An Exploratory Sociolinguistic Study of Key Areas for Politeness Work in Saudi Academic Emails

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by

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate and analyse the key areas in which politeness work is going on in email correspondence between Saudi Arabian students and lecturers. The importance of this study lies in its role in understanding social and professional (i.e., academic) interactions through the politeness strategies employed in Saudi emails and by exploring similarities and differences in their use between women and men, as well as between lecturers and students. In this study, both first and second-order (see Section 2.7) politeness approaches were integrated to analyse particular politeness phenomena, taking into consideration participants' perspective. This study explored 140 emails that were gathered from 20 Saudi participants in Saudi universities, and eight participants were interviewed. This study has drawn on Brown and Levinson's (1978) seminal work on politeness in analysing quantitative data as well as on other relevant frameworks (e.g., Wong, 2010). Many features found in previous studies were also found in the current study; some aspects were particular to the Saudi context. Some patterns of choice appeared to have a relationship as to whether the writer/receiver of an email is a woman or a man, and/or is a lecturer or a student, and that there is a relationship between the choice of politeness strategy and identity construction. The results showed that there seems to be no clear cut boundary between the politeness classifications as implied in Brown and Levinson. The results also showed that the rapport potential varied for the different politeness devices, and that a single item might convey different things. The current data indicated that it is not possible to interpret rapport or politeness strategies from a single linguistic form, without taking content and context into consideration, and that perceptions and practice are different components that may have a gap between them.

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The List of Abbreviations

Computer-Mediated Communication	CMC
Face-Threatening Act(s)	FTA(S)
First Language	L1
Second Language	L2
King Abdul Aziz University	KAU
Discourse Completion Task	DCT
English as Foreign Language	EFL
Illocutionary Force Indicating Device	IFID
Identification	ID

Chapter 1:   The Introduction

1.1 Aims and Research Questions

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the rationale behind the current research, to provide a brief description of the Saudi context which is the focus of this research and to outline the structure of this study. This research aims to explore and analyse the key areas in which politeness work is going on in Saudi academic emails. This study is particularly interested in investigating the rapport potential (Spencer-Oatey, 2000) (see Section 2.7 for the definition of rapport) conveyed through the use and choice of particular politeness strategies. Investigating the notion of politeness is crucial because, "in studying politeness, we are automatically studying social interaction and the appropriateness of certain modes of behaviour in accordance with socio-cultural conventions" (Watts et al., 1992: 6). Thus, the importance of this research lies in its role in understanding social and professional (i.e., academic) interactions between people by shedding light on the politeness strategies that are employed in Saudi emails and by exploring similarities and differences in their use between women and men, as well as between lecturers and students.

In light of the research aims, the specific questions addressed by the study are presented below:

1. What politeness strategies are used in emails sent by Saudi Arabian lecturers and students?
2. How do the uses of politeness strategies vary according to the gender and role of the participants in this study?
3. How do lecturers and students in a Saudi Arabian academic context perceive the rapport potential of different politeness strategies as these occurred in the emails considered in this study?

Some of the background to these research questions is briefly mentioned in the next section, with an outline of the methods and models employed in the current study.

1.2 An Overview of the Research Study

In order to carry out the research investigation, both first and second-order politeness (see Section 2.8 for the definitions and discussion) were combined and adopted. Thus, the data were analysed using a mixed methods approach which combines quantitative (email data) and qualitative (interview) methods, which I discuss in detail in Chapter 3.

The current study draws on previous linguistic and pragmatic work on politeness, from Lakoff (1973) to Leech (2014). For the quantitative part of the analysis, Brown and Levinson's (1978; 1987) model was considered and partially adapted for a macro level of analysis. Since each chapter in this study is independent and self-contained, in some of the chapters (i.e., Chapters 5, 6 and 7), the relevant politeness strategies were analysed against other selected frameworks. For instance, the thanking strategies that occurred in the current data were analysed using Wong's (2010) framework. In terms of apologies, Olshtain and Cohen's (1983) framework was adopted for the analysis of apology strategies. The requests that occurred in the current data were coded and labelled against Blum-Kulka's (1989) framework.

In this study, I will show how perceptions and practice are different. I will also demonstrate how sex and the participants' professional roles as either lecturer or student intersect in complicated ways. This study will also critically examine Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) politeness model, particularly concerning the implied polarised categorisation suggested by them for negative and positive politeness (see Section 2.5 for definitions). The current study will argue that there is no clear cut boundary between each politeness classification, as implied in Brown and Levinson (1978; 1987).

Much of the analysis in the current study confirms earlier research on politeness strategies. For instance, despite the optionality of openings and closings (Crystal, 2001), the majority of participants still used them as a rapport-enhancing strategy. The findings of this study were also in line with Waldvogel's (2002), which found that thanking occurred more in emails that were sent up the hierarchy compared to emails that were sent down. This study shows that, when requests are directed upward, more mitigation

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and less directness is needed (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008: 113). The current study concludes that apologies function as remedial devices (Goffman, 1971: 109; Holmes, 1993: 104) and that an apology is a "post-event speech act" (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984: 206). In this study, I will also demonstrate that the politeness strategies that accompanied the opening and closing, thanking, requesting and apologising in the data bear some similarities with what occurred in previously examined English-speaking contexts. Additionally, this study will highlight some findings that were quite specific to the Saudi context, which should not be ignored. For instance, in the Saudi context, socio-religious salutations (e.g., السلام عليكم *peace be upon you*) were employed as email openings and socio-religious prayers (e.g., الله يوفقك *May Allah grant you success*) as well as cultural-address terms (e.g., أخ/أخت *sister/brother*) as closings.

1.3 The Saudi Higher Educational Context

Today's Saudi Arabian higher education system has expanded tremendously to include 24 public and nine private universities (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013: 3). Within the Saudi universities, 54.69% of the students are Saudi females.

In Saudi Arabia, the language of instruction at schools and some specialties in universities is Arabic. However, English is employed as a foreign language and as a tool for communication, business, diplomacy, tourism and higher education. The motivation for learning English in Saudi Arabia is influenced by the Islamic religion, which urges the learning of other languages (Elyas and Picard, 2010: 141). The status of English in Saudi Arabia is influenced by economic factors, such as the expansion in trading activities and oil revenues. These activities require communication and negotiation with international parties and organisations and these normally happen in English. The importance of learning English is crucial in Saudi universities, particularly in learning science, medicine, dentistry, engineering and computer science. Moreover, students at higher degree levels are required to prove their English language proficiency in order to pursue their post-graduate studies (either abroad or locally), and to be recruited for a job. The medium of instruction in most faculties and departments is Arabic. However, there are

various universities that use English as a medium of instruction, e.g., King Fahad University and King Abdullah University of Science and Technology.

Saudi Arabia is a highly conservative country which has a strict gender segregation governed by Islamic and traditional views. Women are only allowed to work in places where there is no direct contact with men, except in cases such as working in hospitals. Most of the workplaces in Saudi Arabia are designed to adhere to these cultural constraints. For instance, a workplace may provide some privacy for women while working, thereby allowing them to dress as they wish (e.g., wearing colourful clothes and short sleeves) without the need to be covered or veiled. In cities and some villages, there are various schools which normally offer a single sex learning environment. At such schools, girls are only taught by women and boys are taught only by men.

In most Saudi universities and colleges (and their buildings in general), women and men are separated; sometimes women have a separate campus. This segregation is based on various Islamic beliefs. Women are normally taught by either women or men, whereas, in contrast, men are only taught by men, except in a very few cases where there may be a shortage of specialists in particular fields (i.e., in the medical field).

Although it is common for women to be taught by men in university, female students would normally not be actually seen by them. Male lecturers would stay in a separate room, or even in a separate building, and give the lecture via video conference or other alternative means. If there are questions in the class, women can freely ask these through phones which are located in each room. Female students may also contact their male lecturers by phoning them on their office landlines during the specified office hours or can email them at any time. Female students being taught by men are normally supervised by a woman so as to ensure that an attendance record is taken and to supervise tests (Nakashabandi, 1993 cited in Baki, 2004: 4) and are then expected to send the exam papers back to the male lecturer to mark.

This sex segregation between men and women has been examined in feminist work (see Section 2.9) in anthropology and geography that considers gender and space. Valentine (2014: 7) argued that space is connected to social identity, since it influences the "construction and reproduction of social identities, and social identities and relations are recognised as producing material and symbolic or metaphorical spaces" (ibid.). A few decades ago, essentialists argued about the natural differences between men and women and they claimed that these sexual differences are shaped by biology. However, more recently, this view was challenged by social constructionists who claimed that a body is culturally-mapped and influenced by social practices rather than by biology (Valentine, 2014: 19). Thus, feminists distinguish between sex, which is the "biological differences between men and women", and gender, which is the social construction of "masculinity and femininity" (ibid.), all of which will be discussed in Section 2.10.

According to Hofstede's (1980) cultural-dimensions theory, Saudi Arabia is a country with high social and power distance (Bjerke and Al-Meer, 2006) where "the less powerful members of organisations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally" (Hofstede, 1980). People in lower hierarchical levels are normally expected to show more respect and more politeness when contacting people in a higher hierarchical level than theirs, possibly to convey certain levels of formality. Students, for example, are normally expected to address their lecturers using appropriate titles, such as Dr. along with the addressee's first name. Students are also expected to use conventionally polite language and style. For instance, students are expected to start their emails with a formulaic opening and end it with a formulaic closing, selecting an appropriate, indirect and polite form of request as well as to thank their lecturer and, if necessary, apologise for an offence (e.g., disturbing the lecturer) (see Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7).

1.4 Overview of the Structure of the Thesis

This study is an exploratory, sociolinguistic study of key areas in which politeness work is going on in Saudi academic emails. The Saudi context is a high distance culture that does not allow the mingling of women and men and, thus, it is different to many previous studies that have examined gender and politeness. This study draws on previous linguistic and pragmatic work on politeness, from Lackoff (1973) to Leech (2014), as will be discussed in the next chapter, comprising a literature review with a detailed description about previous work on politeness. Chapter 3 identifies the methods that were used in the study and discusses some information about the participants of the current study, the data sample size and its collection process as well as introduces the data collected for this study. For the remaining chapters, I begin with the related topics of opening and closing strategies, and then discuss thanking (Chapter 5), requesting (Chapter 6), and apologising (Chapter 7), the last chapter in this thesis summarising the implications and conclusions of the current study. Although openings and closings are not of equivalent status to thanking, requesting and apologising, they still perform a politeness work and build rapport with others.

