a more recent study, Delen and Tavil (2010) reported that learners of English at a private university in Turkey were not able to produce complaints appropriately or their complaints lacked variety. As well as, the idea that speakers transfer strategies from their native language into their second language has been the focus of attention in many studies (Bou-Franch, 1998; Corder, 1981; Kasper, 1992).

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

The field of interlanguage pragmatics has always been in search of finding better ways to maximize the outcome of second and foreign language learners concerning the use of the target language in socially and culturally appropriate way, since most English Foreign Language students reported to have difficulty in communicating with native speakers. Their difficulties include how to request, complain, and respond to compliments properly and politely. The issue of politeness in realizing one of the speech acts have a strong relationship with the some sociopragmatic factors such as the social status of the interlocutors and the social distance between them. For that, communicative competence instructions for English Foreign Language learners has to cover not only linguistic and grammatical knowledge regarding phonology, syntax and semantics, but also pragmatic knowledge including the rules

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of appropriateness and politeness which dictate the way that the speaker can use the language effectively in context.

### **3. Aims of the Study**

Owing to the fact that cross-cultural communication is governed by a multiple set of standards and principles, the purpose of the present study is mainly to inspect the extent to which the use of politeness strategies is resorted to by English Foreign Language learners at the university of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel, when performing the speech act of complaint with respect to the influence of the contextual social and behavioral factors upon the selection of complaint strategies.

### **4. Research Questions**

The present study aims to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What are the complaint strategies used by Master one students of English?
- 2) What are the politeness strategies used by Master one students of English?
- 3) What are the factors that influence the choice of politeness strategies when complaining?

### **5. Research Hypotheses**

Considering the above research questions, two research hypotheses were formulated:

1. It is assumed that English Foreign Language learners resort to similar strategies when performing the speech act of complaint, however the form and the selection of these strategies vary from one student to another.
  2. The selection of complaint strategies is not governed only by sociological factors but it is also subject to other different issues.
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## **6. Research Methodology**

For the sake of achieving the objectives of the study and arrive at significant results, data were collected using an open-ended discourse completion task (Discourse Completion Task) which consists of ten situations. The situations were set up to cover all the parts of the conversation starting from the interlocutors to the social status and the relationship between them. Students are supposed to express complaints in each situation.

The data obtained from the questionnaire is then analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative analytical approaches in order to improve the evaluation by ensuring that the limitations of one type of data are balanced by the strengths of another.

## **7. Organization of the Dissertation**

In addition to a general introduction, the research work in hand includes three main chapters and a general conclusion. Two of them are devoted to review background information about the study while the other one presents the practical part. The first chapter is related to a general overview on the field of interlanguage pragmatics concerning pragmatic competence and pragmatic failure as well as raising pragmatic awareness. In the second chapter, the focus is on the speech act theory, politeness theory and related views in addition to the factors influencing the choice of politeness strategies and finally, it sheds light on the speech act of complaining and its strategies. The last chapter is divided into two sections; the first one introduces the methods, instruments, subjects and analysis system of the study, whereas, the second section reports the results of the study and provides some discussions about the results.

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**Chapter one: Interlanguage pragmatics**

Introduction.....	7
1.1. Interlanguage Pragmatic.....	7
1.1.1. Pragmalinguistic Competence.....	9
1.1.2. Sociopragmatic Competence.....	10
1.2. Communicative Competence.....	11
1.3. Pragmatic Failure.....	12
1.3.1. Lack of Linguistic Knowledge.....	15
1.3.2. Lack of Socio-Cultural Knowledge.....	15
1.3.3. Pragmatic Transfer.....	16
1.3.3.1. Positive Transfer.....	17
1.3.3.2. Negative Transfer.....	18
1.4. Raising Pragmatic Awareness .....	18
1.5. Language Socialization Theory.....	21
Conclusion.....	24

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## **Introduction**

This chapter is devoted to report the theoretical part of the present study. First, it provides background information on the field of interlanguage pragmatics as well as the communicative competence. Further, it tackles the notion of pragmatic failure along with the pragmatic transfer phenomenon in which positive and negative transfer are to be described. Next, it extends to the issue of raising EFL learners pragmatic awareness. Finally, it ends with a review of language socialization theory.

### **1.1. Interlanguage Pragmatics**

Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) is a new interdisciplinary branch of study that lies at the intersection of the second language acquisition theory (SLA) and developmental pragmatics research. Thus, it is primarily concerned with the study of second language use rather than second language acquisition. In this respect, Kasper and Rose (2002) illustrate the interdisciplinarity or 'hybrid' nature of interlanguage pragmatics as belonging both to pragmatics and SLA as well, stating that:

“As the study of second language use, interlanguage pragmatics examines how nonnative speakers comprehend and produce action in a target language. As the study of second language learning, interlanguage pragmatics investigates how L2 learners develop the ability to understand and perform action in a target language" (Kasper and Rose, 2002, p.5).

In other words, this field of study examines the ability to perceive, infer and produce communicative speech acts by foreign language learners. Meaning that, it uses pragmatic theories, principles and frameworks to examine how foreign/second language learners encode and decode meaning in their L2.

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Interlanguage pragmatics has been first defined by Kasper and Dahl (1991, p. 216), who indicated that “interlanguage pragmatics will be defined in a narrow sense, referring to nonnative speakers’ comprehension and production of speech acts, and how their L2-related speech act knowledge is acquired”. Few years later, Kasper and Schmidt (1996) integrated the notion of linguistic action into the definition of interlanguage pragmatics stating that “it is the study of the development and use of strategies for linguistic action by non-native speakers” (p.150). Furthermore, it can be said that interlanguage pragmatics deals with nonnative speakers’ use and acquisition of L2 pragmatic knowledge as referred to by Kasper and Rose (1999). Similarly, Leech (2014) pointed out that the term interlanguage pragmatics has come to be applied to the study of how nonnative-speaking learners of a language acquire pragmatic competence in their target language.

Moreover, recent research concerning the field of interlanguage pragmatics, has focused on the teachability of a large range of pragmatic features and abilities (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Rose and Kasper, 2001), as well as strategies for learning and performing L2 speech acts (Cohen, 2005; Trosborg, 1994), stressing the need for instruction on ILP in order to develop learners ability to communicate appropriately in the TL as to overcome the lack the chances to engage in genuine communications with NSs and to use it for real life purposes. With regard to these problems, the first major attempt to study speech acts across a range of languages and cultures was the famous cross cultural speech act realization project (CCSARP) that was carried out by a group of international researchers (Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper, 1989). This study was conducted to investigate whether there are universal principles in request and apology speech act realizations, to establish native speakers’ patterns of realization, compare speech acts across languages, and establish the similarities and differences between NSs and NNSs in the realization of these acts.

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In the same regard, Cohen (1996) proposed two distinct levels of abilities required for acquisition of pragmatic competence, namely sociocultural ability and sociolinguistic ability. Speakers' sociocultural ability is used to determine which speech act is appropriate given the culture involved, the situation, the speakers' background variables and relationships. Sociolinguistic ability constitutes "the speakers' control over the actual language forms used to realize the speech acts (e.g. 'sorry' vs. 'excuse me', 'really sorry' vs. 'very sorry')" (Cohen, 1996, p. 388). Also, Leech (2014) clarified the distinction between ability and knowledge, claiming that for learning English, this may require pragmalinguistic adjustment for example, learning to use indirect directive formulae rather than relying too heavily on the imperative. It can also require sociopragmatic accommodation, such as learning to respond positively rather than negatively to a compliment.

### **1.1.1. Pragmalinguistic Competence**

Successful communicative performance involves the ability to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific communicative purpose and to understand language in context that is referred to as pragmalinguistics. It focuses on the intersection of pragmatics and linguistic forms in that it comprises the knowledge and ability for the use of conventions of meanings, such as the strategies for realizing speech acts, and conventions of forms, such as linguistic forms for implementing speech act strategies. According to Kasper (1993), pragmalinguistic competence refers to the quality and range of linguistic forms by which linguistic action can be implemented and modified, i.e. it reflects the state of learners' lexical and syntactic knowledge. He, also, pointed out that it includes not only the resources used for conveying illocutionary meaning, but also the plethora of devices available for managing relationships (Kasper,1992).

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The notion of pragmalinguistics has been referred to by Leech (1983) as the particular resources which a given language provides for conveying particular illocutions. In the same respect, Thomas (1983) states that pragmalinguistics refers to the actual language forms used to convey the intended meaning.

### **1.1.2. Sociopragmatic Competence**

Communicative competence involves not only the ability to use linguistics resources in order to perform actions, but it relies also on the socio-cultural knowledge of the target language community. This interface of sociology and pragmatics has been first proposed by Leech (1983) as Sociopragmatics and defined as the contextual and social variables that determine appropriate pragmalinguistic choices or the particular linguistic resources for formulating a specific type of speech act. Another definition was declared by Kasper and Rose, (2001, p. 2) indicates that sociopragmatics is “the social perceptions underlying participants’ interpretation and performance of communicative action”.

Furthermore, Kasper and Roever (2005), asserted that sociopragmatics encompasses the knowledge of the relationships between communicative action and power, social distance, imposition, and the social conditions and consequences of what you do, when, and to whom. In the same regard, Harlow (1990) pointed out that sociopragmatic competence is the ability to adjust speech strategies appropriately according to different social variables such as the degree of imposition, social dominance and distance between participants of conversation, and participants' rights and obligations in communication.

## **1.2. Communicative Competence**

In the field of language learning and teaching, “linguistic competence may be thought of as the learner’s knowledge of the structures and vocabulary of the language and his ability to produce and comprehend well-formed sentences in the language” Ficher,

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(1984, p. 35). However, when people use language, they use much more than just words. According to the opinion that language is not merely about rules of form, but is also about rules of use, Hymes (1972) proposes the concept of communicative competence which is supposed to be not only about inherent grammatical competence but also about the ability to use grammatical competence in a variety of communicative situations. In other words, communicative competence entails knowing the language code or the form of language, as well as what to say, to whom, and how to say it appropriately in any given situation. The actual theory of communicative competence, that is suggested by Hymes (1972), involves that a foreign language learner may not be able to survive in L2 circumstances without learning “whether (and to what degree) something is formally possible, whether (and to what degree) something is feasible in virtue of the means of implementation available, whether (and to what degree) something is appropriate (adequate, happy, successful) in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated, whether (and to what degree) something is in fact done, actually performed, and what it’s doing entails” Hymes, (1972, p.12).

On the other hand, foreign language communicative competence, for Savignon (1972) is seen as the “ability to function dynamically in a truly communicative setting adapting to all of the informational elements in the context be they linguistic or non-verbal” (pp. 8-9). Hence, FL are required to consider the entire set of variables related to context in which the conversation takes place. Similarly, Canale and Swain (1980) define communicative competence in the context of second language teaching. They view communicative competence as a synthesis of knowledge of basic grammatical principles, knowledge of how language is used in social settings to perform communicative functions, and knowledge of how utterances and communicative functions can be combined according to the principles of discourse.

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Canale and Swain (1980) classify communicative competence into grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, which they soon divided into sociolinguistic competence and discourse competence, and strategic competence. Grammatical competence means the acquisition of phonological rules, morphological rules, syntactic rules, semantic rules and lexical items. Today it is usually called linguistic competence. Whereas, sociolinguistic competence refers to the learning of pragmatic aspects of various speech acts, namely, the cultural values, norms, and other socio-cultural conventions in social contexts. They are the context and topic of discourse, the participants' social status, sex, and age, and other factors which influence styles and registers of speech. Since different situations call for different type of expressions as well as different beliefs, views, values, and attitudes, the development of sociolinguistic competence is essential for communicative social action, otherwise communication breakdowns are more likely to happen.

### **1.3. Pragmatic Failure in English Foreign Language Class**

One of the major aims of foreign language teaching is for the L2 learner to achieve efficient communication and to avoid making unfortunate mistakes causing undesired misunderstandings. However, In cross-cultural or intercultural communication, understood as communication between individuals belonging to (rather) different cultural groups and languages, misunderstandings are even more likely to occur because hearers may fail to understand what their non-native interlocutors intend to communicate with an utterance in a specific communicative circumstance or do not capture the intended pragmatic force of their utterances. When this happens, interlocutors experience a pragmatic failure. Pragmatic failure was firstly coined by Jenny Thomas in her article Cross-cultural Pragmatic Failure in 1983. Thomas (1983, p. 91) argues that pragmatic failure refers to

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“[...] the inability to understand what is meant by what is said”. To illustrate her definition of the term ‘pragmatic failure’, Thomas used the following examples:

- a. “Hearer perceives the force of Speaker’s utterance stronger or weaker than S intended s/he should perceive it.
- b. Hearer perceives as an order an utterance that Speaker intended s/he should perceive as a request.
- c. Hearer perceives Speaker’s utterance as ambivalent where S intended no ambivalence.
- d. Speaker expects Hearer to be able to infer the force of his/her utterance, but is relying on the system of knowledge or beliefs that S and H do not share.” (1983, p. 94)

Many other scholars (He Ziran, 1988; Qian Guanlian, 2002; Charlebois, 2003) base their research on Thomas’ analysis of pragmatic failure and supplement the definition of pragmatic failure. He Ziran (1988) points out that pragmatic failure refers to the failure to achieve the desired communicative effect in communication. He further indicates that pragmatic failures are not the errors in diction, but those mistakes failing to fulfill communication because of infelicitous style, incompatible expressions, and improper habit. While Qian Guanlian (2002) defines pragmatic failure in a more specific way pointing out that Pragmatic failure is committed when the speaker uses grammatically correct sentences, but unconsciously violates the interpersonal relationship rules, social conventions, or takes little notice of time, space and addressee.

After a careful examination, criticism has been made upon the definitions mentioned above; Yan and Zhuang (2010) claims that it is unfair to impute pragmatic failure either to speaker (as Guan-lian did) or to hearer (as Thomas did). It is well known that

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communication, both verbal and non-verbal, involves sender (speaker or writer) and receiver (hearer or reader). Effective communication can only be achieved with the participation of both. Sometimes, it is the sender who is to blame for the communicative breakdown, while sometimes it is the receiver. While Charlebois (2003) distinguished between pragmatic failure and cross-cultural pragmatic failure saying that the concept pragmatic failure applies to misunderstandings between people from the same speech community; yet, the term cross-cultural pragmatic failure is used to describe the case of pragmatic failure between people from different speech communities.

Based on many studies related to speech acts realization by EFL learners, it is worth mentioning that pragmatic failure may occur mainly due to the following reasons: lack of linguistic or sociocultural knowledge and Pragmatic transfer. That is, communication breakdown resulting from verbal and non-verbal factors is bound to violate either the grammatical principles due to a lack in linguistic knowledge or deviate from the conventions of the target culture as an outcome of lack in socio-cultural knowledge, or it may be the result of L1 interference on the target language. Therefore, successful cross-cultural communication requires both speaker's sufficient mastery of the linguistic knowledge of the target language and their pragmatic competence.

Thereby, communication breakdowns resulting from verbal and non-verbal factors are tied to violate either the grammatical principles due to a lack in linguistic knowledge or to deviate from the conventions the target culture as an outcome of lack in socio-cultural knowledge.

### **1.3.1. Lack of Linguistic Knowledge**

Linguistic knowledge is “a domain of information in memory that is available for use [...] in catering and interpreting discourse in language use” Bachman and Palmer, (1996, p.

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67). This domain covers several distinct areas including grammatical, syntactic, semantic and morphological knowledge. Concerning the importance of linguistic knowledge, it is considered as key element in the interpretation and production of speech acts by EFL learners, since the simplest conversation requires a profound knowledge of how language rules functions, and how words are related to one another as they form meanings.

Additionally, second language learners most often rely on their linguistic knowledge in communication so they can be described as more linguistically than pragmatically competent. Even though, learners need to have a certain degree of linguistic and grammatical development in the target language to satisfy the demands imposed by the social situation, since any errors committed in language use, including spelling mistakes and ungrammaticalities may give rise to misunderstandings and bring about confusion.

### **1.3.2. Lack of Socio-cultural Knowledge**

According to Yan and Zhuang (2010), culture refers to a shared set of beliefs, values and patterns of behavior common to a group of people. It is known that since every country has its own culture, cultural differences are inevitable. Each culture has its own perceptions regarding what kind of linguistic behavior is appropriate. Consequently, even students with sufficient linguistic knowledge still make mistakes in real-life communication with foreigners as He Ziran (1988) mentioned.

Socio-cultural knowledge is highly recommended since the link between culture and communication is crucial to the understanding of cross-cultural communication because “culture not only dictates who talks with whom, about what, and how the communication proceeds, it also helps to determine how people encode messages, the meanings they have for messages, and the conditions and circumstances under which various messages may or

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may not be sent, noticed, or interpreted[...] Culture is the foundation of communication” Samovar and Porter, (1981, p. 24).

### **1.3.3. Pragmatic Transfer**

One of the factors causing deviations in language production during L2/FL communication is the interference of L1. As foreign learners, they may think that certain norms, strategies and phrases that are used in their native language to achieve a certain purpose can also be employed in the target language to achieve the same purpose. In other words, intercultural miscommunications often occur when EFL Learners fall back on their L1 in realizing any kind of speech act in L2 applying the conversational rules and norms of their own culture and language to the target language . This phenomenon is referred to as L1 pragmatic transfer or simply transfer as Coulmas (1981) described.

According to Wolfson (1989, p. 141), pragmatic transfer reflects “the use of rules of speaking from one’s own native speech community when interacting with members of the host speech community or simply speaking or writing a second language”. While in Kasper’s view (1992, p. 207) pragmatic transfer shall be narrowly defined within interlanguage pragmatics as “the influence exerted by learner’s pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2 on their comprehension, production and learning of L2 pragmatic information”. In EFL learners’ interactions, it is often noticed that they resort to the use of L1 forms and strategies when carrying out a certain speech act because of the poor exposure to the TL and the limited opportunities provided for learners to communicate in real context. In this regard, Richards and Schmidt (2002) claim that the transmission of first language strategies of performing speech acts into a second language may be inappropriate either at the level of form and words or at the level of politeness and indirectness in the second language.

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In her study concerning pragmatic transfer, Kasper (1992) distinguished two major types. On the one hand, pragmalinguistic transfer refers to those cases in which the functional and social meanings of certain linguistic forms in the L1 affect the comprehension and production of “form-function mappings in L2”; on the other hand, sociopragmatic transfer occurs when “the social perceptions underlying language users’ interpretation and performance of linguistic action in L2 are influenced by their assessment of subjectively equivalent L1 contexts” Kasper, (1992, p. 209).

Generally, the influence of one language upon another may bring about two different types of results: negative transfer which takes place when the previously acquired knowledge interferes with learning in a new situation and positive transfer which occurs when something have been learned previously helps the learner in acquiring new knowledge.

#### **1.3.3.1. Positive Transfer**

Positive transfer receives less attention from researchers because it is not considered as a problematic issue for interlanguage communication, since it implies the mother tongue and the second language (L2) have similar structure and/or identical social behavior, so the native language will actively aid the foreign language in the learning process. In such situation it can be said that the transfer functions positively. This type of transfer has been referred to by Dulay et.al (1982, p.101) as “the correct utterance, because both the first language and second language have the same structure”. In the same regard, Maeshiba et al. (1996, p.155) declared that “... the projection of first language-based sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic knowledge where such projections result in perceptions and behaviours consistent with those of second language users...” delineates a positive language transfer.

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### **1.3.3.2. Negative Transfer**

Negative transfer is considered the transfer of elements and structures from the mother tongue to the target language in a way that diverges from the use of the target language by native speakers. As Dulay et.al (1982, p. 101) has mentioned, “Negative transfer refers to those instances of transfer, which result in error because old habitual behavior is different from the new behavior being learned”.

Within the theory of contrastive analysis, it is believed that the greater the differences between the two languages, the more negative transfer can be expected (Lado 1957). Such transfer may give rise to a deviation from the L2 norms. However, the mother negative language transfer in learning a foreign language is seemingly inevitable. Since the differences between the learners’ mother tongue will interfere with the target language learning in terms of structure, appropriate choice of words or in terms of social and cultural behaviors. Therefore, In order to overcome the negative transfer from L1 and minimize the risk of L1 interference, learners have to master the standard pronunciation, accurate grammatical rules and vocabulary, in addition to the social and cultural norms of the target language.

### **1.4. Raising Pragmatic Awareness**

Previous studies in ‘Interlanguage Pragmatics’ (Kasper and Rose, 1999; Cohen, 1996; Ellis, 1994; Kasper and Blum-Kulka, 1993) have shown that differences and similarities exist in how to carry out communicative actions between language learners and native speakers of target languages, hence it is necessary for EFL learners to understand and create language that is appropriate to the situations in which one is functioning, because failure to do so may cause communication breakdowns.

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It can be argued that pragmatic knowledge simply develops alongside lexical and grammatical knowledge, without requiring any pedagogic intervention. However, research into the pragmatic competence of adult foreign and second language learners has demonstrated convincingly that the pragmatics of learners and native speakers (NSs) are quite different (Kasper 1997).

In one of the first papers on this issue, Van Dijk (1977) argues that to comprehend an illocutionary act correctly, interlocutors need to analyse the context in which the utterance is made. Kasper (1984, pp. 4-5) summarizes the five phases of the contextual analysis van Dijk proposes as follows:

- “The identification of the general social context (formal/informal, public/ private)
- The identification of the specific social context (e.g. opening a formal meeting, introducing somebody at a party)
- The identification of the relevant factors in the given context, for example, participants’ social status, their positional and situational roles, and their role relationship
- The identification of conventions (social norms) pertaining to the given context
- The identification of the overall ongoing action and the sequence of acts preceding the speech act under comprehension”.

The list shows that inferring the intended meaning of an utterance is a complex process. To be able to correctly interpret what is being said, hearers need to have a good understanding of the cultural and pragmatic norms of the target language and context. Therefore, there is a need for L2 instruction to focus on the pragmatics of the language, and researchers in this area generally point out the positive impact of instruction aimed at raising learners’ pragmatic awareness Kasper (1997), which is one of the main beneficial

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approaches and techniques that can be used for teaching pragmatics and avoiding cross-cultural communicative failure.

Although, it is difficult to provide learners with authentic pragmatic input, Kasper (1997) stresses the importance of teacher's reinforcement and consolidation of pragmatic knowledge, suggesting a number of activities that are useful for pragmatic development. Such activities can be classified into two main types: activities aimed at raising students' pragmatic awareness, which are designed to develop recognition of how language forms are used appropriately in context, and activities offering opportunities for communicative practice.

Noticing that pragmatics has often been de-emphasized and shuffled aside under the rubric of syntactic knowledge and has gone unrecognized as a significant knowledge component in language learning, Nagasaka (2005, pp. 20-24) suggested that teachers consider adopting the simple acronym S.U.R.E. to guide them as they help their students See, Use, Review, and Experience pragmatics in the EFL classroom.

### **See**

Teachers can help their students see the language in context, raise consciousness of the role of pragmatics, and explain the function pragmatics plays in specific communicative events.

### **Use**

Teachers can develop activities through which students use English in contexts (simulated and real) where they choose how they interact based on their understanding of the situation suggested by the activity.

As Olshtain and Cohen (1991) and others have pointed out, using role plays, drama, and mini-dialogs in which students have some choice of what they say provides

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students with opportunities to practice and develop a wide range of pragmatic abilities.

### **Review**

Teachers should review, reinforce, and recycle the areas of pragmatic competence previously taught. Kasper (1997) and others have made a strong argument that even in environments characterized by teacher-fronted classroom discourse, opportunities for learning and reviewing pragmatics exist.

When teachers and students use English to complete common communicative functions in the classroom, such as requests, commands, openings, closing, refusals, apologies, and explanations, students' developing pragmatic knowledge can be reinforced through the common communicative events that take place daily in every EFL classroom as in opening lessons and transitioning to new activities.

### **Experience**

Teachers can arrange for their students to experience and observe the role of pragmatics in communication. Video is one of the richest resources teachers have for helping their students experience and observe pragmatics at work. Films, television shows, and other video programs can provide us excellent resources for experiencing and analyzing language use in specific contexts.

## **1.5. Language Socialization Theory**

In language socialization study, it is increasingly acknowledged that people not only experience their primary language socialization during childhood, but continue to experience secondary language socialization throughout their lives as they enter new sociocultural contexts, join new communities of practice such as workplace, or educational

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program, assume new roles in society, and/or acquire a new language, (Lave and Wagner, 1991).

In fact, Language Socialization in the field of SLA, has quickly become one of the most informative, sophisticated, and promising domains of second language acquisition inquiry, (Watson-Gegeo, 2004). While most of the pioneering studies of language socialization were conducted in small-scale societies or on relatively homogeneous monolingual communities (e.g. Heath 1983; Schieffelin and Ochs 1986; Watson-Gegeo 2004), more and more recent and currently ongoing studies have begun to pay attention to the particularities of secondary language socialization processes within linguistically and socioculturally diverse settings associated with contact between two or more languages and cultures (e.g. Bayley and Schecter 2003; Crago 1992; Duff et. al. 2000; Katz 2000; Willett 1995).

Situated in an intercultural communication context, cross-cultural interlocutors tend to use diverse culturally-based communicative strategies with different discourse conventions even though they share the same linguistic code (Saville-Troike, 2003). Moreover, second language learners will inevitably experience cross-cultural communication difficulties, to different degrees, when they plunge into the host cultural environments where communicative interactions are governed by the target cultural behavioral standards and cultural values. Thus, a complete and valid interpretation of many significant aspects of language acquisition and performance in immediate contexts cannot be fulfilled apart from the relevant sociocultural and political contexts, which mediate “which linguistic forms are available or taught and how they are represented” (Schieffelin and Ochs 1986, p. 340). Since Language learning is regarded as the simultaneous acquisition of both linguistic knowledge and sociocultural knowledge.

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Language socialization theory is rooted in the notion that novices across the life span are socialized into using language and socialized through language not only in the immediate/local discourse context but also in the context of historically and culturally grounded social beliefs, values, and expectations, that is, in socio-culturally recognized and organized practices associated with membership in a social group (Ochs 2002; Schieffelin and Ochs 1986). Research concerning this theory investigates how the processes of linguistic and cultural development are interlinked, and how these processes vary across cultural contexts. The notion of second language socialization has been, precisely, acquainted as the process by which novices in an unfamiliar linguistic and cultural context gain intercultural communicative competence by acquiring linguistic conventions, sociopragmatic norms, cultural scripts, and other behaviors that are associated with the new culture.

In a study of a second language learner/user's language socialization in the workplace, Li (2000) illustrates how through exposure and participation in social interactions and with the scaffolding of experts or more competent peers, EFL learners came to internalize target language and cultural norms and develop appropriate sociolinguistic competence to make requests strategically and more directly in the target culture workplace for their own rights and benefits. In the same respect, language socialization (e.g., Duff and Talmy, 2011) allows to see that one of the main purposes of the class is to socialize students into critical thinking and developing arguments that critically present multiple viewpoints. As Watson-Gegeo (2004) argues, "there is no context-free learning" (p. 340).

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**Conclusion**

This chapter was concerned with some theoretical key issues related to interlanguage pragmatics. It has dealt with its historical background, definition and classification. It also shed the light on the notion of pragmatic failure and its major sources. Finally, a brief review of pragmatic awareness raising was pointed out, in addition to the theory of language socialization.

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<b>Chapter Two: Politeness Theory</b> .....	25
Introduction.....	26
2.1. Speech Act Theory.....	26
2.1.1. Austin's Work.....	28
2.1.1.1. The locutionary, Illocutionary and Perlocutionary Acts.....	29
2.1.2. Searl's Work.....	31
2.1.2.1. Classification of the Illocutionary.....	32
2.2. Politeness Theory: Definition.....	33
2.3. Politeness: Conceptualizations and Theories.....	35
2.3.1. The Social Norm View.....	36
2.3.2. Conversational-Maxim View.....	37
2.3.2.1. Lackoff's Rules of Politeness.....	38
2.3.2.2. Leech's Politeness Principle.....	39
2.3.3. The Conversational-Contract View.....	41
2.3.4. The Face-Saving View.....	42
2.4. Politeness Strategies.....	44
2.5. The Sociological Factors Influencing the Choice of Politeness Strategies.....	45
2.6. The Speech Act of Complaint.....	46
2.6.1. Complaint Strategies.....	48
Conclusion.....	49

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## **Introduction**

In this chapter, the first element to be dealt with is a review of the speech act theory. Then the chapter touches the notion of politeness in addition to the five main views and conceptualizations of the theory, and subsequently, sheds light on politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson. The next element is about the sociological factors influencing the choice of these strategies, before moving to discuss the speech act of complaint and its strategies.