Chapter 2:   Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter attempts to set the scene for the field of politeness, particularly in emails exchanged between students and lecturers in the Saudi academic context. This chapter begins with an overview of previous studies about politeness and the theorists of politeness. Face and identity, which are concepts associated with politeness, will be discussed. Other relevant aspects of politeness will also be discussed in this chapter, such as directness, rapport, first and second-order politeness, speech-act theory, gender/sex and online contexts. Finally, a summary of the main themes and controversies will be provided at the end of the chapter.

2.2 The Nature and Definition of Politeness

The nature of politeness has been, and is still, a controversial issue among linguists. Researchers have not reached a consensus as to what constitutes polite behaviour and how this polite behaviour is distinguished from normal or appropriate behaviour (Locher, 2004: 60). Mills (2003: 6) commented on a BBC radio programme concerning politeness that, while people thought that politeness was important when interacting with others, perceptions of what constitutes polite behaviour varied from one person to another. This controversy in identifying politeness may, consequently, lead to variations in definitions of politeness. Thus, politeness can sometimes be problematic. One set of definitions of politeness that focuses on the speaker and addressee perspectives is illustrated below.

Locher (2004: 91) suggested two definitions for politeness, one oriented to the speaker and another to the addressee.

"Politeness for the speaker" is defined as:

A polite utterance is a speaker's intended, marked and appropriate behaviour which displays face concern; the motivation for it lies in the possibly, but not necessarily, egocentric desire of the speaker to show positive concern for the addressees and/or to

respect the addressees' and the speaker's own need for independence (Locher, 2004: 91).

In contrast, "Politeness for the addressee" is defined as:

Addressees will interpret an utterance as polite when it is perceived as appropriate and marked; the reason for this is understood as the speaker's intention to show positive concern for the addressees' face and/or the speaker's intention to protect his or her own face needs (Locher, 2004: 91).

Both of the above definitions emphasise that politeness is conveyed through showing concern to the addressee's face and by taking the interlocutor's feelings into consideration, which was also indicated in many other descriptions of politeness. In this regard, Brown (1980: 114) gave a general outline of politeness as "a special way of treating people, saying and doing things in such a way as to take into account the other person's feelings." Similarly, Das and Herring (2016: 53) also associated politeness with good behaviour, since politeness is, according to them, typically perceived as "the pragmatic application of good manners or etiquette[1]." Holmes (1995: 4) described politeness as an "expression of concern for the feelings of others." In daily convention, politeness stands for "behaviour which is somewhat formal and distancing, where the intention is not to intrude or impose" (Holmes, 1995: 4).

Some definitions of politeness pinpoint some of the key functions of politeness. Politeness, for instance, functions to minimise tension and conflicts, as illustrated in Lakoff's (1975: 64) descriptions of politeness as a type of behaviour that has been "developed in societies" in order to reduce "friction in personal interaction." Lakoff (1989: 102) also defined politeness as "a means of minimising the risk of confrontation in discourse." Blum-Kulka (1992: 260) summarised politeness as a "diplomatic way of getting things." However, the over use of diplomacy may lead to "flattery, if not

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[1] Etiquette is the set of protocol or rules that govern people's behaviour in some situations. It includes good manners and proper behaviour.

manipulativeness" (Blum-Kulka, 1992: 260). Watts (1992: XXXiX) stated that politeness plays an important role in establishing and enhancing social relations among people. Although politeness was considered generally on a macro level, some linguists have drawn attention to specific types and forms of politeness.

Linguistic politeness is a specific form of politeness, which, according to Holmes (1995: 194), "involves using language in a way that reflects consideration for others." She also pointed out that "selecting the appropriate grammatical construction may convey greater or lesser politeness. Modal verbs such as would and could, for instance, generally soften directives" (Holmes, 1995: 9). The ordering of linguistic items in a sentence and its organisation influence the politeness function (Brown and Levinson, 1978; 1987: 93), as some politeness strategies were considered more polite when they occurred at the beginning of a sentence than at the end. For instance, Brown and Levinson (1978; 1987: 93) considered the expression "if you don't mind me asking, where did you get that dress?" more polite than "where did you get that dress, if you don't mind me asking", because of the organisation and ordering of the expression. According to Brown and Levinson (1978: 93) "the more effort S [the speaker] expends in face-maintaining linguistic behaviour, the more S communicates his sincere desire that H's [the hearer's] face wants be satisfied."

Politeness may sometimes be compared with the terms appropriate and politic. Watts (1992; 2003), for example, drew a distinction between polite and politic behaviour. Politic behaviour stands for "that behaviour, linguistic and non-linguistic, which the participants construct as being appropriate to the on-going social interaction" (Watts, 2003: 21). Watts (1992: 61) states that "socially appropriate behaviour is in fact politic behaviour and not polite behaviour, and terms of address are realisations of politic behaviour" (for more discussion of Watts, 1992; 2003 see Section 2.4.2). However, other researchers use "appropriate behaviour" as an alternative term for "polite behaviour" (e.g., Meier, 1995), which is a term that has been criticised for its lack of a negative counterpart (Locher, 2004: 86).

Perception of politeness varies from one cultural context to another. Brown and Levinson (1978; 1987) and Scollon and Scollon (1995; 2001) distinguished between negative politeness cultures, e.g., the British culture, and positive politeness cultures, e.g., China, Australia and America. According to them (ibid.), in negative politeness cultures the focus was more placed on deference and formality, which were given more priority, whereas, in a positive politeness culture, deference and formality are seen to obstruct communication as solidarity and camaraderie are stressed (ibid.). However, Kadar and Mills (2011: 27) questioned the attempts by Brown and Levinson (1978; 1987) and Scollon and Scollon (1995; 2001) to generalise observations about groups of language and cultures concerning their use of negative or positive politeness. Rather, they (Kadar and Mills, 2011: 27) argued that, although this distinction in the use of positive or negative politeness takes place in each language group, each group also employs both kinds of politeness (positive and negative) to some extent.

Despite the amount of work and analysis on politeness, there is, in contrast, a lack of work and analysis on impoliteness (Mills, 2003: 121). Impoliteness is defined as "a negative attitude towards specific behaviours occurring in specific contexts. It is sustained by expectations, desires and/or beliefs about social organisation, including, in particular, how one person's or a group's identities are mediated by others in interaction" (Culpeper, 2011: 23). Based on Culpeper's (ibid.) definition of impoliteness, it is not possible to attribute a term or utterance as impolite without taking context into account. This implies that there is no such term or utterance that is inherently impolite, as both content and context need to be considered. Mills (2003: 121) argued that having a polarised view of politeness and impoliteness will end up classifying behaviours as either polite *or* impolite, which is not the case, because interlocutors might be tolerant in assessing whether an utterance is polite or impolite. Additionally, there are other utterances that are quite "ambiguous in terms of their function" (ibid.: 122).

There also seems to be a shift in theoretical conceptualisation of politeness among scholars, from viewing politeness mainly as a face-threat mitigating device (Brown and Levinson, 1978) and being "a good thing" (Holmes, 1995) to a rather

manipulative tool (Mills, 2003: 59; Watts, 2005: 69). Politeness can serve other, different, functions, e.g., "avoiding responsibility" or "hiding one's real intentions" (Mills, 2003: 60), which may sometimes be good or bad depending on the situation. Positive and negative[2] types of politeness particularly "operate respectively, as a kind of social accelerator and social brake for decreasing or increasing social distance in relationships, regardless of FTAs" (Brown and Levinson, 1978: 93). While some previous studies (Brown and Levinson, 1978; Holmes, 1995; Mills, 2003; Watts, 2005) have investigated the function of politeness, others (Pearson, 1988; Holmes and Stubbe, 2003; Yeung, 2003; Chew, 2011) have discussed some of the factors that had an impact on politeness.

Politeness is based on a person's evaluation of a specific behaviour or situation. Spencer-Oatey (2005: 97) claimed that there is no behaviour that is inherently polite, politic or impolite, but rather it is "the subjective judgment" of people that they "attach to behaviour." Apart from people's evaluation of behaviour, there are other factors that influence the use of politeness, including social distance and power, context and pragmatic transfer, each of which will be discussed in the following.

Firstly, social distance influences the choice of politeness strategy used in an utterance. Waldvogel (2007: 468) described social distance as the degree to which both interlocutors know each other, either personally or professionally. Social distance is conveyed differently from one culture to another according to the level of social distance between interlocutors. Negative politeness is employed more in relationships with higher social distance, whereas positive politeness is expressed more between friends (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003: 14). Thus, negative politeness shows distance and inequality in power (ibid.: 18). For example, in Vietnam, being polite to a friend conveys

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[2] Positive and negative politeness are the types of politeness that satisfy and are associated with the positive and negative face needs, respectively (see Section 2.5 for the definitions of positive and negative face).

insincerity in interpersonal communication (Chew, 2011: 214). In western societies, strangers and superiors are treated in the same way and positive politeness conveys solidarity and equality in interpersonal relationships (ibid. 18). In some studies that examined the relationship between power and face in the workplace (Pearson, 1988: 68-93; Yeung, 2003: 47-63), people in a higher hierarchical level were found to be aware of the necessity of attending to their subordinate's face and mitigating the FTAs through employing different politeness strategies. Nonetheless, "subordinates can be treated impolitely with impunity – interrupted, talked over, ignored and even subtly insulted" (Holmes, 1995: 19). Holmes and Stubbe (2003: 5) found that, although power might offer people the right to be coercive, the majority of workplace interactions tended to convey politeness, respect and take into account others' feelings and face wants. In contrast, in down-up interactions, "it is self-evidently in the interests of a subordinate to express themselves politely or with deference to a superior" (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003: 5). Formal contexts are characterised by the higher use of negative politeness strategies compared to contexts with less formal situations (Holmes, 1995: 20). There is also a stereotypical view of women being linguistically co-operative and avoiding conflicts, and that their language use may reflect that women are more powerless (ibid.), not only in workplace contexts, but in other contexts as well.

The context also plays a key role in determining appropriateness and the degree of politeness in a particular utterance (Holmes, 1995; Mills, 2003; Watts, 2003; Locher, 2004; Hossjer, 2013). Instead, politeness is viewed as a "situationally-adapted strategy" which is affected by contextual situations, for example, email communication in a workplace environment within a "community of practice[3]" (Hossjer, 2013: 630). While interacting, people tend to "adapt their politeness behaviour to the external situation" (ibid.). Holmes (1995: 10) claimed that it is not possible to judge whether an utterance

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[3] A community of practice takes place in social contexts when a group of people who share a common goal interact to learn how to do something or how to perform an act or task better.

is appropriate or not in isolation as "[t]here is nothing intrinsically polite about any linguistic form." Similarly, Locher (2004: 91) claimed that it is not possible to explore politeness without taking into consideration the context, the speaker, the situation and the "evoked norms". She (ibid.) also pointed out that politeness is judged in a norm-based approach by the speaker and the addressee. Through contextualising quoted extracts, a researcher is able to "modify" the evaluations "of whether, the participants are being 'rude', 'polite', 'hypocritical' or whatever" (Watts, 2003: 3). Likewise, Mills (2003, 245) emphasised the importance of taking into account the context when analysing politeness. According to her, "Politeness cannot be seen as simply 'nice' or 'deferent' behaviour towards others, but should be seen as a wide-ranging set of behaviours which individuals view differently depending on the context and interactions" (Mills, 2003: 245).

In addition to the previous factors that determine the use, choice and perception of politeness, pragmatic transfer also has an impact. "Pragmatic transfer" is a term that has been extensively used in studying inter-language pragmatics (Leech, 2014: 263) and which is relevant to the field of politeness. Leech (2014: 263) explained the term as a "phenomenon whereby the learners transfer features of the L1 to the L2." Leech (ibid.) distinguished between "positive transfer", which does not cause any problem, as both languages have the same characteristics, and "negative transfer", which arises from the variation in properties between the speaker's first language (L1 here and henceforth) and the speaker's second language (L2 here and henceforth) and leads to failure in attaining pragmatic competence.

Finally, while some scholars have attempted to define what politeness is, others have attempted to explain how it is acquired. According to Watts (2003: 110) "politeness is not something we are born with, but something we have to learn and be socialised into, and no generation has been short of teachers and handbooks on etiquette (see the definition of etiquette earlier in this section) and 'correct behaviour' to help us acquire polite skills.". This suggests that a number of external factors (such as family, teachers and books) might play a role in promoting politeness and helping in acquiring polite

skills, which is beyond the scope of the current study. Having looked at some of the previous studies and definitions of politeness, it is clear that some of these definitions (e.g., Locher, 2004: 91) associated politeness with face. In Section 2.5, face and identity will be discussed. I move now to a discussion of politeness from the perspective of the participants in this study.

2.3 Definitions of Politeness by the Participants in this Study

An interview (see Section 3.6.2 for further details of the interviews) was conducted with eight participants to elicit their views and to have an in-depth understanding of politeness phenomena. Many of the aspects that have been observed in previous definitions on politeness were also reported by some of the participants in their interview comments. From the participants' points of view, politeness is centred on showing concern to the addressee's face and by taking the interlocutor's feelings into consideration, as demonstrated in Holmes (1995: 4) and Locher' (2004: 91) definitions (as stated earlier).

التأدب مراعاة شعور الآخرين

Politeness is caring about others' feelings

Politeness is caring about the feelings of others (ML2[4])

Some of the interview participants implicitly linked politeness to the avoidance of causing any possible Face-Threatening Acts[5] (FTAs here and henceforth) to the hearer.

أنك ما تهيني أحد

that you don't insult anyone

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[4] *M* refers to male, *L* to lecturers and the number 2 is a substitute of the name of a participant who was interviewed in this study so as to ensure the person's anonymity.

[5] A Face-Threatening Act is an act that affects the interlocutor's face wants and challenges it by causing loss or damage to it. Mill (2003: 58) defined an FTA as "a threat to a person's face."

(Politeness is) not insulting anyone (FS1)

Similarly, another participant described politeness in terms of the avoidance of causing FTA, i.e., offence.

Being polite with people and not offending them (MS1[6])

In the interview data, politeness was thought to be the ability to have self-control when interacting with others, regardless of their behaviour.

انك مهما كان ردة الفعل اللي قدامك مثلا غير لائقة تحاولي تتحكمي في نفسك

That you, whatever the reaction in front of you was, for example, inappropriate, you try to control yourself

(Politeness is) controlling oneself, regardless of the interlocutor's reaction (FL2)

A generic perception about politeness in this study was that it is the use of good manners, as illustrated by FS2:

Politeness تفعيل الأخلاق من خلال التعامل مع الناس و التواصل الأخلاق الحسنة الكلمات الجيدة التواصل

Politeness is activating manners through treating people and communicating good manners, good words and communication

Politeness is demonstrating good manners through using good words and behaviour when communicating with people (FS2)

This perception is in line with Brown's (1980: 114) definition of politeness (given in Section 2.2.1) that politeness is a "special way of treating people." It also lends support to Blum-Kulka's (1992: 260) description of politeness (stated earlier) as a "diplomatic

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[6] This interview extract was originally given in English. For other extracts that were originally spoken in Arabic, these are presented in Arabic and subsequently translated into English. An additional idiomatic layer is also provided at the end.

way of getting things." Likewise, perception of politeness was sometimes narrowed down to being tactful and using etiquette (as the following interview extract shows):

Use of good manners والـgood etiquette مع الناس سواء وجها لوجه أو كتابة أو اي شيء

Politeness is the use of etiquette and good manners with people, either face-to-face or writing, or any other means

Politeness is the use of etiquette and good manners with people, either face-to-face or in writing, or by any other means   (ML1)

This link between politeness and etiquette was also mentioned in Watts' (2003: 110) description of how politeness is acquired.

In the Saudi context, politeness was sometimes connected to respect, as demonstrated by Holmes (1995: 4). One interview participant described politeness as:

يعني الكلام بطريقة مهذبة فيها احترام

It means talking in a polite way, with respect

Using respect when talking to others   (MS2)

All the above definitions of politeness suggest that, in a Saudi context, politeness can stand for showing tactfulness, using good manners and etiquette when interacting with other people, and maintaining self-control with the interlocutor, regardless of his/her behaviour. Politeness might project respect and deference, which is more expected in messages addressed upward, for example, from a student to a lecturer (see Chapter 5).

2.4 **Politeness Theorists**

Having shed light on definitions of politeness, I will now move on to theories. Politeness is a topic that has interested linguists for the last 40 years. According to Watts (2003: 63), the two most common approaches in empirical work on linguistic politeness were Brown and Levinson's and Leech's approaches. In this section, I will discuss some of the theorists who contributed to the first-wave approach (pre-2000 theories). I will start by discussing two early studies that influenced later work (neither of which are the focus

of the current study), namely Lakoff (1973; 1975; 1977) and Leech (1977; 1980; 1983), both of which drew on Grice (1975). I will devote the rest of the discussion to Brown and Levinson (1976), who initiated the first-wave of contemporary research and whose theory was widely influential. In this study, I will focus on Brown and Levinson (1976) because it is more useful for my work, especially since it takes into consideration the interactants' face needs (see Section 2.5 for more discussion about face). I will also discuss some of the other scholars' critiques of Brown and Levinson's (1978; 1987) work. After discussing the theorists of the first-wave approach, I will then move to discuss some of the important theorists in the second-wave approach.

2.4.1 Theorists of the First-wave Approach

Lakoff

Lakoff (1973) started investigating politeness from a pragmatic approach by, according to Leech (2014: 33), "taking a broadly Gricean perspective." Lakoff argued that politeness is normally more important than clarity in order to promote inter-personal relationships and to build rapport between people (Lakoff, 1973: 297-298). She (1973) also proposed some rules for pragmatic competence:

1. Be clear
2. Be polite

Based on these rules, there is always a need for an appropriate balance between clarity and politeness in interactions to avoid any breakdown in communication (ibid.). She (1973:297-298) also suggested three sub-rules (sub-maxims):

1. Don't impose
2. Give options
3. Make the interlocutor feel good

Her proposed sub-rules above highlight the importance of using negative politeness to minimise any imposition and to respect the interlocutor's right to have the choice, all of which have a positive impact on the interlocutor and lead to a successful communication.

In more recent work, Lakoff (2005: 30) explored politeness in American culture and argued that it is shifting from a respect-based culture to a more camaraderie-based culture. This means that American culture is no longer a negative politeness culture, but, rather, has become a positive politeness culture. Despite her insight and contribution to the field of politeness, Lackoff is, however, American-focused. In the following section, I will look at some similar ideas, but from a British perspective.

Leech

Leech (1977), like Lakoff (2005), also drew on Grice's (1975) pragmatic view on politeness. In the field of politeness, Leech's (1983) theory of politeness remains influential. According to Leech (1983: 131), politeness "concerns a relationship between two participants whom we may call self and other." His perspective of politeness is centred on conflict-avoidance, which is conveyed by a set of maxims (ibid.). Leech (1983: 132) proposed six maxims of politeness which help in promoting linguistic behaviour and in being attributed as polite:

1. Tact maxim: aims to "minimize cost to other" and "maximize benefit to other."
2. Generosity maxim: aims to "minimize benefit to self" and "maximize cost to self."
3. Approbation maxim: aims to "minimize dispraise of other" and "maximize praise of other."
4. Modesty maxim: aims to "minimize praise of self" and "maximize dispraise of self."
5. Agreement maxim: aims to "minimize disagreement between self and other" and "maximize agreement between self and other."
6. Sympathy maxim: aims to "minimize antipathy between self and other" *and* "maximize sympathy between self and other."

Both Lakoff (1973) and Leech (1977; 1983) considered politeness in terms of principles, rules and Gricean (1975) maxims, which are not the focus of my study. Other scholars in the field, e.g., Brown and Levinson (1978) were much more focused on face and strategies to mitigate FTAs (see Section 1.2.2 for the definition) to the interlocutor's and, possibly, the speaker/writer's face, on which the current study is built. In the next

section, I will turn to Brown and Levinson to discuss their studies, as well as some of the other scholars' critiques of their work.

Brown and Levinson

Brown and Levinson's seminal work on politeness is a useful and influential resource to which various other studies in the field refer. Brown and Levinson's (1978) theory is centred on the notion of face (see Section 2.5 for the definition), which, they argued, was the main reason for politeness. Their politeness theory particularly drew on Goffman's (1967; 1974) conceptualisation of face or self-image (see Section 2.5). Brown and Levinson developed a model based on the Gricean (1975) foundation, but with a broader perspective on social behaviour, particularly the concept of face. The main focus of Brown and Levinson's theory is the notion of FTAs and the politeness strategies that mitigate them. Thus, their theory is known as a "face-saving" theory of politeness (Watts, 2003: 85). When an FTA needs to be performed, there is a choice of five major strategies, as suggested by Brown and Levinson (1978):

1. Bald-on-record strategy, without redress, but rather doing it in the most direct way.

2. Positive politeness strategy is focused on the hearer's positive face which is "the positive self-image that he claims for himself" (Brown and Levinson, 1978: 70).