### **2.1. Speech Act Theory**

When people talk, they use words to get things done; sometimes to exchange ideas, to convey emotion or other times it's to get others to perform a task, as Bach (1984) said “People don't speak merely to exercise their vocal cords” (P. 3). Though, in conversation analysis, people do not only produce utterance containing grammatical structures and words, but they perform actions by means of those utterances such as complaints, requests, refusal, etc.

The speech act theory considers language as a sort of action rather than a medium to convey and express. The contemporary speech act theory was developed by J. L. Austin (1975), a British philosopher of languages who came up with the findings that people do not only use language to assert things but also to do things. Austin introduced this theory in a series of lectures, the William James Lectures at Harvard, which were published posthumously as a book entitled *How to Do Things with Words* in 1975. Later Searle (1985) brought the aspects of theory into much higher dimensions. This theory is concerned with the ways in which words can be used not only to present information but also to carry out actions. In his theory, Austin (1975) examined how acts of speech can constitute a change in the world, saying that “It was for too long the assumption of

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philosophers that the business of a 'statement' can only be to 'describe' some state of affairs, or to 'state some fact', which it must do either truly or falsely" (1962, p.1), And people who followed him (Searle and Vanderveken,1985; Schiffer,1972)went to greater depths based on this point.

The theory emphasizes that the utterances have a different or specific meaning to its user and listener other than its meaning according to the language. According to Kent (1984), the inference the hearer makes and takes himself to be intended to make is based not just on what the speaker says but also on mutual contextual beliefs:

“We call such items of information "beliefs" rather than "knowledge" because they need not be true in order to figure in the speaker's intention and the hearer's inference. We call them "contextual" because they are both relevant to and activated by the context of utterance (or by the utterance itself). And we call them "mutual" because Sand H not only both have them, they believe they both have them and believe the other to believe they both have them” Kent, (1984, P. 5).

Concerning the concept of speech act, Austin (1962) pointed out that people do not produce utterances to merely communicate information but they produce utterances to do things or have others to do things for them; they apologize, promise, request, refuse, complain, etc. Utterances used to realize these functions are called speech acts. In other words, according to Austin, saying something means doing an action.

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### 2.1.1. Austin's Work

The main theme of Austin's mature work, *How To Do Things With Words* (1975), is the distinction between doing by saying and simply saying. At the very beginning, He divided speech acts into constative and performative utterances; the former are basically presented as statements which describe the world, or that report or constate some fact. The latter are utterances which do not merely inform or describe, but they carry out an action.

Constative utterances, according to Austin, denote certain utterances that are used only in descriptions and assertions like conveying a message or stating and reporting matters of fact that can be compared to the real world and declared to be true or false. Performative utterances, on the other hand, refer to "utterances that are void of descriptions and are neither true nor false in virtue of their meaning or definition but still remain understandable and meaningful" Searle, (1969, p. 6). In using a performative utterance, a person is not just saying something but is actually doing something if certain real-world conditions are met. I.e. Instead of saying something, the speaker may be performing an action via language such as promise, request, apology...etc. As opposed to constatives, performative utterances cannot be subjects to the truth/falsity condition; they either be happy or unhappy. They are happy if made in good and successful faith, and unhappy when they do not come off (Austin, 1962).

Following Austin's theory (1962), performative speech acts can be classified into explicit and implicit performatives. The former represent those utterances in which the speaker has to indicate the speech act involved by inserting the performative verb. Thomas (1995, p. 47) defines an explicit performative as: "[...] a mechanism which allows the speaker to remove any possibility of misunderstanding the force behind an utterance"; that is when the utterance includes certain cues which make the message clear and removes ambiguity. In other words, Lyons (1981) claims that the utterance can be referred to as an

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explicit performative in case it contains an expression that makes explicit what kind of act is being performed. The latter, on the other hand, refers to the case when what the speaker has in mind is not specifically or precisely indicated (Thomas, 1995). The utterance is rather ambiguous without an appropriate context since the hearer does not always decode the speaker's intention successfully.

Austin later realized that the dichotomy performative/constative is not sufficient since, as Thomas (1995) proposed, there is no formal way to distinguish performative verbs from other sorts of verbs and there are ways of 'doing things with words' which do not involve using performative verbs, in addition, the presence of the performative verb does not guarantee that the specified action is performed. The collapse of the performative hypothesis lead Austin to shift to a more general theory of speech act in which three kinds of acts are simultaneously performed (Levinson, 1983) the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts.

#### **2.1.1.1. The locutionary, Illocutionary and Perlocutionary Acts**

Austin (1962) presented a tripartite analysis of the total speech act theory, in which he classified the speech act into three main components: "He distinguishes the act of saying something, what one does in saying it, and what one does by saying it, and dubs these the locutionary, the illocutionary, and the perlocutionary act, respectively" Kent bach, (2003, p. 150).

The concept of a locutionary act is intended, according to Austin (1962), to cover the act of saying something. The locutionary act is concerned with the production of the utterance itself and its literal meaning regardless to the context and circumstances in which it occurs.

"It includes phonetic acts, phatic acts, and rhetic acts. Phonetic acts are acts of pronouncing sounds, phatic acts are acts of uttering words or sentences in accordance with the phonological and syntactic rules of the language to which

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they belong, and rhetic acts are acts of uttering a sentence with sense and more or less definite reference.” Etsuko Oishi, (2006, pp. 3-4).

An illocutionary act, the core of Austin’s trichotomy, is briefly described as the speaker’s intention. More precisely, the illocutionary act represents the action performed by the speaker via the produced utterance; “whenever a speaker utters a sentence in an appropriate context with certain intentions, he performs one or more illocutionary acts.” Searle and Vanderveken, (1985,p.1). It is roughly equivalent to the desire or the willingness to make a certain effect on the addressee. Austin classifies illocutionary acts into five types, i.e., verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitives, and expositives.

Although it is often argued that Austin’s classification is not complete and those coined categories are not mutually exclusive “Etsuko Oishi; (2006, p.4). Saying something, on the other hand, “will often, or even normally, produce certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons: and it may be done with the design, intention, or purpose of producing them [...] We shall call the performance of an act of this kind the performance of a perlocutionary act” (Austin; 1962, p. 101). Perlocutionary act is, as Wagiman points out, “the consequent effect of the utterance on the hearer, or the overall aim of the utterance” (2008, p. 70) i.e it is focused on the hearer’s response or reaction toward the speaker’s utterance. Similarly, Austin declares that “perlocutionary acts is what we bring about or achieve by saying something” Austin; (1975, p. 109).

However, Austin's early death left many gaps, ambiguity and unanswered questions about the theory of speech act. John Searle (1962), who is specially known in the field of pragmatics for his work on speech act theory, undertook to develop the theory and to render it more systematic.

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### **2.1.2. Searl's Work**

Following Austin's (1962) philosophy of language, the second great contribution to the development of speech act theory belongs to the American philosopher J. R. Searle (1962). Although, most of Searle's research has centered on the speech act theory which was subjected to further significant changes, the central connotations of illocution and perlocution were preserved with their initial meaning.

In his taxonomy of the speech acts, Searle focuses more on the concept of illocutionary act. He points out that "the minimal units of human communication are speech acts of a type called illocutionary act" (1985, p.1). He goes further supporting his definition of the illocutionary act; stating that this notion, in general, consists of two main constituent. The first one is the illocutionary force (F), which stands for the kind of illocutionary act the speaker has the intention to perform in delivering an utterance; in other words, it refers to the type of function that the speaker wants to achieve in the course of producing an utterance whether it is a command, a question, a request or any other function, which means that there are an interrogative illocutionary force, imperative illocutionary force, optative illocutionary force and declarative illocutionary force, as Van Vallin and LaPolla (1997) state.

The second component of an illocutionary act Searle introduces is the propositional content (P) that is determined by the linguistic structure of the utterance, That is, it can be grounded to the semantic and grammatical level of the sentence or expression produced by the speaker. So, the speaker may perform different speech acts that have the same propositional content but they differ in their illocutionary force. In this respect, Searle referred to utterances containing different devices used to indicate how an illocutionary force must be interpreted as "illocutionary force indicating devices (IFID), that is elements

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which more or less directly determine the illocutionary force of the speech act in which they are used.” Searle, (1980, p.1) comparably equivalent to Austin’s performative verbs.

Consequently, Searle (1975) claims that any form of sentence can be interpreted in, at least, two ways. It can be rather inferred as its literal meaning denotes; “the speaker utters a sentence and means exactly and literally what he says. In this case, it is referred to as a direct speech act by which “the speaker intends to get the hearer to recognize this intention in virtue of the hearer's knowledge of the rules that govern the utterance of the sentence” Searle, (1975, p. 59). It may, on the other hand, go beyond that depending on the speaker and the contextual situation, as when “the speaker’s utterance meaning and the sentence meaning come apart in various ways [...]or when the speaker utters a sentence, means what he says, but also means something more” Searle, (1975, p. 59). In this case, it relies more on the context and the conventional knowledge shared by both the interlocutors. These two broad categories were later broken down into five sub-classes.

#### **2.1.2.1. Classification of the Illocutionary**

In his article, *A Classification of Illocutionary Acts* (1977), Searle sorted the speech acts into five categories based on the types of action that can be performed in speaking claiming that Austin’s classification is unsystematic. The five fundamental or basic kinds of illocutionary acts are presented by Searle as follows:

Representatives (assertives): are such utterances which commit the hearer to the truth of the expressed proposition. They include: stating, concluding, reporting, asserting, claiming...etc. Representatives are assessable on the True-False dimension.

Directives: are attempts by the speaker to get the addressee to do something. In other words, it is the case when the speaker asks the hearer to commit an action whether it is an order, an invitation, a request or a suggestion.

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Commissives: are those illocutionary acts whose point is to commit the speaker to some future course of action, such as promises, threats and refusals.

Expressives: The illocutionary point of this class is to express the psychological state of the speaker as in apologizing, welcoming, thanking or complaining.

Declarations: It is the defining characteristic of this class that the successful performance of one of its members brings about the correspondence between the propositional content and reality. Declarations effect immediate changes in the institutional state of affairs and which tend to rely on elaborate extra-linguistic institutions such as in weddings.

Searle was criticized for his classification as being incomplete. He was accused of only systematizing Austin's principles and that some of his classes of speech acts are alike with Austin's (Levinson, 1983). In spite of its seemingly numerous flaws, Searle's theory of speech act is still the most popular speech act theory today.

## **2.2. Politeness Theory: Definition**

Within everyday social interactions, people generally take into account other's feelings and try to avoid conflicts by showing respect and consideration to each other under the so-called politeness that Leech (1980, p. 19) defined as "strategic conflict avoidance"; he suggested that it can be measured in terms of the degree of effort put into the avoidance of a conflict situation. Although, the notion of politeness, which has become one of the major themes in recent pragmatic research, does not have a quite unequivocal moral value, it is predominantly associated with a nice and considerate kind of behavior. Watts, Ide and Ehlich (2005) argue that politeness is a set of strategies to achieve social goals with a minimum of social friction. Similarly, Yule (1996) sees politeness as a concept of polite social behavior in a particular culture which can be demonstrated by

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showing good manners towards others. In addition to the prevailing definition of the term politeness which represents it as a means to promote smooth communication between interlocutors, politeness has also been used to distinguish one social class from another in the 18<sup>th</sup> century standing as a central concept in the formation of social classes (Watts, 2005).

Furthermore, the term politeness or polite human behaviour is defined by Ehlich (2005) as a relative quality that is related to a standard that lies outside it. Politeness is thus a social activity where the value of polite behavior is realized by the social standard which means that an individual polite action is socially determined whether it is polite or not. However, to characterize polite language usage, as Watts; (2003, p.1) invokes:

“We might resort to expressions like ‘the language a person uses to avoid being too direct’, or ‘language which displays respect towards or consideration for others’. Once again, we might give examples such as ‘language which contains respectful form of address like sir or madam’, ‘language that displays certain polite formulaic utterances like please, thank you, excuse me or sorry’ or even elegantly expressed language”.

Therefore, a fundamental issue in theorizing politeness is about the distinction between first-order and second order politeness proposed by R. Watts, S. Ide and K. Ehlich (1992). By first-order politeness the authors refer to commonsense notions of politeness, in other words, the various ways in which polite behaviour is perceived and talked about by members of socio-cultural groups. It involves everyday understanding of politeness, something which varies between people, places and cultures, and across time. Altogether, first-order politeness is an evaluation of ordinary notion of politeness with regards to the norms of society; the way politeness is realized through language in daily interactions by speakers as well as the hearer’s perception and assessment of politeness.

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Second-order politeness, on the other hand, is referred to as a theoretical construct, a term within a theory of social behaviour and language usage. It involves looking at the variations in what different people, in different places and at different times, deem as polite behaviour, and bears these differences in mind when identifying the particular strategies that people employ in order to get along through language. In short, second-order politeness can present universal characteristics of politeness in different communities

### **2.3. Politeness: Conceptualizations and Theories**

The concept of politeness has become increasingly popular in pragmatics over the past few decades. Politeness studies have been concerned with developing theories or investigating norms of politeness in different cultures. Moreover, the academic study of politeness has led to the emersion of various taxonomic approaches and classifications of the concept between the intuitive understanding of politeness of ordinary speakers, and technical conceptualizations of politeness developed by researchers. Four perspectives concerning this notion have been proposed by Fraser (1990) namely, the social norm view, the conversational maxim view, the conversational-contract view, and the face-saving view. These views stand as the most influential perspectives on the treatment of politeness.