3. Negative politeness strategy is focused on "partially satisfying (redressing)*" the hearer's negative face,* "his basic want to maintain claims of territory and self-determination" (ibid.).

4. Off-record strategy is an indirect way that helps the speaker to avoid the "inescapable accountability, the responsibility for his action that on-record strategies entail" (Brown and Levinson, 1978: 70).

5. Not to do the FTA.

Many linguistic studies drew on Brown and Levinson's (1978; 1987) theory of politeness (Kummer, 1992; Herring, 1994; Spencer-Oatey, 2000; Mills and Mullany, 2011; Bella and Sifianou, 2012). Despite the popularity of Brown and Levinson's (1978; 1987) theory of politeness and the benefits offered by it, however, this seminal work

has been challenged and criticised by a number of scholars, including Matsumoto, 1988; Ide, 1989; Mao, 1994; Fraser, 2004; Locher, 2004; Hossjer, 2013 and Mills, 2003. Matsumoto (1988) criticised Brown and Levinson's model for ignoring the social perception of face and for exaggerating the concept of the individual's freedom and autonomy. Brown and Levinson's model has also been criticised for ignoring the "wider linguistic context" which is essential for interpreting the pragmatic meaning, and focusing instead on "isolated speech acts" (Hossjer, 2013: 616). Locher (2004: 68) pointed out that one drawback with Brown and Levinson's (1978; 1987) framework is that it considered indirectness as a key concept that defines politeness. Although Brown and Levinson mentioned the speaker and hearer in their framework, the focus in their analysis was only paid to the hearer when they become speakers (Mills, 2003: 89). Thus, their work is more speaker-oriented. Mills (ibid.: 90) also argued that Brown and Levinson's (1978) interpretations of results assume that the meaning of polite or impolite acts is easy to identify. Mills (2003: 116) argued that the "idealized nature " of Brown and Levinson's model resulted in difficulties of handling politeness as "a form of assessment behaviour" (that is polite or impolite) in authentic conversations. Mills (2002: 78) also challenged Brown and Levinson's framework for not being able to help with analysing politeness "beyond the level of the sentence." Despite all of these criticisms of their model, Brown and Levinson's names have become associated with the field of "politeness" (Eelen, 2001: 3).

Lakoff, Leech, and Brown and Levinson's were all substantial works performed by important scholars in the first-wave approach, within which the focus was mainly on speakers' utterances and maxims (Fukushima, 2015: 262). Kadar and Haugh (2013: 10) described the first-wave approach as a research approach that was oriented towards modelling politeness on a quite abstract theoretical level. Following the scholarly studies on politeness in the first-wave approach (discussed earlier), within which the focus was "based on rules, maxims or strategies" (Fukushima, 2015), postmodern politeness

theoretical studies and scholars, or what is known as discursive[7] (cf. Mills, 2011: 27) trends, emerged.

2.4.2 Theorists of the Second-wave Approach

This trend in politeness work was established by Eelen (2001), Mills (2003), Watts (2003), Locher and Watts, 2005 and Kadar and Mills (2011), who formed the second-wave approach to politeness. The focus in this second-wave approach is on both speaker and hearer and, thus, the interaction and any relationships between them (Fukushima, 2015: 262). It is, therefore, "discourse oriented" (ibid.). Many of the scholars who contributed to this trend emphasised the importance of contextualisation in analysing politeness and warned against considering the phenomenon in isolation. The postmodern turn particularly emphasised the importance of gaining a first-order politeness perspective (see Section 2.8) as well as taking into consideration contextual factors when analysing politeness, which is a matter that many of the earlier scholars seem to have ignored (e.g. Brown and Levinson). A number of the theorists who initiated the second-wave approach will be discussed briefly below.

Spencer-Oatey:

Spencer-Oatey (2000) reviewed and adapted Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework of face and proposed a sociopragmatic framework that extends the field of politeness to cover rapport management. Spencer-Oatey's model also functions to conceptualise face (see Section 2.5) and rapport (see Section 2.7). In her model, Spencer-Oatey distinguished between two types of face: quality face[8] (which is labelled by Brown and

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[7] *Discursive* is related to discourse that includes different topics that have a lot of detail. Discursive approaches to politeness are often context-dependent, focused on interactants' perception about politeness and impoliteness through conducting interviews about linguistic choices that may convey politeness or impoliteness in an interaction (Mills, 2015: 187, 188). However, the discursive approach has been critiqued for not taking into consideration individual linguistic features.

[8] Other scholars have worked on these types of face, such as Leech (2014: 40) who defined quality face as "the value we claim for ourself in terms of personal qualities such as abilities and appearance, and is closely related to self-esteem" and identity face as "the value we claim for ourself in terms of social role."

Levinson as positive face) and identity face (see Section 2.5 for more details). The quality face represents a personal perspective, whereas the identity face conveys a social perspective.

Watts

Watts (1989; 1992; 2003) is a postmodernist theorist who took a discoursal approach to politeness and differentiated between first-order politeness and second-order politeness (see Section 2.8 for the definitions). Watts argued (2003) that first-order politeness should be adopted in politeness research. Watts (1989; 1992; 2003) also drew another well-known distinction between (im)politeness and politic behaviour (as discussed in Section 2.2). According to Watts (2003: 19), politic behaviour is the "linguistic behavior which is perceived to be appropriate to the social constraints of the ongoing interaction, i.e., as non-salient."

Mills

Mills (2002; 2003) is a post-modern theorist who aimed to combine recent theoretical work on gender (obtained from feminist linguistics) with new theories on linguistic politeness. She argued that, on an analytical level of politeness, it is important that politeness is seen as occurring over long stretches of talk and within a "community of practice" context, instead of as produced by individual speakers (Mills, 2002: 69). Mills (2002: 85) contested the view that all women differ in the way they speak to men, and she called for a higher complexity in the analysis of gender by moving from the sentence level to the level of discourse.

Thus, many theorists have contributed to the field of politeness, either in the first-wave approach, where focus was on the speaker, or in the second-wave approach that took both the speaker and hearer into account. I will draw on a number of these theorists in the following sections on face and identity, rapport management, first and second-order politeness, speech-act theory, gender/sex and politeness.

2.5 **Face and Identity**

Goffman (1967: 5) defined face as:

> The positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delivered in terms of approved social attributes – albeit an image that others may share, as when a person makes a good showing for his profession or religion by making a good showing for himself (Goffman, 1967: 5).

Goffman's (1967: 5) definition above describes face as the image that a person creates for themselves in public and which is aimed to be perceived as attractive, appreciated and positive by others. This face may convey different types of identities for a person and may vary from one situation and context to another. Brown and Levinson's (1978: 61) assumptions of face were based on Goffman's (1967) notion of face that is associated with "losing face", which conveys embarrassment and humiliation. Face was described by Brown and Levinson (1976: 61) as "something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended in interaction." Brown and Levinson (1987: 62) then defined face as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself." According to Brown and Levinson (1987: 62), face consists of two needs, which are positive and negative (reproduced verbatim):

> Negative face: "the want of every 'competent adult member' that his actions be unimpeded by others."

> Positive face: "the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others."

Based on Brown and Levinson's (1987: 60) description of face, both the speaker and hearer share the interest to save each other's face, even when having to commit FTAs that threaten face intrinsically. The speaker may redress the FTA using a strategy, for example, mitigating devices according to the expected loss of face. These descriptions of face pinpoint the main focus of Brown and Levinson's theory (1978) which is on FTAs

and adopting the appropriate politeness strategies to mitigate these threats or minimise their force.

In many politeness studies, the notion of face is related to other concepts such as identity, reputation and many other contextual factors and social variables, for example, social distance, status and direction of communication. This study is interested in exploring politeness and rapport management strategies in terms of sex (see Section 2.10 for the definition of sex) and the academic role (student/lecturer) of participants in the Saudi academic context, as it is exploring a mostly sex-segregated and potentially high distance context, i.e., higher education in Saudi Arabia (see Section 1.3 for the context of higher education in Saudi Arabia). Therefore, identity is an important element that needs to be taken into account. The concept of face refers to a personal self-image, which makes it associated with "status or prestige" (Watts et al., 1992: 9) and, in consequence, suggests a link between face and identity. Apart from conveying concern for face, through politeness a person might create at least one (desired) identity for themselves. Bauman (2000: 1) defined identity as:

> the situated outcome of a rhetorical and interpretive process in which interactants make situationally motivated selections from socially constituted repertoires of identificational and affiliational resources and craft these semiotic resources into identity claims for presentation to others.

In the current study, participants were explored in terms of their sex and role identity, as will be examined in the analysis in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7. Based on Erickson (2001: 160), Holmes and Stubbe (2001: 11) claimed that "interaction and identity construction are dynamic interactional processes where meanings and interactions are jointly and progressively negotiated between the individuals involved in a given interaction." Mills and Mullany (1011: 43) argued that some situational and contextual aspects influence the individual's identity and linguistic choice. Facework is, therefore, an important aspect to consider, particularly when investigating relationships and interactions.

There is a link between face and politeness. The concept of face was introduced in 1955 by Goffman. Then, it was associated with politeness, but it has since been claimed to be the base upon which politeness was built, and was thus expanded in 1978 in Brown and Levinson's seminal work on politeness. Some scholars in the field later explored face in relation to impoliteness (e.g., Culpeper, 1996; Bousfield, 2008). Others have investigated the notion of face in relation to rapport management (e.g., Spencer-Oatey, 2005). Face was sometimes examined in terms of its link to identity (Blitvich, 2013), which, thus, enabled the field "to move forward rather than backward" (Blitvich, 2013: 8). Blivich (ibid.) specifically argued that, in order to explore face, it is important to take identity into account. In a study that investigated linguistic research to find how editors can balance clarity and politeness when interacting with native and non-native speakers, Mackiewicz and Riley (2002: 84) pointed out that to be polite is to fulfil and meet both "the negative and positive face needs of the people with whom we interact." In contrast, Locher (2004: 51) suggested substituting the term facework with "relational work" in order to show that at least two interactants are involved. Thus, politeness was linked to face, and it was sometimes examined in terms of directness and indirectness, as will be discussed in the next section.

2.6 Directness and Indirectness

Politeness was also explored in terms of some other aspects, for example, indirectness and respect. Politeness has been often associated with indirectness (Brown and Levinson, 1978: 56-289). Indirectness occurs when "the syntactic form does not match the illocutionary force" (Lam, 2011: 363) and indirect illocutions are considered more polite for the level of optionality they offer (Leech, 1983: 108). Indirectness plays an important role in establishing relationships and rapport between people (Lam, 2011: 364), while, in contrast, directness is described linguistically as "when the syntactic form of the speech act matches the illocutionary force, or underlying intention, of the speech act" (ibid.). Based on Mills' (2003: 141) review of previous literature, directness is considered to be intrinsically face-threatening. Kummer (1992: 326) found that, in English, politeness increases when the level of directness decreases. For instance, using

imperative forms of request, e.g. *Open the window,* is considered less polite in English compared to requesting indirectly using a modal verb, as in *Would you mind opening the window*? In contrast, Arab speakers of English were considered to be very direct and rude (Hamza, 2007) since they employ very direct forms, e.g., commands, which, in most dialectal varieties of Arabic, convey solidarity. Holmes and Stubbe (2003: 33) explored the relationship between the direction of communication and the use of imperatives (which is perceived as direct) concerning the everyday tasks to subordinates in workplaces. They found that explicit and direct forms tended to be used when directed downwards (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003: 34) (for more details see Chapter 6 on requesting). Another study by Holmes (1995: 4) associated politeness with showing respect. According to her, in order for a person to be polite, he/she should convey respect to others and not offend them (ibid.). Although politeness was examined in terms of directness, it was also explored in terms of rapport, as will be discussed in the next section.

2.7 Rapport Management

Politeness is argued to be associated with harmonious/conflictual interpersonal relations, specifically with rapport management (Spencer-Oatey, 2000; 2002). Spencer-Oatey (2005: 96) described rapport as "the relative harmony and smoothness of relations between people", and involves "the management (or mismanagement) or relations between people" (Spencer-Oatey, 2005: 96). The notion of rapport enhancement started with the idea of camaraderie in the 1970s and subsequently began to expand and spread to other areas (Leech, 2014: 297).

Many previous studies that explored politeness in terms of face (e.g., Brown and Levinson, 1978) argued that face was an important component upon which politeness is based (i.e., Brown and Levinson, 1978) (see Section 2.5.) However, other studies treated face as just one element that constitutes rapport management and, thus, examined politeness in terms of rapport management (Spencer-Oatey, 2005: 96). Spencer-Oatey (2000: 12) differentiated between face management and the wider term of rapport management. According to her, "rapport management" shows more balance

between self and other, whereas "face" is just concerned with self (ibid.). Spencer-Oatey (2000: 13) also suggested that rapport management requires three main elements: the management of face, the management of sociality rights and obligations, and the management of interactional goals. She (2000: 32) distinguished between different types of rapport in terms of its orientations between people, which are paraphrased here:

- Rapport-enhancement orientation, which attempts to promote harmonious relations between people.
- Rapport-maintenance orientation, which attempts to maintain or protect harmonious relations.
- Rapport neglect orientation, which refers to the absence of concern and interest in the quality of relations possibly because attention was given to oneself.
- Rapport-challenge orientation, which seeks to weaken harmonious relations.

The notion of rapport seems to be implied in many politeness studies (e.g., Lakoff, 1973; Leech, 1983; Holmes, 1995) when describing the role of politeness in building or maintaining relationships and establishing solidarity in interpersonal communication. However, there is still a lack of studies (except by Spencer-Oatey, 2000; 2005) that discuss and explore rapport explicitly in terms of politeness. Thus, this study attempts to bridge this gap by exploring rapport and politeness in Saudi academic emails exchanged between students and lecturers. Based on my overview of previous studies on politeness, most of the politeness strategies/features considered in this thesis, i.e., email opening, thanking and email closing, are treated as rapport managing (particularly enhancing) strategies for promoting interpersonal relationships. On a few occasions in the current data, some forms of requesting and apologising were also considered to be rapport enhancing strategies (see Chapters 7 and 8). In this study, the writer's choices of linguistic forms and structures in an email message are occasionally referred to as *interactive style* in interpretations concerning politeness. The politeness phenomenon might be explored using a first or second-order (or both, as in the current study) politeness approach, which will be discussed in the next section.

2.8 **First and Second-Order Politeness**

Recent trends in politeness research have reviewed the concept of politeness and differentiated between first-order and second-order politeness (Watts, 1992; 2003). Watts et al. (1992: 3) described first-order politeness as "the various ways in which polite behaviour is perceived and talked about by members of socio-cultural groups." In contrast, second-order politeness is a "theoretical construct, a term within a theory of social behaviour and language usage" (Watts et al., 1992: 3). A first-order approach was also described as an approach that is "grounded in the participants' interpretations, while a second-order approach is grounded in that of the analysis" (Haugh, 2012: 123). Another first-order distinction of analysis was suggested by Mills (2009), who distinguished between politeness at the individual and social level. This first/second-order politeness differentiation was argued by Haugh (2012: 122) to resemble the emic-etic (see Section 3.2 for the definitions) distinction in anthropological linguistics as suggested by Pike (1967,) which, according to Haugh (2012:122), need to be differentiated. Mills (2003: 226) argued that there is a need to consider both hearers' and speakers' perspectives when analysing politeness, because "utterances may have a range of different interpretations." Having outlined the first and second-order politeness distinction (Watts et al., 1992) (see Section 2.4.2), Eelen (2001) reviewed and adapted the concept of politeness by renaming first and second-order politeness as politeness1 and politeness2. Eelen (2001) described politeness1 as a common sense politeness andpoliteness2 as a theoretical perspective.

Given the diversity of approaches to politeness research, determining which approach to adopt when exploring politeness is still quite controversial. Watts' (2003) view is that, when studying politeness, the focus should be on a first-order politeness approach. In contrast, for Leech (2014: 47), the focus should rather be on a second-order politeness approach. Similarly, Brown and Levinson's (1978; 1987) seminal work on politeness was focused primarily on a second-order politeness approach. In this study, both first and second-order politeness approaches were integrated by looking at the content of the emails and interviewing some of the participants who provided them (see

discussion in Chapter 3) in academic emails. This will help me to analyse particular aspects of politeness while taking into account participants' perspectives and, thus, to avoid decontextualisation and analysing utterances in isolation. Since this study focuses on exploring politeness strategies that occur in different speech acts, the next section in this study will introduce and discuss speech act theory.

2.9 Speech-Act Theory in Relation to Politeness

The term "*speech act*" is often linked linguistically to the field of pragmatics. To gain a better understanding of speech acts, it is essential to start by defining pragmatics. Pragmatics refers to "the study of meaning in relation to speech situations" (Leech, 1983: 6). Since pragmatics is concerned with the use of language to express meaning through words, speech-act theory falls under the umbrella of pragmatics.

Austin (1962), who introduced the term "speech acts", argued that speakers should be able to use words in a way that helps to express the intended meaning. This ensures that the intended meaning of an utterance is properly understood by the interlocutor and helps to avoid any misunderstanding that may result in miscommunication. Chailka (1994: 153) defined speech acts as "the ways people use language to manage the social interaction." Thus, the choice of linguistic form may indicate the speaker's/writer's attempt to manage rapport between people. For instance, using an indirect language or form when requesting may convey the speaker's concern for the interlocutor's face compared to using an imperative form of requesting (see Chapter 6 on requesting). Chailka's (1994: 153) definition will be followed in this study as it highlights the key function that a speech act plays in managing rapport in interpersonal interactions. Since they offer an important explanation for the functions of utterances, speech acts have become a key resource for exploring language usage.

During the last few decades, numerous studies have explored language, linguistic use and choice in speech acts (Cohen and Olshtain, 1981; Wolfson, 1981; Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984; Brown and Levinson, 1987). Brown and Levinson (1987), for instance, explored FTAs in terms of speech acts, for example, requests and offers. Blum-

Kulka and Olshtain (1984), who focused on inter-cultural pragmatics, found that speech acts' perceptions of politeness may vary from one culture to another. Thus, speech acts that are perceived to be polite in one culture may be impolite in a different culture. Speech-act theory differentiates between three acts in every utterance:

- Locutionary act: the literal meaning of an utterance; e.g., *I forgot to bring my pen.*
- Illocutionary act: the intended meaning of an utterance; e.g., in the example above, the intended meaning is that the speaker is asking indirectly to borrow a pen.
- Perlocutionary act: the effect of an utterance on its audience; e.g., if the hearer gave the speaker a pen, then this is the perlocutionary force of the utterance.

(Brown et al., 2014: 84)

Thus, speech acts remain an important area for politeness studies. However, their theory has been criticised by a number of scholars (Scollon and Scollon, 1995; Eelen, 2001; Masaki, 2004). For example, Searle's (1969) speech-act theory has been criticised for its speaker-centeredness: it does not pay attention to the hearer in an interaction (Eelen, 2001: 114; Masaki, 2004: 34). In contrast, in a sociolinguistic approach, the focus is more on the interconnection between the product (which, in this study, is the speaker) and the social context (which, in this study, includes the hearer) in which it has been produced, rather than focusing on isolated, abstract products (Eelen, 2001: 114). Despite the fact that the listener is mentioned in speech-act theory, they are treated as "an object that is supposed to respond to Ss (Speakers') utterances like a machine, not a subject like the speaker", so the explanation of intention is based on the "speaker-centered view of meaning" (ibid.). According to Masaki (2004: 39), "the speaker-centred speech act theory cannot capture the complexity of the speech act in dialogical communication" because an illocutionary act can have different meanings to the listener, regardless of what the speaker's intention may be. In speech-act theory, it is assumed that "perfect communication is the norm" (Mills, 2003: 41), whereas, in practice, misunderstanding can happen frequently, and is argued by Scollon and Scollon (1995) to be a definite characteristic in conversations, whether cross-cultural or general.

Speech acts have been associated with face-threatening acts, such as requests, offers, compliments and criticism, which have been argued by Brown and Levinson (1987) to be inherently FTAs for imposing on the hearer and affecting freedom of choice. However, (as explained earlier in this section) perceptions of speech acts vary from one culture to another. For example, in China, speech acts such as requests, offers and criticism are not considered face-threatening and imposing as they are in Britain and Greece (Watts, 2003: 15). Some of the politeness studies (e.g., Holmes, 1995) were interested in exploring whether particular politeness features and strategies were affected by people's sex, which will be discussed in the following section.