#### **2.3.1. The Social Norm View**

According to Fraser (1990), the social norm view assumes that each society has a particular set of social norms consisting of more or less explicit rules that prescribe a certain behavior, a state of affairs, or a way of thinking in a context. A positive evaluation

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(politeness) arises when an action is in congruence with the norm, a negative evaluation (impoliteness = rudeness) when action is the contrary. This means that the way people rate a particular behavior to be polite or impolite is strongly related to the norms imposed by social conventions. The social norm view associates politeness with speech style, and connects a higher degree of formality to greater politeness, as Gu says, “if an individual uses polite language, he or she is regarded as having good breeding; on the other hand, if a person uses impolite language, it appears to indicate that the very person is uncultured” (1992, p. 13). This view of politeness implies that politeness is something determinate and predictable and it entails the existence of a kind of homogeneous culture in which there are specific rules for doing what is socially acceptable.

Following the principles of the social-norm view of politeness, it might be presumed that all the members of a certain socio-cultural background share the same politeness set of rules and that all the members refer to the same system in making politeness or impoliteness evaluations (Fraser, 1990). However, in real life, people are different from one another in various aspects including family background, life process, social practice, life experience and educational background, which may exercise great or even decisive influence on people’s views of social norms and politeness norms, upon which not every individual necessarily agrees (Eelen, 2001). Another problematic issue about the social-norm view that was claimed by Eelen (2001) is that it assumes that social norms are the only criteria people resort to in their evaluation of politeness or impoliteness.

### **2.3.2. Conversational-Maxim View**

The conversational-maxim view relies principally on Grice’s (1975) well-known studies on the cooperative principle (CP) which is considered as the foundation of the politeness models. The ‘cooperative principle’ and ‘implicature’ were introduced as a means of investigating the ‘implied meaning’ of ‘indirect’ utterances. According to Grice

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(1975), when communicating, the superior principle to be observed and followed by every speaker is the cooperative principle, the core of which gives an account of how communication might be achieved in the absence of any conventional means for expressing the intended message, that is to “make your contribution such as it required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” Grice (1975, p.45). Within the cooperative principles theory, Grice (1975) postulated a set of rules or maxims namely quantity, quality, relevance and manner.

The maxim of Quantity deals with the amount of information provided by the speaker. This maxim includes two main rules: “make your contribution as informative as required” and “Do not make your contribution more informative than is required” Grice, (1975, p.26). The second maxim, which is quality, has to do with the truthfulness of information, try to make your contribution one that is true, also following two rules: “Do not say what you believe to be false” and “Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence” Grice, (1975, p. 27).

The third maxim is defined by Grice, quite simply, as “Be relevant”. It has to do with the appropriateness of one’s contribution to the context of communication. Finally, the maxim of Manner tells communicators to be perspicuous. This maxim is divided into: “Avoid obscurity of expression”, “Avoid ambiguity”, “Be brief”, and “Be orderly”. Grice, (1975, p. 27)

People who do not follow the maxims in communication but still seem cooperative, resort to another set of rules to communicate that according to Lackoff (1973) are called “the rules of politeness”. Leech (1983) uses the term politeness principle to refer to the

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same rules. Lackoff's (1973) rules of politeness and Leech's (1983) politeness principle can be covered by the umbrella term of conversational maxim view of politeness.

### **2.3.2.1. Lackoff's Rules of Politeness**

Although the Cooperative Principle of Grice (1975) fails to account for politeness directly, but as a reference it gave rise to the formulation of the other theoretical and empirical works. One of those works is Lackoff's (1973) taxonomy, in which she integrated Grice conversational maxims with the concept of politeness leading up to the production of what is called "Rules of politeness".

Lackoff fleshed out her theory in two major overarching rules: "be clear" and "be polite". The former is a summary of the Griceian cooperative principle in which she renames the maxims of conversation. In the latter she proposed a sub set of three rules. These sub-rules aim at "making one's addressee think well of one" and accordingly "imparting a favorable feeling" as far as the content of communication is concerned (Lachoff, 1973). She put forward the sub-rules of politeness as follows (lackoff, 1977):

- 1) "Don't impose", which is concerned with "distance and formality"
- 2) "Give options", that is about hesitancy
- 3) "Make a feel good ( be friendly)" is concerning equality

Lackoff (1973) stated that speakers employ the above-mentioned rules to either express politeness or avoid offence as a consequence of indicating speaker/addressee status. She claims that these rules are highly affected by the speaker's assumptions about his relations with his addressee, his real-world situation as he speaks and the extent to which he wishes to change either or both or to reinforce them.

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Thus, Lackoff (1973) substantiated that the main concern in politeness rules of conversation are the needs of the addressee which should be always taken into consideration by the speaker.

### **2.3.2.2. Leech's Politeness Principle**

Leech's (1983) approach to linguistic politeness constitutes an account of how language is used in communication. In this model also, Grice's cooperative principle was the cornerstone for the explanation of polite utterances. However, Leech explains why people violate the CP in conversations claiming that the speakers do not only give heed to the cooperative principle in conversation, but they further consider what he terms by "politeness principle", since they cannot always be truthful and polite at the same time.

The central model of politeness principle (PP) is a cost-benefit scale of politeness related to both the speaker and hearer or, as Leech calls them, "self" and "other". It involves minimizing the expression of impolite beliefs as the beliefs are unpleasant or at a cost to it (1983). The major purpose of Politeness Principle, according to Leech (1983), is to establish and maintain feelings of comity within social groups. In this respect, Leech (1983, p. 82) says, The aim of the politeness principle is to "regulate the social equilibrium and the friendly relation between the speaker and the hearer, which enables them to assume that their utterances are being cooperative".

According to Leech (1983), the pragmatic framework of this theory is rhetorical consisting of two main components namely 'textual rhetoric' and 'interpersonal rhetoric' which are composed by a set of principles each one. Politeness Principle as a subdivision is embedded within the interpersonal rhetoric. Within the politeness principle, Leech proposes a series of maxims as a way of explaining how politeness operates in

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conversational exchanges. These maxims, as Leech (1983, p.132) describes them, tend to go in pairs as follows:

1. The Tact Maxim:

- Minimize cost to other.
- Maximize benefit to other.

2. The Generosity Maxim:

- Minimize benefit to self (benefit to the speaker)
- Maximize cost to self

3. The Approbation/Praise Maxim (it is oriented toward the H):

- Minimize dispraise of other.
- Maximize praise of other.

4. The Modesty Maxim:

- Minimize praise of self (S)
- Maximize dispraise of self (S)

5. The Agreement Maxim:

- Minimize disagreement between self and other.
- Maximize agreement between self and other.

6. The Sympathy Maxim:

- Minimize antipathy between self and other.
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- Maximize sympathy between self and other.

Leech believes that all his maxims are not of the same importance. He points out that the tact maxim and the approbation maxim are more crucial compared to the Generosity and Modesty Maxims, since in his idea the concept of politeness is more oriented towards the addressee (other) than self. This theory has been criticized as being “too theoretical to be applied to real languages”, as Locher (2004, p. 65) states, but “the maxims can be used to explain a wide range of motivations for polite manifestation”. However, Politeness Principle can also be employed to account for the cross-cultural variability of the use of politeness strategies, as Thomas (1995) pointed out.

### **2.3.3. The Conversational-Contract View**

The conversational-contract view is proposed by Fraser and Nolen (1990) in which they see politeness as a conversational contract, that is related to the terms and conditions imposed by the socio-cultural context and applicable to the interaction. According to this view, When people enter into a certain conversation, each participant brings a set of rights and obligations that will determine, at least for the preliminary stages, what the participants can expect from the other(s) (Fraser,1990). In other words, partners in a conversation have to submit to a fixed set of rights and obligations that are described by the social contract.

From the epistemological foundation of Fraser and Nolen’s approach (1990), It can be noted that politeness is a matter of remaining within the terms and conditions of the conversational contract; impoliteness, therefore, consists of violating them which means that, as long as the interlocutors respect the terms and conditions agreed upon at the primary stages, they are interacting politely. However, during the process of interaction, through the course of time or because of a change in the context, there is always the possibility for a renegotiation of the initial rights and obligations on which the parties have

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agreed; the two parties may readjust just what rights and what obligations they hold towards each other.

The conversational contract view has been subject to criticism, owing to the fact that the way it was introduced was very sketchy, as Thomas (1995) reports, this model is not empirically applicable due to the lack of model details. Watts (2003) questions the terms and rights as it is not clear what social conditions may prepare the ground for the readjustment and renegotiations of rights and terms. He also believes that the nature of the terms and rights are open to question.

#### **2.3.4. The Face-Saving View**

The most influential politeness model to date is the face-saving view proposed by Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson in 1978, whose names have become almost synonymous with the word politeness itself as it is impossible to talk about politeness without referring to Brown and Levinson.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), Politeness, unlike the Gricean cooperative principle, needs to be communicated, that it constitutes a message and it can never be simply presumed to be operative; it must be signaled by the speaker. Moreover, they suggest that the failure to communicate the intention to be polite may be taken as absence of the required polite attitude. This model is based on constructing a Model Person (MP) who is a fluent speaker of a natural language and equipped with two special characteristics, namely 'rationality' and 'face'. Such features are claimed to be universal features, i.e. possessed by all speakers and hearers.

By rationality, Brown and Levinson (1987) refer to the ability to rationalize from communicative goals to the optimal means of achieving those goals; that is to decide on the linguistic behavior necessary for the maintenance of politeness. Face, as the other endowment of the MP, is defined as the individual's self-esteem. They adapted this concept

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from Goffman (1967) who states that “face may be defined as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact” (1967: 5). Face refers to an individual’s feeling of self-worth or self-image or reputation and that everyone else is expected to recognize.

Brown and Levinson (1987) characterize two types of face; Negative Face as "the want of every 'competent adult member' that his action be unimpeded by others" (p. 62), or to have the freedom to act and behave without any imposition. This represents a negligence of all factors which constitute a threat towards individual rights. While positive face reflects "the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others" (p. 62). It can be described as the eagerness towards being liked, approved of, respected and appreciated by others; the appreciation to his personality or to his achievements.

The proposed face concept is something vulnerable, i.e. “something that is emotionally invested, and can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction” Brown and Levinson, (1978, p. 66). Thus, participants in an interaction, generally, want to defend and save their face in case of being threatened, and act, at the same time, in such ways that preserve other’s face. Brown and Levinson postulate that certain types of speech acts are inherently threatening to face; such acts are therefore called Face threatening acts (FTAs). However, face threatening acts are unavoidable as it is almost impossible to satisfy all face wants of either the speaker or addressee, either negative or positive, since the nature of interaction often leads speakers, intentionally or unintentionally, to produce utterances that are threatening to one or both types of face. Brown and Levinson (1978: 65-67) provide that face-threatening acts can be analyzed according to two basic parameters: the first is about whose face is being threatened, the speaker’s or the addressee’s, and the second on which type of face is being threatened positive or negative face.

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## 2.4. Politeness Strategies

In the course of social interaction, people seek to mitigate the potential face-threatening acts and to maintain a balance in protecting the positive and the negative faces of each other and acting appropriately. Subsequently, the “face-bearing rational agent will tend to utilize the FTA-minimizing strategies according to a rational assessment of the face risk to participants” Brown and Levinson, (1978, p.91). There are four types of politeness strategies, described by Brown and Levinson that sum up human "politeness" behaviour: Bald on Record, Negative Politeness, Positive Politeness, and Off-Record-indirect strategy.

The first politeness strategy is bald on-record, which does nothing to minimize threats to the hearer's face involving no redressive action, which means being very direct without any regard to the face of the addressee. This strategy sounds very impolite, but there are contexts in which it can be acceptable such as in situations where the speaker and the hearer “both tacitly agree that the relevance of face demands may be suspended in the interests of urgency or efficiency”, or “where the danger to the hearer’s face is very small” Brown and Levinson, (1987, p. 69).

The second one is negative politeness in which the speaker employs methods to avoid or decrease potential damage to the hearer’s negative face through conveying respect, deference, and distance rather than friendliness and involvement. This strategy is “essentially avoidance-based and realizations of negative-politeness strategies consist in assurances that the speaker recognizes and respects the addressee’s negative-face wants and will not (or will only minimally) interfere with the addressee’s freedom of action” Brown and Levinson,(1978, p.70). It is used in case the speaker wants to maintain distance from the hearer.

Third, positive politeness entails utterances which express interest and care for the hearer’s needs and wants to be appreciated. It is defined as “redress directed to the

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addressee's positive face, his perennial desire that his wants (or the actions/acquisitions/values resulting from them) should be thought of as desirable" Brown and Levinson, (1987, p.101). Using this strategy, participants try to minimize the distance between them by expressing friendliness and solid interest in the hearer's need to be liked and respected. Positive politeness strategy is usually seen in groups of friends or where people in the given social situations know each other fairly well.

The last proposed strategy is off-record that is considered the least direct strategy and the most polite one among the four types. The main focus for using this strategy is to assume that the speaker is removing himself from any imposition whatsoever. Linguistic realizations of off-record strategies, as Brown and Levinson proclaim, "include metaphor and irony, rhetorical questions, understatement, tautologies, all kinds of hints as to what a speaker wants or means to communicate, without doing so directly" (1978, p. 69). Thus, using off-record strategy during interaction may take some of the pressure off of the participants.

## **2.5. The Sociological Factors Influencing the Choice of Politeness Strategies**

The employment of politeness strategies is strongly related to some sociological factors which determinate the level of politeness. According to Brown and Levinson (1978), the degree of politeness investment, or what they call the weightiness of face threatening acts depends on two basic social attributes that the conversational participants have, namely, the social distance and the social power. They go further explaining this relation saying that, as more Social Power the hearer has, or as more social distance the speaker perceives toward the hearer, the weightiness of gets to be greater, and the greater degree of politeness is employed.

By the social distance, Brown and Levinson (1987) mean how well developed the social relationship between the speaker and the hearer that is how well they know each

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other. If the distance is high the level of formality tends to be high and vice versa. Whilst, social power can be referred to, as the asymmetric social status of the conversation participants. Brown and Levinson (1987) described it as “the degree to which Hearer can impose his own plans and his own self-evaluation at the expense of Speaker” (p. 77). Moreover, social power subsumes, in a wider sense, other factors such as age and occupation.