2.10 Gender/sex and Politeness

Studies on language and gender have been shaped by a sequence of feminist "waves". The First Wave developed in the UK and USA in the twentieth century and involved the Suffragette movement (Baker, 2008: 32; Mills and Mullany, 2011: 14). The Second Wave, also known as "the modern approach", took place in the 1970s and the focus was on the difference between men and women in their language use, and why this difference occurred (Mullany and Mills, 2011: 14). The focus of the Second Wave was particularly on white, middle-class heterosexual women in western contexts, and it viewed the language of women as the language of a subordinated group (Mills, 2008: 22). The Third Wave is referred to as "the post-modern approach" to feminism and developed in the 1990s, focusing on gender as well as "other relevant identity variables" (Mullany and Mills, 2011: 15). This Third Wave focused on sexual and gender diversity and was interested in exploring differences within the group, and "challenged the homogeneity of women as a group [by] focusing instead on localized studies" (Mills, 2008: 122). Thus, recent studies on language and gender have explored differences among women and among men rather than differences between them (Swann, 2002: 44). This within-group distinction will be relevant to my work, since I will focus on differences in roles (students versus lecturers) within groups of men as well as within groups of women.

The terms *gender* and *sex* were used interchangeably until the 1970s; however, with the rise of feminist writers in the 1980s, the term *gender* started to refer to

"socially-constructed traits", while sex referred to "a person's 'born' biological status" (Baker, 2008: 4). According to Baker (2008: 4) sex is defined as "the biological distinction between males and females", whereas gender refers to "differences between male and female behaviour that are agreed on by members of a particular society" (Baker, 2008: 3-4). Similarly, a sex-gender distinction was also made by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003: 2), who defined sex as "a biological categorization based primarily on reproductive potential", whereas gender is "the social elaboration of biological sex." Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (ibid.) claimed that "gender builds on biological sex, but it exaggerates biological difference into domains in which it is completely irrelevant." They also argued that, although the term sex is quite straightforward and binary to define, gender is more "malleable, subject to change across societies and within individuals" (Baker, 2008: 5).

In this study, I focus on a university context where women and men are culturally segregated from each other (see Section 1.3 for more information); this segregation is on the basis of biological sex. Therefore, to reflect the culture that I am examining, I am also using a binary way of conceptualising the biological sex of the writer of emails. Therefore, the current study does not explore politeness in terms of gender, but rather in terms of sex,[9] i.e., males versus females. Nevertheless, the current study goes further to explore within groups of men and women, i.e., male lecturers, male students, female lecturers and female students.

Much previous linguistic and pragmatic work in the field has been devoted to politeness (including the lack of it) and gender/sex differences in politeness behaviour (Tannen, 1990; 1991; Herring, 1994; Holmes, 1995; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003; Holmes and Stubbe, 2003; Mills, 2003; Herring and Paolillo, 2006; Planchenault, 2009;

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[9] In terms of identifying the sex of the participants (whether male or female), in this study, I relied on what they recorded on the consent form that were given to them to sign at an initial stage of the study.

Mills and Mullany, 2011; Herring et al., 2013). A number of these studies particularly compared and contrasted men and women in terms of the politeness strategies, attitude and communicative style they used in interacting with others.

Some of the politeness studies (e.g., Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003; Planchenault, 2009) reported that women were more polite than men. One common stereotypical representation of women's identity in a western context includes showing women as "being nice, supportive and cooperative" and men as "competitive and aggressive" (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003; Planchenault, 2009). In Holmes' (1995: 2) study, New Zealand women were reported to be more verbally polite than New Zealand men. Women were said to aim through communication to socialise with others, as well as to "establish, nurture and develop personal relationships." It was also claimed that women tend to convey rapport and friendliness and are, therefore, inclined to positive politeness strategy more than men (Holmes, 1995: 6). Women were also inclined more to "rapport talk" (Tannen, 1990; 1991). In another study, women's messages were found to be more supportive, conveyed more agreement, apologised and hedged more (Herring, 1992, 1993). Herring (1994: 283) observed that women express "more overtly polite behaviours" compared to men and argued that this is conveyed through the use of both positive politeness (being supportive, agreeing) and negative politeness (apologising, showing hesitation). However, in a study that compared users' behaviour in internet discussion groups with an assessment of appropriateness in informants' responses to a survey on net etiquette, Herring (1994: 291) found that women seemed to be more inclined to positive politeness.

Men, in contrast, have been reported to employ language as "a tool for obtaining and conveying information" (Holmes, 1995: 1). It has been claimed that they are less inclined towards "report" talk (Tannen, 1990; 1991) and that their messages tend to be adversarial in nature and are sent more frequently than by women (Herring, 1992; 1993). Men have also been reported to be inclined to negative politeness (Herring, 1994: 291).

However, these generalisations about the attitudes/behaviours of women and men concerning politeness have been criticised by more recent scholars. Mills (2003), for example, argued that politeness is already gendered, since it is linked to the stereotypical level of middle-class white women. The difference in gender in relation to politeness might be caused by the language itself, for example, in the "asymmetry of the titles Miss. and Mrs. in relation to Mr.", since this conveys the level of importance society places on "women's marital status" compared to men (Talbot, 2010: 15). Generalisations have been challenged by some other scholars in the field (Mills, 2003: 169; Mills and Mullany, 2011: 47) who have warned against generalising particular behaviours, especially those that are gender-oriented. Mills (2003: 169) argued that gender, rather than being viewed as "binary oppositions" that generalise certain behaviours to all men or all women, should be viewed as some groups of women or men in some specific situations or contexts. This study attempts to avoid generalisations about any politeness behaviour and strategies and the findings are restricted to the participants in this study only. Further future studies may help in generalising findings. While politeness was previously explored in terms of gender/sex differences, it was sometimes examined in computer-mediated communication, as will be discussed in the next section.

2.11 Politeness in Online Contexts

Computer mediated communication (CMC here and henceforth) has been defined as a "communication that takes place between human beings via the instrumentality of computers" (Herring, 1996: 1). CMC plays a key role in social relationships by promoting individual participation (Kollock and Smith, 2013: 109). CMC is an interesting means of exploring politeness, since it can be used to investigate how language is used "creatively to meet the technological challenges and to exploit them" (Locher, 2010: 1).

The politeness phenomenon has been extensively investigated in CMC (Herring, 1994; Bloch, 2002; Herring and Paolillo, 2006; Graham, 2007; Darics, 2010; Haugh, 2010; Upadhyay, 2010; Shuang-Shang, 2010; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Lam, 2011; Bella and Sifianou, 2012; Das and Herring, 2016). A number of these previous studies on

politeness in CMC specifically focused on examining email messages (Bloch, 2002; Graham, 2007; Darics, 2010; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Lam, 2011; Bella and Sifianou, 2012).

Despite the substantial body of work on politeness in CMC, there is still a lack of sufficient work on politeness strategies in CMC (Herring, 2007; Haugh, 2010: 8; Locher, 2010: 3; Shuang-Shung, 2010: 92). Moreover, previous studies of student-lecturer interaction have only examined politeness aspects and strategies in students' interactions, particularly in email messages written by students (Bloch, 2002; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Lam, 2011) and have not looked at lecturers' roles in those interactions (except Haugh, 2010). Thus, there is a lack of studies that explore politeness in both students and lecturers' interactions. Exploring student-lecturer interactions in emails, particularly, is an expanding area of study (Bloch, 2002; Merrison et al., 2012). In this study, I address this research gap by investigating politeness strategies in CMC, particularly, in emails exchanged between students and lecturers in a Saudi academic context.

A salient stereotype about CMC is that men tend to focus primarily on the "exchange of information", whereas women's purpose for exchanging emails is "to promote and maintain interpersonal relationships" (Herring, 2013: 81). When analysing publicly-posted messages to two internet mailing lists, Herring (2013: 104) found that, in both lists, women's messages were inclined to be "aligned and supportive in orientation, while men's messages tend to oppose and criticise others." Women's interactive style in CMC has been claimed to establish solidarity and rapport (Herring, 2013: 104). In contrast, men, in Herring's study, tended to draw attention to themselves by having contests (ibid.).

In terms of email communication, Crystal (2001: 11) defined email as "the use of computer systems to transfer messages between users - now chiefly used to refer to messages sent between private mailboxes (as opposed to those posted to a chat group)." Email is a common type of CMC which dates from the 1970s. It was used mainly in governmental and business settings until the late 1980s, when it became more widely

popular with the advent of the Internet (Durscheid and Frehner, 2013: 36). It was considered a "letter-genre", because it included addressing the interlocutor, the body of the message and a farewell (Gunter and Wyss, 1996). Email is a common channel of communication that is influenced by "the linguistic mores of its users" (Crystal, 2001: 112); for example, whether an email is polite or impolite depends on the user's choice of linguistic form.

Despite the variety of types of CMC that have arisen more recently, email is still considered to be "the most important CMC application because it is the only one with which the average internet user is familiar" (Durscheid and Frehner, 2013: 35). Emails enable the exchange of text messages in a synchronous way when both interlocutors are using computers at the same time (Durscheid and Frehner, 2013: 44). The faster the response to an email, the more it resembles oral interactions and, thus, the less likely it is to include greeting formulae (Crystal, 2006: 44). Emails are used to send formal letters and greetings cards and for "rapid conversational exchanges" (Crystal, 2006: 112-114).

It is not straightforward to determine whether an email is considered a formal or informal medium. Crystal (2006: 132) argued that email is associated with informality compared to other means of traditional writings as, "because of its spontaneity, speed, privacy, and leisure value, emails offer the option of greater levels of informality" and that, with time, email usage will change, as it is "becoming apparent that it is not exclusively an informal medium, and received opinion is going to have to change." Crystal (2006: 112/133) further predicted an expansion in email's communicative role and purposes.