The above mentioned elements are the most likely considerable factors affecting the way politeness strategies are chosen and performed within interaction. Interlocutors tend to use a greater degree of politeness with people who have some power or authority than to those who do not. The same with social distance, which determines the overall degree of respectfulness within a given speech situation.

## **2.6. The Speech Act of Complaint**

Complaint is an expression of a psychological state of being dissatisfied, aggrieved or unhappy about something. Following Searle’s (1977) classification of the speech acts, the act of complaining comes under the category of expressives.

According to Trosborg (1995), a complaint is, “an illocutionary act in which the speaker (the complainer) expresses his or her disapproval or other negative feelings towards the state of affairs described in the proposition (the complainable) and for which he or she holds the hearer (the complaine) responsible, either directly or indirectly” (pp.311-312). Thus, the speech act of complaint occurs when a speaker feels annoyed or displeased due to an unfavoured action committed by the complaine. In the same respect, Olshtain and Weinbach (1993) offered a clear definition, which implies that In the speech act of complaining, the speaker (S) expresses displeasure or annoyance-censure-as a reaction to a past or ongoing action, the consequences of which are perceived by S as

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affecting her unfavorably. This complaint is usually addressed to the hearer (H) whom the S holds, at least partially, responsible for the offensive action. By performing a complaint, the speaker attempts to make the complainee repair the caused damage, or tries to prevent a repetition of the deplorable act.

According to Brown and Levinson (1978) the speech act of complaint involves the face threatening acts and it is considered, by Leech (1983), as conflictive acts that should be avoided because they show the negative feelings of the speaker and tend to threat the hearer. The act of complaining is included as an act that threatens both positive and negative face want. Complaint threatens the hearer's positive face wants of being admired or appreciated because the speaker holds a negative attitude toward the hearer and It puts threats on addressee's negative face of being free from imposition which mostly occurs when a complaint is accompanied by a request for compensation.

Consequently, speakers are required to be competent enough in performing a complaint. They need also to consider what linguistic or non-linguistic choices to make in order to achieve their communicative goals, and, at the same time, to avoid the risk of damaging relationships with the interlocutors because it has no pre-determined forms and the interpretations are often negotiable.

### **2.6.1. Complaint Strategies**

This speech act is very situation dependent in that speakers should know how to perform the speech act considering such aspects as the hearer, the relationship with the hearer and the appropriate linguistic forms for the speech act. Thus, the speaker is required to have sociocultural competence of language use as well as linguistic competence to perform the speech act appropriately.

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As proposed by Trosborg (1995), complaints can be made directly or indirectly. While direct complaints are addressed to a complainees who is held responsible for the offensive action, indirect complaints are given to addressees who are not responsible for the perceived offense. The directness of complaints may be influenced by the contextual variables, such as social power and social distance and it can be controlled by the speaker, as Sauer (2000) points out. In other words, the speaker can use different linguistic forms and nonverbal signals in order to mitigate the directness of the complaint, to reduce the risk of threatening the hearer's face and to remain polite.

According to Trosborg (1995), "A number of strategies are available to a complainer who wants to avoid a direct confrontation with the complainees. The degree of involvement of the complainer and the complainees specified in an act of moral censure is decisive in establishing a scale of directness levels of complaints" (p. 313). She identifies four categories of complaints and divides them into eight sub-strategies (p. 338):

- No Explicit Reproach: This category has one sub-strategy, namely hints. It is used by a complainer to express indirect complaints to a complainees. It could be used as soft complaints or as a strategy to prepare for more intense complaints or as a strategy intended to stand alone in its own right.
  - Disapproval: This category is used for expressing a complainer's negative judgment of a complainees's act. It consists of two strategies namely annoyance and ill consequences. Compared to the first category, it performs a higher level of complaint.
  - Accusations: This category is composed of two strategies, namely direct and indirect, which aim to convey particular complaint messages in different ways. Direct accusations are usually straight statements, while indirect accusations
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are ambiguous ones. Furthermore, relationships between the complainers and complainees could be considered by these accusations.

- **Blame:** This is the highest level of complaints strategies. Speakers complain directly and aggressively and may use face threatening acts. There are three strategies here, namely modified blame, explicit blame (behaviour) used for blaming a bad action, and explicit blame (person) used for blaming an irresponsible person.

Performing the speech act of complaining is very challenging for nonnative speakers, since not only the lack of linguistic competence, but also sociocultural competence may cause communicative breakdowns.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter pertained an overview of the speech act theory shedding light on the main works concerning this theory. It, also, focused on politeness as a basic notion in this dissertation enlightening the four major considerable views related to it. Then it moved to the speech act of complaint providing a set of strategies proposed by Trosborg (1995) for the realization of this act.

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<b>Chapter Three: Methodology, Data Analysis and Results</b> .....	50
<b>Section One: Methodology</b> .....	50
Introduction.....	51
3.1. Research Paradigm.....	51
3.1.1. Instruments.....	52
3.1.1.1. Discourse Completion Task.....	52
3.1.1.2. Description of the Used Discourse Completion Task .....	54
3.1.2. Population and Sampling.....	56
3.2. Analysis Procedure.....	57
3.2.1. Coding the Data.....	57
3.3. Limitation of the Study.....	60

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## **Introduction**

This section describes all the steps the researcher followed in carrying out the study and all the used materials. It comprises a detailed elaboration of the research paradigm in which the instrument used to collect data was described, population and sampling, the procedure of data analysis as well as the limitations of this study.

### **3.1. Research paradigm**

The current study attempts to investigate the politeness strategies used by Master one EFL students in the realization of the speech act of complaint and the way social status affects the choice of the different complaint strategies. In order to arrive at a clear examination of this phenomenon, this research is made up of a descriptive qualitative approach supported by a quantitative analysis of the data collected. Generally, qualitative research deals with exploring ideas, reasons and opinions deeply. In writing qualitative research, the writer generally uses descriptive data taken from interviews, videos, questionnaires, notes and any other sources that can be described. However, quantitative research deals with numerical data that are commonly formulated into statistic data.

Throughout this study, a mixture of both the quantitative and qualitative method is used, when collecting and analysing the data, to ensure that the limitations of one type of data are balanced by the strengths of the other. An initial quantitative discussion phase deals with the statistics related to the frequency of the use of different complaint strategies among EFL students, followed by a qualitative data description phase, in which the reasons behind choosing those strategies, the social factors influencing that and the expressions used when carrying out this speech act in addition to other issues are marked out.

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### **3.1.1. Instrument**

#### **3.1.1.1. Discourse Completion Task**

Over the last decades, the area of interlanguage pragmatics has experimented an increasing interest in investigating how learners' pragmatic competence in a second or foreign language is learnt and taught. The use of a particular elicitation instrument may potentially influence research outcomes, since pragmatic language use is a very complex phenomenon with a lot of contextual factors influencing its actual performance.

Among the data collection methods, the most widely used to collect learners' production data, related to a pragmatic phenomenon, has been the Discourse Completion Task (DCT). This instrument has been frequently used to evaluate second or foreign language learners' ability to perform speech acts in a target language. The DCT, that was first adapted by Blum-Kulka (1982) to study speech act realization patterns, is a production questionnaire consisting a set of one-sided role plays contain very briefly described situations designed to elicit a particular speech act in cross-cultural or interlanguage pragmatic studies. It is defined by Blum-Kulka et al. as a set of "scripted dialogs that represent socially differentiated situations. Each dialog is preceded by a short description of the situation, specifying the setting, and the social distance between the participants and their status relative to each other, followed by an incomplete dialog" (1989, p.13-14).

This speech act data collection method can be an open-ended task includes a scenario that describes a speech situation with information about the setting and relationship between the interlocutors. The informants are requested to write down whatever they would say in a given situation. Otherwise, the DCT can be structured by a prompt preceding the incomplete discourse sequence and/or a rejoinder in the form of an interlocutor's reply (Cohen 1996). With discourse completion tasks, the researchers elicit

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more stereotyped responses, which reveal the actual cross-cultural differences in a sharper contrast.

The popularity of DCTs is due to the fact that they enable the researcher to collect and codify large amounts of data in a relatively short period of time. They are attractive, as McNamara and Roever (2006) mentioned, because they elicit something akin to real-world speech act performance and because they are still somewhat practical despite the need for rating - at least they can be administered to large numbers of test takers at the same time. Another common advantage of this elicitation instrument concerns the fact that different variables, such as the setting, politeness factors, gender and age of the participants, or their proficiency level can be controlled. Furthermore, this instrument may serve as both data collection instrument for researchers as well as pedagogical teaching material for instructors.

Although the DCT as a data elicitation method is considered the most frequently used for measuring pragmatic competence, it is also the most criticized instrument. The disadvantages of DCTs have been manifested by many researchers; Beebe and Cummings (1996) state that the DCTs do not elicit natural speech with respect to actual wording, range of formulas and strategies, length of responses or number of turns necessary to fulfill a function. Nor they adequately represent the depth of emotion and general psycho-social dynamics of naturally occurring speech. This is because respondents were addressing an anonymous fictional character and had no motivation to establish or preserve a relationship. One more inherent limitation of the DCT is about The relationship between the respondents' proficiency and the format of the task particularly for low proficiency learners, because they are not usually capable of providing creative responses; so when writing in open-ended DCTs, the respondents' level of proficiency should be taken into consideration.

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The DCT was chosen to be used in the present study for some reasons as it identifies social constraints that are sensitive to the speech-act situations and it provides information about the kinds of strategies that participants employ to produce the speech act of complaint.

### **3.1.1.2. Description of the DCT**

Data was obtained through a DCT consisting of ten situations. The subjects were required to imagine themselves in the described situations and respond as they would say in their daily conversations or talk, but they were not explicitly asked to complain as the responses can be expected to be more authentic. The scenarios in the DCT were based on certain variables which determined appropriate level of politeness for complaint making namely social distance and relative power, as suggested by (Brown and Levinson, 1978), in addition to the variable of age.

In the first situation, the participants embody a dominant role for a university professor talking to one of his students, who is always overdue, comes to the class 20 minutes late. The teacher complains about the unacceptable student's attitude. In this case, the choice of complaint strategies can be influenced by the factor of social distance as well as the relative power of the complainer.

The second situation entails the participants to imagine themselves waiting for a long time in the ticket office at a bus station to buy ticket when an aged man tries to cut the line, and they are supposed to complain about that. The way the participants express complaint is affected by the factor of the complaine's age and the social distance between the interlocutors.

In the third situation, the event happens in a restaurant where the waiter spills some drink on the customer who has a formal meeting with a company manager. The customer,

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who is pissed off, complains about the accident. In this situation, there is low level of formality and equal authoritative role.

In the fourth situation, the problem occurs between very close interlocutors. A boy/girl, who has already said to his/her mother not to open the letters, came back from school to find out that another letter has been opened. The participants are asked to imagine how the complaint would be in such case when there is no formality between the interactants.

The fifth situation, each participant is required to imagine himself in a situation; he/she is talking on the phone while his/her little brother is playing and making loud noise. The complaint to be made by the participant in this situation may generally be affected by his/her powerful role and the very low level of formality because of the close relationship between the partners.

The event in the sixth situation is similar to that of the fifth one despite that the distance between the interlocutors is not that close. The participant plays the role of someone who is teaching his neighbor's child but he does not pay attention. Getting angry from repeating the same thing several times, the participant writes down the complaint to be expressed in such situations.

In the seventh situation, there is a high level of formality as well as the influence of the relative power between a teacher and his student who feels that he deserves a higher mark because he believes that the content of his paper is good enough. The students meet his teacher to complain about the mark.

In situation eight as well, the level of formality tends to be very high since the conversation occurs between a student and his professor. The student, who requested his professor to send the recommendation letter to the committee one month ago, has been

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informed that the letter did not arrive. The participants are supposed to put themselves in the student's shoes to complain about the situation taking into consideration the powerful status of the complaine.

The ninth situation is about a student, who is about to graduate, placed an order at the photocopy shop for copies of his thesis that must be submitted by 12:00 noon. However, when he goes to pick up his copies at 11:00, the clerk seems to be unaware of his request. In this case, the complaint is not affected neither with the relative power nor the level of formality.

In the last situation, the level of familiarity is somehow low and there is an equal authoritative role. The talk is between two new roommates; one of them is preparing for the exam while the other is listening to a very loud jazz music. The one who is studying complains about the situation.

### **3.1.2. Population and Sampling**

For the purpose of examining politeness strategies in the realization of the speech act of complaint, and exploring the factors influencing the choice of the strategies used when complaining among university students, English Master one students at university of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel, were chosen as the population of this study based on the assumption that they have both adequate linguistic knowledge and sufficient communicative competence. In order to have more reliable data, participants in this investigation were 50 students sampled randomly from the population. It is worth mentioning that the sample comprises respondents who are supposed to have similar background in terms of mother tongue, age, previous education, and cultural background.

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### **3.2. Analysis procedure**

The realization of complaining strategies in this study were analysed following the theory proposed by Trosborg (1995) in addition to inserting two other additional strategies that are likely to be frequently used by the Algerian students. The major complaint strategies suggested in this theory are no explicit reproach, expression of disapproval, accusations and blaming. Trosborg (1995) classified these strategies into eight specific sub-strategies namely hints, annoyance, ill consequences, indirect accusation, direct accusation, modified blame, explicit blame (behaviour), explicit blame (person). However, in order to be in line with the Algerian socio-cultural background, two other strategies, which are opting out and Threat, have been added. These two strategies were adapted from (Olshtain, Weinbach, 1985) model of complaint strategies.

The other dimension on which the gathered data have been analyzed is social variables influencing the implementation of politeness strategies when carrying out the speech act of complaint. In this respect, the present study adopted Brown and Levinson's model of politeness strategies (1978) which suggests two main social factors called the social distance and the relative power.

#### **3.2.1. Coding the Data**

A taxonomy of complaint based on Trosborg (1995) was employed to classify complaint strategies used by the research participants. The proposed strategies of expressing the speech act of complaint are listed starting with the least direct, which is the most polite as well, to the most direct with a low level of politeness.

The first type of complaint strategies used in the analysis is hints which falls under the category of no explicit reproach. In this strategy, the complainer does not explicitly state his complaint and he does not directly hold the complainees responsibility for the

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problem; as in the following example where the student found a mistake with his final score:

Complainer: Madam, I wonder why I got a C in your course. Can you tell me the reason?

The second strategy is expressing annoyance, by which the complainer explicitly states his/her complaint through stating the annoying situation but he does not directly hold the complainees responsibility for the problem. An example for this strategy is the following:

Complainer: "It's very annoying to hear a lot of noise every night"

Ill consequences is the third strategy. In this type of complaint, the complainer states the ill consequences resulting from the offence for which the complainees is held implicitly responsible as illustrated in the example of a broken camera:

Complainer: Hello, why I can't use my camera again? It was good before I lent it to you.

In the fourth type of complaint strategies, which is indirect accusation, the complainer asks the hearer questions about the situation or asserts that he or she was in some way connected with the offence. Trosborg (1995, p.317) argues that the use of questioning or a piece of information is less face threatening, for instance:

Complainer: Excuse me Sir, I just want to ask you about my score? Why I got C while on the final test an A?

The fifth one is direct accusation. This type of strategies is face threatening since the complainer directly accuses the complainees of having committed the offence. But there are various ways for the complainers to state direct accusations in mitigated way. Examples for direct accusation are the following:

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1) Broken camera:

Complainer: What did you do with my camera?

2) Noisy night:

Complainer: Would you shut up?

The sixth strategy is modified blame, in which the complainer expresses his disapproval of an action for which the accused is responsible and states a preference for an alternative solution, as the following example clarifies:

Complainer: it's so noisy. I am very sleepy I need to go to bed. Can you at least be quite a little bit?

Explicit blame for behavior is the seventh strategy. By using it, the complainer clearly states and explains that the action the complaineer has to take responsibility of is bad. For instance in a noisy night:

Complainer: I think it's better for you not to make any distracting noise while you are coming home late, because people here are so uncomfortable with your behavior.

The last but not the least type of complaint strategies is explicit blame for person in which the complainer explicitly directs the blaming toward the person. The use of this strategy is vivid in the following example:

Complainer: Hey you, this camera won't be fixed by just saying you are sorry and then you watch TV. Go and fixed it!

Finally, to fit the utterances used by the participants when expressing complaint in some situations, two additional strategies were used to analyze the responses, namely opting out, in which the complainer forgives the offender and even accepts the

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complainable matter, and Threat in which the speaker threatens the hearer for the unfavorable behavior, for example:

Complainer: If you are late again, this is going to have an effect on your grade.

### **3.3. Limitations of the Study**

During the process of carrying out this study, the researcher encountered three significant limitations to the research that can be described as follows:

- Most of the participants responses were in form of a reported speech instead of the utterance that he/she would produce in such situations in the real life.
  - The use of informal language by participants in their replies in addition to the extensive use of pragmatic transfer
  - During the data analysis phase, the researcher found some instances of politeness strategies that were not mentioned in Brown and Levinson's taxonomy. Therefore some new strategies were added to suit the present research purpose.
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<b>Section Two: Data Analysis and Results</b> .....	61
Introduction.....	62
3.1. Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analysis .....	62
3.2. Discussion of the Results.....	86
Conclusion.....	90

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## **Introduction**

This section is mainly concerned with the presentation and analysis of utterances produced by the participants, when performing the speech act of complaint, obtained from the research instrument. It begins with a statistical analysis of the data, that is encoded, then, through a qualitative discussion. Finally, the results of the analyzed data are presented and discussed with respect to a modified version of Trosborg's model of complaint strategies (1995).

### **3.1. Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis of the Complaint Strategies**



**Situation 1**

Table 1

*The Frequency of the Complaint Strategies Used by Participants in Situation One*

Complaint type	Strategy	Frequency	Percentage %
Opting out	Acceptance	0	0%
No explicit reproach	Hints	3	6%
Expressing disapproval	Annoyance	4	8%
	Ill consequences	0	0%
Accusation	Direct	6	12%
	Indirect	8	16%
Blaming	Modified blame	0	0%
	Explicit blame (behavior)	9	18%
	Explicit blame (person)	11	22%
Threat	Direct	9	18%

In the first situation, participants were instructed to act as a university professor to complain about a situation, where one of his students, who comes every session late, arrives at class again 20 minutes late. As indicated in table 1, 22% of the participants performed explicit blame to the person, which is the most frequently used strategy in this situation. They chose to do the FTA by frankly stating the blame to the person as it is

shown in the following examples: “Don’t come to the class again; you are disturbing your classmates”, “I have told you several times before, not to come to the class late again. Don’t you understand?”. Two other strategies were utilized with the frequency 18%: explicit blame to the behavior that is illustrated in this example “This behavior is not respectful, you have to be punctual” in which the complainer signals that the behavior committed is not favorable, and threat that can be seen in this utterance “If you come late next session, I will kick you out”.

The next employed strategy which is a little lower in frequency (16%) is indirect accusation that appears in utterances where participants asked questions about the situation in a less face threatening way such as “Why do you come always late” and “Where have you been”. Some of the participants (8%) chose to be indirect through only expressing their annoyance by saying for example “bear in mind that I’m not satisfied with this situation”. The rest of the participants (6%), on the other hand, tried to be more polite using hints which is the least direct strategy as in this reply “May I know what is the reason behind being late each time”. However, none of the participants used acceptance, ill consequences nor modified blame.

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**Situation 2**

Table 2

*The Frequency of the Complaint Strategies Used by Participants in Situation two*

Complaint type	Strategy	Frequency	Percentage %
Opting out	Acceptance	19	38%
No explicit reproach	Hints	5	10%
Expressing disapproval	Annoyance	3	6%
	Ill consequences	0	0%
Accusation	Direct	1	2%
	Indirect	2	4%
Blaming	Modified blame	9	18%
	Explicit blame (behavior)	7	14%
	Explicit blame (person)	4	8%
Threat	Direct	0	0%

The table above is concerned with the second situation in which participants were asked to complain about the behavior of an aged man tries to cut in line in front of the other people who have been waiting in the ticket office for more than one hour. With regard to the age of the complaine, many participants (38%) tended to accept the

unsuitable behavior and forgive the man by saying nothing about the situation, while the most often used strategy is modified blame which comprises 18% of the responses. Modified blame is considered as an indirect strategy of complaining that generally takes place in the form of an advice. It can be noted in utterances such as “you should respect the order”, and “I have been waiting for over an hour to get a ticket, and you should do the same”. The third rank is occupied by explicit blame to the behavior with a rate of occurrence 14%, as a direct way to show the disturbance from the situation in which respondents performed the FTA. To exemplify, “Sorry Sir, but this attitude is really unacceptable”.

The next applied strategy is hints which occurs in 10% of the utterances. By this strategy, participants chose to avoid conflicts with the complaine and to stay away from the FTA as in the following expressions, “All of us are waiting for tickets”, “I have been waiting here for a long time”, and “Everyone here has to wait for his turn”. More direct ways for realizing complaint were employed through explicit blame for the person with a frequency of 8%. Using such strategy, participants decided to do the FTA directly “Sir, you have to respect your turn”, “what’s wrong with you, sir? You are not supposed to be in my place or to cut in line in front of me”. On the other hand, 6% of the participants preferred to be less direct by expressing their annoyance towards the event as it is noted in the following instances, “I feel uncomfortable because I spent a lot of time here”.

Therefore, few participants (4%) used indirect accusation in an attempt to soften the act of complaining. For instance, “can I help you sir?”, “Excuse me please, do you have an emergency?”. The least used strategy, in this situation, is direct accusation that has been found in only one response (2%), “Sir, do not cut in line, you have to wait for your turn”. This type of complaint is a face threatening act. Finally, it is worth mentioning that both ill

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consequences and direct threat strategies were not employed by participants when expressing complaint in this situation.

### Situation 3

Table 3

*The Frequency of the Complaint Strategies Used by Participants in Situation three*

Complaint type	Strategy	Frequency	Percentage %
Opting out	Acceptance	13	26%
No explicit reproach	Hints	1	2%
Expressing disapproval	Annoyance	2	4%
	Ill consequences	3	6%
Accusation	Direct	6	12%
	Indirect	5	10%
Blaming	Modified blame	9	18%
	Explicit blame (behavior)	7	14%
	Explicit blame (person)	4	8%
Threat	Direct	0	0%

Under this situation, each participant was supposed to complain about the waiter of a restaurant who spills the drink all over him. As shown in the table, a high rate of participants (26%), surprisingly, chose either to accept the offence and to forgive the waiter as in utterances such “It’s ok, I’m sure you didn’t mean it”, and “don’t worry, this is not a

big deal”, or to keep silent since it is not an intentional mistake. The second rank is for modified blame which occurs in 18% of the utterances produced in this situation by participants who express their anger through stating an advice. To illustrate, “Would you please be careful and watch your steps next time”, “You should be careful when serving the customers”. The third one is explicit blame to the behavior, that is found in 14% of the responses, where participants resorted to perform the FTA. Concerning this strategy, participants performed a face threatening act by directly showing displeasure towards the behavior of the waiter. As examples, “This behavior is not acceptable at all; I won’t get to this place again”, “you know that you have done something irresponsible”. Then, the fourth used strategy is direct accusation with a frequency 12% of the replies.

This strategy is, also, face threatening because the complainer makes the other part directly guilty of the offence which can be found in these examples: “Are you blind?! What did you do?”, “what’s wrong with you? Pay attention”. However, others preferred to employ accusation in an indirect way by asking questions about the situation. This strategy holds (10%) of the utterances such as “Can you tell me what should I do now?”, “bring me something to clean it up”. The next strategy is explicit blame to the person, used by 8% of the participants, which is considered a little harsh and face threatening as it can cause conflicts. It is elaborated in the following typical example: “How dare you?! Fix it now”, “Are you insane, Don’t you see clearly!”.

Additionally, 6% of the participants sorted out the ill consequences resulted from the waiter’s mistake. Instances of this strategy are following, “Oh my god! My new suit is ruined”, “My suit got wet and I have an important meeting; how can I fix it?”. Few others (4%) expressed annoyance as an indirect way to complain about the event in this situation. Participants said utterances such as “This is really annoying”, while only 2% of the responses contains hints that is the most polite strategy as well as the least direct one. An

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example of this type, “where is the bathroom, I need to fix my suit”. Nevertheless, no one of the participants used threat as a strategy to complain about the waiter in this situation.

#### Situation 4

Table 4

*The Frequency of the Complaint Strategies Used by Participants in Situation four*

Complaint type	Strategy	Frequency	Percentage %
Opting out	Acceptance	6	12%
No explicit reproach	Hints	3	6%
Expressing disapproval	Annoyance	5	10%
	Ill consequences	0	0%
Accusation	Direct	11	22%
	Indirect	6	12%
Blaming	Modified blame	3	6%
	Explicit blame (behavior)	2	4%
	Explicit blame (person)	11	22%
Threat	Direct	3	6%

As far as this situation is concerned, participants were instructed to complain about their mother who has opened one of their private letters after agreeing that she would not

do that again. The results in the table above show that participants in this situation employed both direct accusation and explicit blame to the person strategies with equal frequency (22%). The former was used by the complainer heading directly towards making the hearer the guilty party. To illustrate, “Mum, Who gave you the permission to open my own personal letters?”, “Oh mum, could you please respect my privacy just the way I respect yours”, “never touch my stuff again”. The latter was adopted by participants to directly hold their mother responsible for the displeasing behavior saying expressions like, “I have already told you Mom, not to open my letters”, “Oh mum, why did you do so? I have told you before not to do such a behavior”. The second rank is occupied by a less face threatening strategy that is indirect accusation which comprises 12% of the utterances. This strategy is usually utilized to minimize the risk of threatening the hearer’s face. To exemplify, “Why my letters are open? Who did this?”, “From now on no one open my letters”. In addition to indirect accusation, acceptance took place with the same frequency (12%) in which participants preferred to be quiet and keep silent.

On the other hand, 10% of the respondents expressed their disapproval about the attitude described in this situation through stating their annoyance and dissatisfaction. Examples of this strategy are the following, “I’m really angry about what is done” and “I don’t like the idea of touching my privacy”. The next rank is, apparently, occupied by three different strategies namely hints, modified blame and direct threat with 6% rate of occurrence. The first one is the most polite complaint strategy since the complainer just implies that he knows about the offence without any direct mention to the complaine in the problem in a way that the FTA is avoided. It was found in replies such as, “those letters are private”, “everyone has his own privacy that should be respected”. The second one entails that the complainer explains that such types of attitudes should not be committed which best represented in the following example: “Mom, I understand your fear for me as a mother but you should respect my privacy”. While the third one is the least polite strategy

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in which the risk of creating a conflict between the interlocutors is very high. For instance, one participant replied: “This is the last time, if something like this happens again, it won’t be good”.

Surprisingly, the least frequently used strategy in this situation is explicit blame to the behavior as only 2 students (4%) resorted to it in this situation. One of their responses was as follows, “what you have done is a kind of trespassing my privacy, and I no longer accept being like an open book”. Yet, no student applied the strategy of ill consequences to complain in the present situation.

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**Situation 5**

Table 5

*The Frequency of the Complaint Strategies Used by Participants in Situation five*

Complaint type	Strategy	Frequency	Percentage %
Opting out	Acceptance	0	0%
No explicit reproach	Hints	2	4%
Expressing disapproval	Annoyance	1	2%
	Ill consequences	3	6%
Accusation	Direct	38	76%
	Indirect	0	0%
Blaming	Modified blame	1	2%
	Explicit blame (behavior)	0	0%
	Explicit blame (person)	0	0%
Threat	Direct	5	10%

In situation five, participants are asked to complain about their little brother who is playing and making a lot of noise around them while they are talking on the phone. The results in the table above demonstrate that the majority of the students, who participated in this study, relied more on performing the FTA in this situation, using direct accusation to

complain about the behavior of the little boy. This strategy occurs in a high frequency (76%) of the responses in which participants reacted without any regard to the boy's face or to the relation between them. To exemplify, "Peter, keep silent", "Go outside", "Peter, can you shut up", "Stop this noise you are annoying me", "Peter, keep quite or go play far from here". The second strategy that was used by participants in this situation is direct threat which comprises 10% of the replies. This strategy is also face threatening and impolite but it is acceptable in this case regarding the social status of the other party and the social distance between the interlocutors. Examples to that are, "If you don't keep your mouth shut, I will punish you" and "When I finish you will see". However, few participants (6%) resorted to use Ill consequences to inform the boy that his behavior was making trouble. This can be seen in the following expressions, "I can't hear", "I can hardly hear what she is saying".