An email was also described as "an ideal tool for building and maintaining social relationships" (Baron, 1998: 155) because of the informality that it allows and the rapidity in exchanging the message in a convenient time and place. Skovholt and Svennevig (2013: 589) described a specific type of email, namely "workplace emails", as "the medium in which people carry out their daily professional activities and in which workers and business partners build and maintain professional and interpersonal relations." Baron's (1998: 155) and Skovholt and Svenneving's (2013: 589) definitions of

email pinpoint the role that it plays in building and maintaining relationships in social and workplace contexts. In this study, email is considered partially according to Skovholt and Svennevig's (2013: 589) definition, since the focus of the current study is on emails exchanged in a professional (university) context, for the lecturers at least. Students may also be considered "business partners" (ibid.), since today's universities are seeking investments, increasing their financial outcome and raising funds (e.g., through attracting more international students and through conducting projects). From a business perspective, students are considered stakeholders[10] (Simon-Uguru, 1991: 68) who are supposed to receive a good quality of service, which, as a minimum, meets their expectations.

The current study investigates emails exchanged between lecturers and students in Saudi universities. The rationale for choosing to focus on emails is that they do not require transcription (time saving); they are considered to be authentic data and are considered a common tool used in student-lecturer communication in the Saudi academic context.

Many of the functions and advantages of email that have been observed in the previous literature were also reported by my participants in this study. A number of participants thought that one main advantage of an email is the rapidity in delivering a message, which supports Crystal's (2006: 112-114) statement that emails are sent for "rapid conversational exchanges" purposes. According to them, using an email saves time, effort and cost:

> I think emails really help reduce the time, perhaps, for me print stuff and go hand it to my supervisor, for example. I think it's a quick way. It's also good for me when I have, you know, some kind of some ideas that I want to communicate to

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[10] Stakeholders are a group of parties who share an interest in something or share a business.

my supervisor, in which case I don't have to go to the university, his office, to ask him for a meeting or something; it's a quick way to do that.   (MS1[11])

It also allows exchanging information and messages in a convenient way. An email is often easily available and accessible, which helps in facilitating communications:

<div dir="rtl">فوائده أنه سهل و في كل مكان</div>

Advantages: it is easy and available everywhere   (FS1)

Lecturers also noted an additional advantage to emails and considered an email as a private and official communication tool that is documented and easily retrieved:

<div dir="rtl">الإيميل فيه خصوصية يعني مثلا ما أحد بيقدر يشوف إلا الشخص اللي بيفتح إيميله مو مثل الجوال مثلا بعدين الإيميل فيه إثبات يعني مثلا أي شي بتبعتيه بيكون مثبت أنك بعتيه</div>

An email has privacy, for example, no one can view it except the person who is opening his email, unlike a mobile, for example; then, the email has documentation, for example, anything you send is documented that you have sent it

An email has privacy, as no one can view it except the person who is checking their email, unlike a mobile, for example. An email is also documented, since anything that is sent is documented (FL2)

Thus, interview participants' comments lend support to what has been illustrated in previous work about the importance of emails in delivering messages rapidly and easily.

2.12 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how previous work associated politeness with directness (Brown and Levinson, 1978: 56-289). I will show later, in Chapter 6, how

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[11] The interview extracts by MS1 in this section was originally spoken in English.

requesting in the Saudi context is sometimes mitigated and formed indirectly. I have discussed, in this chapter, a number of theorists who contributed to the first and second wave and I focused on Brown and Levinson (1976), whose theory was used extensively. Other theorists (in the first and second wave) whose work is relevant to my analysis (in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7) were also discussed, e.g., Spencer-Oatey, Watts and Mills. In the current study, I will analyse my data using first and second-order politeness (Watts, 1992; 2003) and interpret my examples and findings in relation to rapport management (Spencer-Oatey, 2005). In this chapter, I have also demonstrated how gender and sex were treated differently in previous studies (McConnell-Ginet, 2003; Baker, 2008), where sex is biological and gender is performative. In this study, I will analyse my results in terms of the participants' biological sex, because the context under investigation is segregated according to men and women.

I have shown in this chapter how politeness research has shifted, from relying on the analyst's judgement of whether a term is polite or not (first-order politeness) to taking participants' perspective and context into account, which allows the researcher to have a better picture of the phenomenon under investigation (second-order politeness). I have demonstrated that previous studies of politeness used first-order politeness, second-order politeness, or combined both first and second-order politeness approaches. However, determining which approach to adopt when investigating politeness is still quite controversial. Leech (2014) called for a second-order politeness approach, whereas Watts (1993; 2003) argued for a first-order politeness approach. In this study, I have adopted a methodology of combining first and second-order politeness approaches to gain an in-depth understanding of politeness features employed in academic emails exchanged between students and lecturers in Saudi Arabia. In this study, these emails were analysed in terms of a number of politeness strategies, as will be seen in Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. The criteria that were used to collect and choose the email data, and the methods of data analysis, will be explained in the next chapter.

Chapter 3:   Data and Methods

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the methodological framework and research design used in the current study. In Section 3.2, the research paradigm has been introduced according to the research aims and questions. The research design and a brief summary of the pilot study carried out as part of the thesis will be discussed in Section 3.3. Section 3.4 describes the ethical considerations that were undertaken before collecting the data. The recruitment method and the participants of the current study will be discussed in Section 3.5. The data collection method for the emails and interviews have been discussed in Section 3.6. Section 3.7 describes the data analysis methods that have been employed in the current research. Finally, an overview of the email data has been described in Section 3.8.

3.2 Methodology and Approach

The main purpose of this study is to analyse the politeness strategies used in email correspondences between Saudi Arabian students and their tutors. The study is an exploratory sociolinguistic[12] analysis of the politeness strategies found in Saudi academic emails. In particular, the study attempts to identify and analyse the strategies which aim to indicate politeness, and to promote a level of rapport between the participants.

This study builds on the previous literature on speech acts and politeness to answer the following general research questions:

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[12] Figeroa (1992: 26) described sociolinguistics as "the study of utterances (spoken, written, signalled)". Sociolinguistics is basically concerned with language in social and cultural context, especially how people with different social identities (e.g. gender, age, race) speak and how their speech changes in different situations.

1. What politeness strategies were used in the emails sent by Saudi Arabian lecturers and students?
2. How does the use of politeness strategies vary according to the sex and role of the participants in the study?
3. How do the lecturers and students in a Saudi Arabian academic context perceive the rapport potential of the different politeness strategies as these occurred in the emails considered in this study?

In order to answer the aforementioned research questions, a mixed method research design was adopted. Since the concept of mixed method research design is "still in its infancy" (Dornyei, 2007: 45) and is relatively new in the field of social and human sciences, a brief definition of the approach follows.

Creswell (2003: 16) described mixed methods as a method "in which a researcher tends to base knowledge claims on pragmatic grounds" and allows for the use of the collected data either "simultaneously or sequentially" to gain an understanding of any research problems. Dornyei (2007: 44) suggested that a basic definition for the mixed methods approach is "some sort of combination of qualitative and quantitative methods within a single research project". Thus, a mixed methods approach allows for the researcher to blend and apply multiple research methods which will helps them to avoid any limitations that can arise from relying solely on one research method. In this study, the mixed methods approach consists of the quantitative data gained from the emails, and the qualitative data gained from the interviews. As is frequently the case with such a combination (see Dornyei 2007), the qualitative data is seen of as a follow-up to the quantitative data, providing a more in-depth examination of the phenomena that is under investigation.

A key benefit of adopting mixed methods is that through the combination of approaches, different perspectives on a dataset can be gained. For example, a quantitative analysis allows for the researcher to gain contextualising information about the frequency of patterns that are employed in a set of data, whereas a qualitative analysis provides in-depth knowledge about one specific feature of a larger dataset (Page et al., 2014: 53). A mixed methods approach helps to check how the data is

interpreted using a quantitative test, and how a phenomenon is perceived using a follow-up interview (ibid.). Creswell (2003: 210) explained that researchers employ mixed methods to "expand an understanding from one method to another, to gain coverage or confirm findings from different data sources". Echoing this view, Dornyei argued that mixed methods "can bring out the best of both paradigms" since the "strength of one method can be utilised to overcome the weaknesses of another method" (Dornyei, 2007: 45).

Due to the shift in the conceptualisation of politeness in terms of first-second order distinction, various methodological approaches towards its study have been used, both quantitative and qualitative (see Chapter 2). However, deciding which approach to select when exploring politeness is still quite controversial. As discussed in Section 2.6, some scholars (e.g. Watts, 1992, 2003) have argued that a first-order politeness approach should be used when investigating politeness, while in contrast, others (e.g. Leech, 2014 and Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987) have argued for a second-order politeness approach instead. Examples of previous pragmatic studies on politeness that have adopted a quantitative approach are Herring, 1994; Holmes and Schnurr, 2005; Herring and Paolillo, 2006 and Lam, 2011. A well-known study that adopted a qualitative approach is Graham, in 2007. There are also some (im)politeness studies that have adopted a mixed methods approach and thus combine a first and second order politeness approach. For example, Das and Herring (2016), Mills (2003) and Culpeper (2011). Das and Herring (2016) explored greetings exchanged in a social network using computer-mediated discourse analysis, face-to-face interviews and participant observations. Mills (2003) used audio recorded data, questionnaires and interviews. In contrast, Culpeper (2011) examined video-recordings and written texts, 100 informant reports, corpus data and a perception questionnaire.

This study follows on from the studies of (im)politeness by Mills, 2003; Culpeper, 2005 and Locher, 2008, and explores politeness in context. Both first and second order politeness approaches have been integrated so as to examine the various politeness features situated in emails exchanged between students and lecturers in an academic

context. This integration allows the analyst to take the participants' perspective into consideration, thus avoiding decontextualisation and analysing utterances in isolation.

The current research has adopted a relatively new politeness approach combining first and second order politeness (Watts, 2003) into a mixed methods approach, which allows the researcher to go beyond reliance on their judgment alone (as in second order politeness), and to take into account the participants' perception of the various politeness phenomena (as in first order politeness). This could also be described in terms of the emic-etic perspective(s). An *emic* perspective means the participants' insider perspective, which includes investigating the way that people "make sense of an activity (including their language practices), what it means to them and how it fits in with the rest of their lives" (Page et al., 2014: 108). In contrast, an *etic* perspective stands for the "*extrinsic concepts and categories imposed by the researcher*" (Buchstaller and Khattab, 2013: 76). The etic and emic perspectives are combined by using quantitative and qualitative analytic approaches together. In the current study, the choice of a mixed method approach is comparable to the kind of studies that Mills (2003) and Culpeper (2011) undertook (as mentioned earlier in this section). The relationship between the quantitative, etic-centred approach and the qualitative, participant-centred approach has been set out in Figure 3.1.