However, only 4% of the respondents utilized hints as a strategy to complain that is considered extremely polite in such situation avoiding all kinds of FTA. The replies contained the following expressions, "It is time to watch cartoon" and "I am talking on the phone". While the least rank (2%) was occupied by both modified blame and annoyance which are indirect ways to complain. Modified blame is clearly indicated in this expression, "you should show some respect at least to the person I am talking to". Whereas, the other one which is annoyance is found in this one, "I am disturbed with this noise, I can't hear my friend". Interestingly, participants did not employ any of the other strategies namely acceptance, indirect accusation, explicit blame to the behavior and explicit blame to the person.

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**Situation 6**

Table 6

*The Frequency of the Complaint Strategies Used by Participants in Situation six*

Complaint type	Strategy	Frequency	Percentage %
Opting out	Acceptance	7	14%
No explicit reproach	Hints	1	2%
Expressing disapproval	Annoyance	0	0%
	Ill consequences	0	0%
Accusation	Direct	12	24%
	Indirect	1	2%
Blaming	Modified blame	4	8%
	Explicit blame (behavior)	3	6%
	Explicit blame (person)	6	12%
Threat	Direct	16	32%

In the present situation, participants were supposed to imagine themselves as they are teaching their neighbor's child English. The child is not interested at all and does not pay attention. As a result, he keeps misspelling the words that are already learnt and each participant was asked to complain about the situation. As can be observed in the table 6, a

large number of the students (32%) made use of direct threat that is considered as a FTA, in order to perform complaint towards the boy's attitude in this situation. To illustrate, "If you continue this way, I'll tell your parents", "If you don't pay attention I won't teach you again", and "I will stop teaching you". Additionally, 24% of the participants were noted to state their complaints towards the boy through direct accusation. This range of participants asserted directly to the boy that he has committed an offence. They employed the following statement formulas, "Can you please pay attention", you don't listen to me, this is why you cannot spell it right". Nevertheless, a group of participants (14%) did not issue any reaction, preferring to keep silent or to try again with the boy.

Regarding the fourth rank, results shows that when complaining about the behavior of the boy, 12% of the participants preferred to declare an explicit blame to the boy who did not listen attentively to what they were saying. This strategy has been found in replies such as, "Oh my God, are out of your mind? Why you do not concentrate?", and "We have just dealt with this word, it is your fault". Moreover, 8% of the respondents employed modified blame which falls under the class of indirect strategies. The latter suggests a better way to act instead of what has been done that is illustrated in these expressions, "You have to pay attention in order to succeed and impress the others", "you should concentrate me I will help you". With a less rate, few students (6%) resorted to use explicit blame to the behavior of the boy trying to make him understand that being reckless is not acceptable. This strategy occurred in utterances as, "This is not a good behavior, I think you have to be respectful and more interested".

The least frequently used strategies for complaining in this situation is hints. Only 2% of the students were content with just hinting to the boy that his method is not appropriate. To exemplify, "Look boy, you are here to learn. Similarly, indirect accusation occurred in only 2% of the responses in which participants tried to be enough polite by

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asking the boy about the reason behind his attitude. The last strategy was found in this statement, “Do you have a problem? Why you are absent minded?!”. Though, both annoyance and ill consequences were not preferred by the students when complaining about the behavior of the boy in this situation.

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**Situation 7**

Table 7

*The Frequency of the Complaint Strategies Used by Participants in Situation seven*

Complaint type	Strategy	Frequency	Percentage %
Opting out	Acceptance	10	20%
No explicit reproach	Hints	5	10%
Expressing disapproval	Annoyance	3	6%
	Ill consequences	0	0%
Accusation	Direct	12	24%
	Indirect	15	30%
Blaming	Modified blame	2	4%
	Explicit blame (behavior)	2	4%
	Explicit blame (person)	1	2%
Threat	Direct	0	0%

Unlike the previous situations, the level of formality in this case is considerably high, since the complainer is a student and the complainee is his teacher. The student felt that the mark he got is too low, and the reasons for that, as he thought, was the difference between him and his teacher in terms of personal beliefs. The results in the table above demonstrate

the majority of the participants did not do the FTA since the dominant strategy used by participants in this situation is indirect accusation with a frequency of occurrence 30% of the overall number of responses. In direct accusation was preferred by this group as it allowed them to complain about the problem or the offence without directly stating that the teacher was the guilty party. "I think that my paper is not that bad to get such a grade", "I want to know what's wrong with my paper". The second strategy that has got a considerable number of use among participants is, surprisingly, direct accusation. This type occurred in approximately quarter of the replies (24%) in which participants directly showed to the teacher that he was the responsible for the problem. For instance, "Sir, I want you to re-correct my paper please", "Excuse me, would you please explain to me, point by point, why I got this mark" and " Sir, I did not understand why you gave me this low grade even if my grammar and content are fine. Please can you check it again?".

In contrast, another group of the participants (20%) chose not to complain; they thought that the teacher is responsible for his work so they preferred to accept the grade and keep silent. However, there some student who tended to use the least direct strategy that is the most polite one namely hints. To be more precise, 10% of the respondents complained through hinting taking into consideration the social status of the other party as well as the relationship and the distance between them. Examples found in their replies are, "My answers are correct, I deserve more than this", "I need to know my mistakes, sir". The next strategy is annoyance that was used by a small number of the participants with a rate of 6%. They preferred to indicate that they were dissatisfied with the mark the teacher gave them as in this statement, "I am not satisfied with my grade, I think there is something wrong".

On the other hand, few participants (4%) resorted to use modified blame as a way to explain to the teacher how things should be. For instance, "Sorry sir, but you may read my

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work from a neutral side so you can get my ideas. We are different but not to that point". Similarly, few others (4%) utilized explicit blame to the behavior stating directly that they don't like the teacher's method. To illustrate, "I believe I've done an excellent job and it is not fair to evaluate me subjectively". The least found strategy in the replies of the participants is explicit blame to the person since it is a very harsh way to complain and can create a conflict. This strategy occurred in this utterance, "Even though there are things which are irrelevant, you should not give such a low mark because there are no mistakes". The remaining two strategies namely ill consequences and direct threat were not preferred by participants in their complaining in this situation.

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**Situation 8**

Table 8

*The Frequency of the Complaint Strategies Used by Participants in Situation eight*

Complaint type	Strategy	Frequency	Percentage %
Opting out	Acceptance	1	2%
No explicit reproach	Hints	6	12%
Expressing disapproval	Annoyance	0	0%
	Ill consequences	5	10%
Accusation	Direct	9	18%
	Indirect	22	44%
Blaming	Modified blame	0	0%
	Explicit blame (behavior)	0	0%
	Explicit blame (person)	7	14%
Threat	Direct	0	0%

Under this situation, the participant was applying for a position with a company and the interview committee asked for the letters of recommendation sent by his professors. After a month he found out that one of his professor's letter has not been sent. Thus, the participant was supposed to complain about that. It can be noticed from the results indicated in the table above that nearly half of the students (44%) employed indirect

accusation to talk with the professor about the non-sent letter avoiding the performance of the FTA. That is a way to minimize the risk of ruining the relationship between the interlocutors. Indirect accusation is realized in the following utterances, “Why my letter was not sent to the committee, sir? Is there any problem?”; “Sir there is something wrong with the letter of recommendation; I don’t know if you have surely send it”. On the other hand, another group of participants did not care about the relationship with the professor nor with his social status, as 18% of the overall number of responses used direct accusation when complaining about the professor’s negligence stating that he was fully responsible of the retardation. To exemplify, “Sir, would you please send the letter as soon as possible because we are very late”, “Sir, there is something wrong with your letter of recommendation; did you really send it?”.

Additionally, 14% of the students made use of the explicit blame to the teacher himself in this situation, accusing him of not being responsible towards his deals. This strategy can be found in this example, “I’m sorry sir, but I have asked you before for the letter but unfortunately you did not send it; could you please do it for me?”. The fourth rank is occupied by the use of hints with a rate 12% of the replies. The hinting strategy was used by the students just to draw the professors’ attention to the letter that was not sent. Instances of the replies were taken to illustrate, “Sir, I am in need for you letter; I hope you understand”, “the letter did not yet arrive at the committee”. In the same respect, 10% of the student indicated the ill consequences of not sending the letter by the professor in utterances such as “The late of the letter will make the procedure longer”. Otherwise, none of the students resorted to express annoyance, or to employ modified blame explicit blame to the behavior nor to use direct threat. While, only 2% accepted the situation and preferred not to react.

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**Situation 9**

Table 9

*The Frequency of the Complaint Strategies Used by Participants in Situation nine*

Complaint type	Strategy	Frequency	Percentage %
Opting out	Acceptance	6	12%
No explicit reproach	Hints	1	2%
Expressing disapproval	Annoyance	1	2%
	Ill consequences	5	10%
Accusation	Direct	13	26%
	Indirect	4	8%
Blaming	Modified blame	3	6%
	Explicit blame (behavior)	8	16%
	Explicit blame (person)	9	18%
Threat	Direct	0	0%

In the ninth situation, the student was supposed to complain about the clerk in a photocopy shop, where he has placed an order for 10 copies of his thesis that should be submitted by 12:00. However, by 11:00, when the student went to there to pick up his copies, he was told that they were not yet ready.

According to the results represented in the table above, more than a quarter (26%) of the participants employed direct accusation when complaining under such conditions. They asked the clerk directly about the reason behind the delay of making the copies or they simply stated accusation to him. To illustrate, “This is your fault, so make them now and quickly, I need them before 12:00”, and “hurry up, find a way to make the copies by 12:00”. The second most frequently used strategy in this situation is explicit blame to the person, with a rate 18% of the replies. These students got angry and started to blame the clerk for not being responsible. Semantic formulas from the sort of the following were used, “You promised the copies would be ready by 11:00, what should I do now?” and “We have agreed before about the time, why you didn’t finish them?”. It can be noticed also that 16% of the students stated an explicit blame to the behavior and directly declared that the behavior of the clerk cannot be acceptable at all. For instance, “This is completely unprofessional”, “I consider this as a kind of irresponsibility”. While 12% of the participants found it useless to complain in such a situation and preferred to wait for more time or to change the photocopy shop; others (10%) resorted to state the ill consequences resulting from the clerk’s carelessness, as in the coming utterance, “Oh my God, I am really in trouble now”.

The next rank is for indirect accusation that was found in 8% of the respondents utterances. Using this strategy the students asked indirect questions concerning the problem, the reasons or the solutions for the problem as illustrated in the following examples, “why the copies are not ready yet!” or “What shall I do now”. Additionally, 6% preferred to carry out a modified blame trying to be less direct by providing advice to the clerk as in the following examples, “Job should be done appropriately and on time”, “in case you had a problem and you could not make them, you should have told me to find alternatives”.

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The least used strategies in this situation were annoyance and hints with a similar rate 2% of the replies. By annoyance, students announce their disturbance from the situation, for example “My blood is boiling”. While by hinting, they only talk about the problem without mentioning the other party or accusing him. This indirect strategy can be seen in the following statement, “I have a committee waiting for me to submit the copies of my thesis”. To conclude, direct threat was not preferred by any student because of its harshness.

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**Situation 10**

Table 10

*The Frequency of the Complaint Strategies Used by Participants in Situation ten*

Complaint type	Strategy	Frequency	Percentage %
Opting out	Acceptance	4	8%
No explicit reproach	Hints	2	4%
Expressing disapproval	Annoyance	1	2%
	Ill consequences	3	6%
Accusation	Direct	10	20%
	Indirect	0	0%
Blaming	Modified blame	24	48%
	Explicit blame (behavior)	5	10%
	Explicit blame (person)	0	0%
Threat	Direct	1	2%

In the last situation, each participant was asked to imagine himself preparing for tomorrow exam late at night, while his roommate is listening to a very loud music causing a disruption for him and leading him to complain. In this situation, the level of formality

was not recommended to be high since the interlocutors are socially equal, but the factor of distance may affect the way of carrying the complaint because they are new roommates.

As the table 10 demonstrates, the dominant strategy used when realizing complaint is modified blame. Approximately half of the participants (48%) chose to explain to their roommate that they were having an exam the day after, then requesting to turn off the music or to reduce the sound. As examples, the following utterances were taken from the participants replies, "If you want to listen to music, put your earphones at least for respect, you see that I am studying and I have an exam tomorrow, so please reduce the sound", "could you please make the volume lower, I have an exam tomorrow, I need to concentrate because I have to finish reading the book this night". The second rank was occupied by direct accusation with a rate 20% of the utterances. Using this strategy, some students employed the FTA asking directly their roommate to stop the music as in these examples, "could you please reduce the voice", "Please, turn the music down or go out and do whatever you want" and "stop it please". The third one is explicit blame to the behavior with a frequency 10% of the responses. A unique characteristic of this strategy is the explanation that the action is bad. To exemplify, "This is not a way to listen to music, you are disturbing me", "Your loud music is preventing me from concentration".

Next, acceptance is classified in the table with a rate 8% concerning those participants who liked better not to complain, to leave the room or to join the roommates in order to enjoy the music. A small number (6%) tended to avoid the FTA by stating the ill consequences caused by the roommates' behavior. For instance, "I can't concentrate", "my head is going to explode". Similarly, the use of hints occurred in only 4% of the replies such as, "I have got stuff to take care of, I hope you consider that". While annoyance as well as direct threat were the least used strategies in this situation with a rate 2% of the utterances, each. Annoyance was found in "this is very annoying, I can't bear it anymore"

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and threat was found in “If you don’t stop this music there is an alternative way I’m going to use with you”. On the other hand, no one resorted to state an explicit blame towards the person or to use indirect accusation.

### **3.2. Discussion of the results**

After having presented and analyzed the results yielded from the research instrument, this section is devoted to the interpretation of the findings based on crosschecking the participants’ answers in relation to the research questions put forward in the introduction. Hence, what will follow next is an attempt to investigate the most frequently used complaint strategies in addition to the significant relationship between the implementation of politeness strategies and the sociological factors as well as other factors in each situation.

Concerning the first situation, the seventh and the eighth, the conversation occurs between a student and his teacher, however, they differ in terms of the context as in the first one, the complaining party is the teacher, while in the seventh and the eighth, the teacher the complaine. Although, the level of formality is high in all the three situations. As the results revealed, the dominant strategies in this situation were explicit blame to the person (student), and explicit blame to the behavior. Characteristic of this strategy requires that the accused person is not considered to be of a higher social status. So, participants were very direct, explicitly stating the blame to the late student or to the behavior of being late again and again. On the other hand, the most frequently employed strategy in the seventh and the eighth situations, was indirect accusation. That is, because of the teacher’s social position and his authoritative role, the participants tended to be less direct and more polite through avoiding to mention the teacher’s person in the accusation but they asserted that in some way the teacher is connected with the offence by asking questions about the situation. The students used indirect accusation strategy in terms of complaint politeness

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and avoidance of breaking their relationship. In light of this discussion, it can be inferred that in such contexts, the social status of the interlocutors plays an important role over the social distance in the determination of directness and indirectness when complaining.

In situation two and four, the factor that was set to be tested is the influence of age with regard to the social distance between the interlocutors on the use of complaint strategies. The context in the second situation entailed complaining towards an aged man who tried to cut in line in a ticket office. A large number of the participants preferred to keep silent and let the man pass as he is old and must be respected while others, with a less rate, resorted to use modified blame that is an indirect way to blame the guilty party for the offence. It can be by proposing alternative approaches to be taken or requesting for a change in the status or the action. Whereas, in situation four, there was a close relationship between interlocutors because the participants were asked to complain about their mothers for opening one of their private letters. In this situation, the majority of the students used very direct and sometimes rude strategies such as direct accusation, explicit blame to the person and threat. This is because there was a low level of formality and there was no social distance between the complainer and his mother, so they reacted with no fear to lose or to distract the relationship between them. Therefore, it is possible to infer that the factor of age may strongly affect the realization of complaint. However, in case of a very close social distance, it is not that much important since people behave in a spontaneous way with close relatives.

Concerning the third, the ninth and the tenth situations, there was an equal authoritative role the same age as well as the same social distance between the interlocutors. However, in situation three, where the mess has been made by the waiter in a restaurant, who spilled the drink all over the customer, more than a quarter of the participants tended to opt out since the accident was by mistake and not intentional while

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others employed modified blame and some additional strategies with less frequency. On the other hand, under the ninth situation, participants complained about the clerk in a photocopy shop, where they have placed an order for 10 copies of their thesis that must be submitted by 12:00, but when they went to pick them up they were told that they were not yet ready. The highest rates were held by direct accusation, explicit blame to the person and explicit blame to the behavior. In addition to that, participants in the situation ten focused on using modified blame as well as direct accusation when complaining towards the behavior of their new roommate who was listening to a loud music while they were preparing for tomorrow exam. Contrary to the third situation, the bad actions conducted by the clerk and the roommate were not accidental but they were intentional, the reason why participants implemented direct strategies with a low level of politeness. In light of this comparison, it can be deduced that there are other factors rather than the social distance and the relative power that can influence the selection of complaint strategies.

lastly but not least, similar to the second and the fourth situations, the factor that was put under test in relation to the speech act of complaint in situation five and six was age. However, in these situations the complainees were younger than the complainers. In the former, students complained about their little brother who was making loud noise around them while they were talking on the phone. Likewise, in the latter, they complained about their neighbor's child who was not paying attention when they were teaching him English. Surprisingly, the most frequently used strategies were direct accusation and direct threat in both situations. The reason behind using the mentioned strategies in both of the situations was the young age of the complainees though the social relationship between the interlocutors in the situation five was closer than that in the situation six. From this comparison, it can be inferred that the influence of age over the social distance when complaining depends on whether the young one is the complainer or the complainees. In such cases, where the complainer is older than the complainees, the factor of the social

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distance may be discarded, otherwise, if the complainer is younger than the complaine, the social distance plays an important role when choosing the complaint strategy to be used.

Finally, upon careful examination of the data, it was interesting to conclude that the variables of social power and social distance showed an effect on the student's use of complaint strategies. More strategies were used with a decrease in social distance and increase in social power. In other words, EFL learners did not use more severe strategies like accusation, blaming and immediate threat, when talking to people at a higher social status, such as the professor

Concerning the first and the second questions, the predominant politeness strategy that was employed by EFL learner when performing the speech act of complaint, was the on record strategy which involves carrying out any speech act in a very direct way without any consideration to the hearer's face. This strategy is the least polite and it is vivid in the following complaint types, direct accusation, explicit blame to the person, explicit blame to the behavior and direct threat. Based on the analysis and the categorization of realization strategies for complaining provided by EFL learners who participated in the present study, I is worth mentioning that the investigation of the third and the fourth questions revealed that the appropriate choice of complaint strategies may depends on sociopragmatic issues such as the social status of the complaine relative to the complainer, social distance between the interactants in addition to other issues related to the context in which the offence occurred, such as whether the mess was intentional or accidental, to what extent the problem is serious. The present study was based on two main hypotheses, the first one assumes that the EFL learners resort to a similar set of strategies when performing the speech act of complaint, however, the form and the selection of these strategies vary from one student to another, while the second postulates that the selection of complaint

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strategies is not governed only by sociological factors but it is also subject to other different issues.

### **Conclusion**

In short, this chapter was concerned with the practical part of the current study. It comprises two main sections which are research methodology, results and data analysis. The research methodology section was devoted to present a detailed description of the research paradigm, sampling, data collection procedures and the procedure of analysis as well as the limitations of the study. The second section, on the other hand, was allocated for the report and the analysis of the data yielded by the research instrument followed by a discussion of the results in the light of the research questions and hypotheses.

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## **General Conclusion**

In daily life, people frequently become annoyed, dissatisfied, or unhappy about people or circumstances. These uncomfortable situations often trigger expressions of complaint. The speech act of complaining is a face-threatening when the speaker violates the sociocultural rule of speaking. This can lead to a breakdown in communication and in the relationship with the other participants. In fact, the ways people show their reactions to the annoying events, express their feeling of dissatisfaction towards others, behave or make certain word choices depend on particular social variables including the social status, gender, the relationship between interlocutors and the complexity of the situation, which influence the selection of the speech strategies. In addition, this speech act is very situation dependent in that speakers should know how to perform the speech act considering such aspects as the hearer, the topic, the purpose of the speech, and the appropriate linguistic forms for the speech act. Accordingly, the dissertation in hand aims at classifying the mostly employed complaint strategies in relation to the factors influencing the selection of these strategies by examining the EFL learners' utterances in certain complaint situations.

The first part of this thesis, which consists of chapter one and chapter two, serves as an overall review of the theoretical background of the whole research including a description of interlanguage pragmatics a long with communicative competence in addition to the notion of pragmatic failure. Afterwards, a presentation of the speech act theory takes place. This chapter also looks over some studies related to politeness phenomenon, focusing on four views that directly inspire the current study, covering the linguistic realizations of politeness strategies and the factors influencing the choice of politeness strategies. Then finally, the speech act of complaint is defined. On the other hand, the second part that is the third chapter is made up of two separate sections. The first one presents the methodology of the study, including the sources of data, the procedures of data

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collection and the method of data analysis, as well as the problems encountered, while the second one reports the results of the study, discusses the possible factors that might have accounted for the results of the data collection and summarizes the major findings.

Based on evidences that have been explained in the third chapter, it is concluded that EFL learners use the same set of complaint types to perform the FTAs politely. However, they had different preferences in the selection of different strategies. In general, students preferred to use more direct on record politeness strategies when realizing the FTA, since the most frequently employed types of complaining are direct accusation and explicit blame. Findings from this study also prove that the social distance between the speaker and hearer and differences in the social status as well as other factors such as the age and the complexity of the situation; do influence the choice of the politeness levels and the selection of complaint strategies. Therefore, the afore set hypotheses are confirmed.

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### **Recommendations for Further Research**

In this study, all the data were elicited by a Discourse Completion Task form. The students wrote their responses in some hypothetical situations instead of speaking out in real life situations. Therefore, data is highly recommended to be as authentic as naturally occurring data, or at least half-natural data through other methods such as role-play. Whereas, concerning the factors influencing the performance of the complaint, gender differences in social behavior, face concern and performances of the face-threatening speech acts would be very interesting to be included in the study. Thus, a comparison between male and female participants' performance in a face-threatening speech act would certainly be enlightening. However, due to the small size of subjects, female/male such comparison was very hard to be done on the complaints in this study. Furthermore, future researches on the speech act of complaint may provide more insights into the universal perception of face and face-threatening speech acts through a comparison of complaint performance between native speakers of English and Algerian EFL learners.

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## **Appendix**

### Discourse completion task

Dear students,

This questionnaire serves as a data collection tool for a research work that aims at investigating the factors affecting the use of different complaint strategies by EFL learners. Your answers will be of great help for the completion of our research.

Thank you in advance for your collaboration.

**Level:** First year Master

**Guidelines:** You are kindly requested to read the situations carefully before you write down your responds. Please make sure that in all of your responds you express complaint.

**Situation 01:** You are a university professor. One of your students comes late every session. Last session you told him that he could not come late to your class any more. Today, he is 20 minutes late. What would you tell him?

**You:**.....  
.....  
.....

**Situation 02:** You need to buy a ticket to travel to a nearby city to visit your family over the weekend. You go to the ticket office at the bus station and you have to wait in a long line to get a ticket. The tickets are almost sold out. You have been waiting there for more than an hour. While you are standing in line, someone about your father's age tries to cut in line in front of you. What would you say to him?

**You:**.....  
.....  
.....

**Situation 03:** You ordered a drink at a restaurant while you are waiting for the manager of a company to which you have recently applied for a job. When the waiter brings you the drink, he spills it all over you. Your new suit got wet. What would you say?

**You:**.....  
.....  
.....

**Situation 04:** You think you are old enough to have some privacy. Therefore, you told your mother not to open your letters, and she agreed. Coming back from school one Friday night, you find that a letter from your friend has been opened. How would you react to the situation?

**You:**.....  
.....  
.....

**Situation 05:** You are talking on the phone to your classmate. Your 10-year-old younger brother, Peter, is playing and making a loud noise around the house. You can hardly hear your classmate. What would you say?

**You:**.....  
.....  
.....

**Situation 06:** You teach your neighbor's child English every Wednesday night. You have caught the child not paying attention several times. Now, the child has not been paying attention again and has misspelled the word you just taught.

You: Now let's spell the word "book." B-O-O-K.

Child: B-O-C-K

**You:**.....  
.....  
.....

**Situation 07:** Your teacher has handed your composition homework back to you. However, you are surprised at your grade, you feel that the mark that you got is too low. You think the reason for this is that the things you wrote are different from your teacher's personal beliefs. You believe that the content and the grammar of your paper are fine. What would you say?

**You:**.....  
.....  
.....



**Situation 08:** You are applying for a position with a company. The interview committee has requested that you have your professors send letters of recommendation directly to the company. However, when you call the committee to check, you are told that one of the recommendation letters has not arrived. You are concerned because you asked your professor for the letter over a month ago. What would you say to him?

You:.....  
.....  
.....

**Situation 09:** Yesterday you placed an order at the photocopy shop for 10 bound copies of your thesis. Today you must deliver all 10 copies to your evaluation committee by 12:00 noon. When you go to the photocopy shop at 11:00am to pick up your booklets, you find that the copies are not ready. How would you respond in this case?

You:.....  
.....  
.....

**Situation 10:** You are reading a book preparing for an exam late at night. Your new roommate is listening to a very loud jazz music. You cannot concentrate any more while you have to finish reading the book since the exam is tomorrow. What do you tell him/her?

You:.....  
.....  
.....

- Which of the following factors might influence your rating of politeness?
  - a. Social distance between you and the addressee (i.e. how well you know each other)
  - b. social power of the addressee
  - c. Age

If there are any other factors write them here:

.....  
.....

## **Résumé**

Cette recherche a étudié les stratégies de politesse utilisées par les étudiants de la langue étrangère de l'anglais (FLE) à l'Université de Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia-Jijel, lors de réaliser de plainte. Il a également tenté d'identifier les stratégies utilisées par ces étudiants dans la réalisation des plaintes. Cette étude a aussi cherché à déterminer l'influence de la distance et du pouvoir sociaux sur le choix des stratégies pour atteindre la déclaration des plaintes. Un questionnaire ouvert a été utilisée pour recueillir les données, et il a été administré à cinquante (50) étudiants de FLE. Les données obtenues ont été codées et catégorisées selon la taxonomie de Trosborg (1994) sur les stratégies de plainte, tandis que les stratégies de politesse ont été identifiées suivant le modèle de Brown et Levinson (1987). Les résultats ont montré que ces participants étaient directs lors de l'exécution de la plainte. Les résultats ont également révélé que les variables sociales ont influencé le choix des stratégies de politesse des participants.

## ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة للكشف عن أساليب الكلام المهذب المستخدمة من طرف طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة محمد الصديق بن يحيى، جبجل، عند تعبيرهم عن التذمر و الاستياء. كما تهدف الى تحديد الاستراتيجيات المتبعة من طرف هؤلاء الطلبة من أجل إبداء استيائهم تجاه شيء ما. تسعى هذه الدراسة أيضا إلى التعرف على تأثير بعض العوامل الاجتماعية كالمسافة الاجتماعية والسلطة على اختيار الاستراتيجيات المناسبة لتحقيق الشكوى. و قد اعتمدت هذه الدراسة في جمع المعلومات على استبيان كتابي تم عرضه على خمسين (50) طالب أولى ماستر لغة الإنجليزية. البيانات التي تم الحصول عليها، تم تصنيفها بالاعتماد على نموذج (تروسبورغ 1994) المتعلق بأساليب الشكوى كما تم تصنيف اساليب الكلام المهذب باتباع نموذج (براون ولوفينسون 1987). نتائج هذه الدراسة أظهرت أن هؤلاء المشاركين استعملوا أساليب مباشرة عند أداء خطاب الشكوى. وكشفت النتائج أيضا أن المتغيرات الاجتماعية أثرت على اختيار المشاركين لأساليب الكلام المهذب.