Phase 1

> **Quantitative Approach**
>
> Email data

Phase 2

> **Qualitative Approach**
>
> Interview data
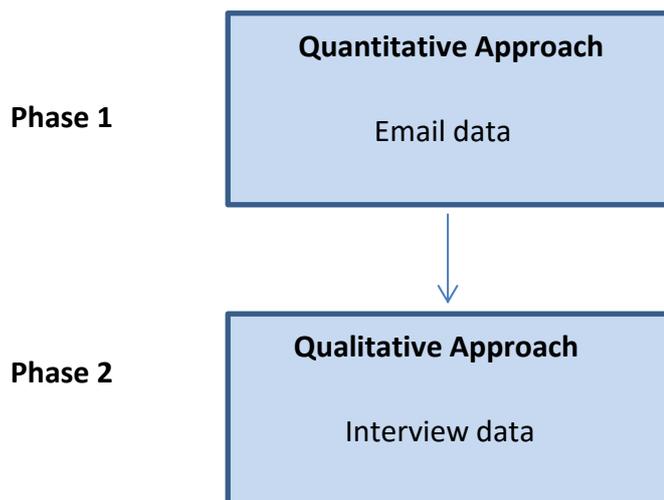
Figure 3-1: Exploratory Sequential Mixed Method Design adopted in the current research

The purpose of using both mixed methods and of using two-stages in sequence was to start off by obtaining the quantitative findings from the email sample, and then

to follow up the findings with semi-structured interviews[13] with the individual participants in order to obtain more in-depth "emic" data. (see Figure 3.1 above). In a sequential procedure such as this, the researcher has employed another method to elaborate on the findings of the first method (Creswell, 2003: 16). According to Creswell (ibid.), a researcher may start the study with a quantitative method to test a particular theory or phenomenon, and then follow it with a qualitative method to explore and elaborate on the phenomenon.

3.3 Research Design

According to Glesne and Peshkin (1991: 30), "the researcher should pilot their observations and interviews in situations and with people as close to the realities of the actual study as possible". Prior to the data collection for the present thesis, a pilot study was carried out on three people (who were not participants in the main part of the research). The main aim of the pilot study was to test the clarity and applicability of the research tools, particularly the data collection process used in relation to the quantitative email data, as well as the interview data.

The data collection method was first tested to check whether the participants understood what they were being asked to do, in order to participate in the study in the right way. This was an important step, especially because a program (Qualtrics) that was normally used for questionnaires was employed to collect the email data from the participants and to gain their initial consent. There was a need to check the efficiency of the link that would be sent to the participants, in order to ensure that they could easily access the right place, and that they could also understand the content of the site clearly[14].

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[13] A semi-structured interview is a mixture of unstructured and structured interviews. It, thus, combines tightly controlled as well as open uncontrolled questions.
[14] During this process, some technical problems were encountered. For instance, participants could not access the required page through the link that was sent to them, which was then resolved by sending

Similarly, when testing the interview questions, the same pilot participants went through all of the steps that the participants underwent later on. Explanations were given for each question to ensure that the questions were understood correctly. In general, there were no problems concerning the interview questions, especially with the explanation that was provided to them. This indicates the importance of carefully elaborating on and explaining any involved procedures to the participants: explaining the interview questions, clarifying any doubts about them, and making sure that the process runs smoothly without any problems. Informed by the pilot study, the current research study consisted of three phases. In Phase 1, the quantitative email data was collected and then analysed. In Phase 2, a selection of the participants who provided their email were interviewed. The qualitative data from the interviews was then transcribed and analysed. In the early stages of the project, some of the participants that were originally recruited were Saudi students studying in Saudi Arabia, and some were Saudi students who were studying abroad (in England). It was felt that those studying in the UK had already subtly changed their use of the strategies under investigation, and it was therefore deemed necessary to replace the student participants who were studying abroad (5 students; 2 males and 3 females) with students who were studying in Saudi Arabia. In Phase 3, more Saudi participants were contacted and recruited, so as to gather more quantitative email data for the research (see Figure 3-2 below).

Phase 1 4/4/2012 – 20/9/2013	1. Informed consent form 2. Collecting email data 3. Translating and coding the email data 4. Quantitative analysis

Phase 2	5. Informed consent form 6. Interview
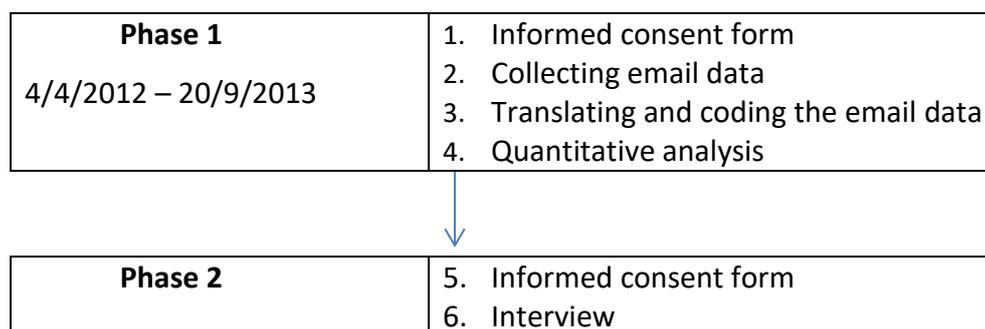
them a new version of the link. One of the respondents also found some redundant sentences in the request to participate, which were irrelevant and subsequently removed.

28/7/2013 – 26/3/2014	7. Transcribing and translating the interview data 8. Analysing the qualitative data
Phase 3 19/9/2014 – 14/10/2014	9. Going through Phase 1 steps again to replace some participants
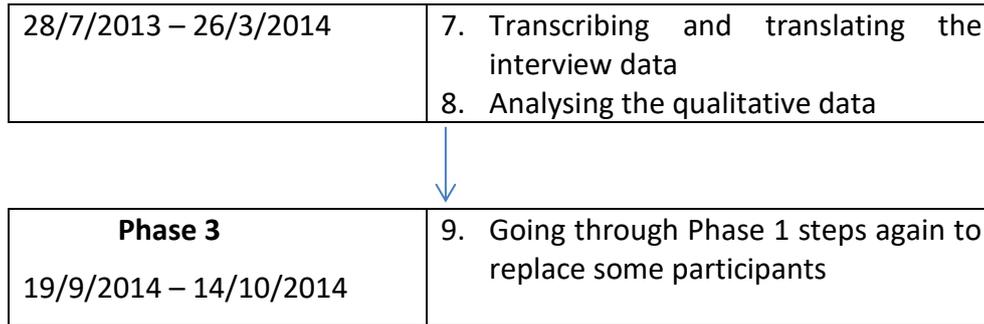
Figure 3-2: Research Procedure

3.4 Ethical Considerations

A crucial aspect to take into account when addressing research ethics is the extent to which the "human subjects" are taking part in the research (McKee and Porter, 2009: 37). After completing the university's ethical approval process for the current study, informed-consent forms (see Appendix A) were sent to all of the participants before the data was gathered. Informed consent is described as a "process by which researchers can allow participants to negotiate, document and agree their contribution to a research project" (Page et al., 2014: 64). According to Eckert (2013: 14), people should be aware of any study requirements, agree to take part and explicitly provide their consent before participating in a research project as a way of "establishing and maintaining trust". A brief description of the purpose and scope of the research study was provided, as well as the role that the participants would be taking on. The participants were informed that their participation was optional, and they were also informed about their right to withdraw at any time.

The participants' names and all private information was removed so as to guarantee their anonymity. Their first names, for instance, were replaced with an X, whereas the surnames were replaced with a Y. Similarly, other specific information and details, e.g. modules' and scientific articles' names, were also replaced with a # for each word.

3.5 Recruitment and Participants

Volunteer participants were recruited for this study. The original plan was to collect data only from people at The School of Arts and Humanity in King Abdul Aziz University (KAU henceforth). However, because of the low response rate, I expanded the institutions and

departments that I looked at. I contacted the Dean and the Head of each department by email, and asked them to circulate the email to members of staff and students in their departments. The email that was sent to them included a brief explanation about the research topic, the organisation, the required data and the consent form.

In this study, the participants were selected using a convenience or opportunity sample, because I chose from among those who had responded to my email (circulated by the Heads of departments of the affiliated Saudi universities who I had contacted) and who had agreed to participate in the study. According to Dornyei (2007, 2012: 98), "an important criterion of sample selection is the convenience of the researcher". Although the convenience sampling method is useful, there are some drawbacks to this method. For example, since convenience sampling is not selected at random, it means that the sample is less likely to represent the population that is being studied accurately. Thus, the convenience sample is less reliable than a random sample when it comes to making generalisations on the population that is under study. In the current study, the participants' age varied in age from 20 to 50 years. The student participants included both under-graduate and post-graduate students. Sometimes, more refined gradations within the roles (e.g. under-graduate/post-graduate/research students) might have made a difference to the results or analysis. For example, one of the participants commented that a particular form of address made by a post-graduate was acceptable, but was not so if made by an under-graduate (see the discussion of Chapter 4). This would be an interesting area to look at in future work where more data is collected. Some of the participants either worked or studied engineering, scientific subjects or the Arts (see Appendix D). Few of the participants were affiliated with medical schools. In terms of language, the first language for all of the participants was Arabic. They all learnt English as a foreign language and some of the participants taught English as well.

The recruitment process began in April, 2012. A total number of 20 participants who either worked or studied in a Saudi university participated in the study by providing emails that were written by them and exchanged within the Saudi academic context. Half of the participants were men (10 participants) and half were women (10 participants). Ten of the participants were lecturers, and 10 were students. The male

participants were then divided into male lecturers (5 participants) and male students (5 participants). Similarly, the women were divided into female lecturers group (5 participants) and female students (5 participants).

Ultimately, the study recruited participants from 5 different Saudi universities across a variety of disciplines (see Appendix D). However, the majority of the participants were from KAU.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

This section discusses the methods that were employed in the research study. Since the study adopted a mixed methods methodology that combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches (see Section 3.2. earlier), two different datasets were collected, which were the email and interview data respectively.

3.6.1 Email Data

In the current research study, a survey form was designed using specific software i.e. Qualtrics, in order to help the participants to understand the research aim, what was required from them and how to provide the required data. Each participant was asked to provide 10 emails written by them, sent to both lecturers and students (5 to lecturers and 5 to students) if possible. However, the students only provided emails that they had sent to their lecturers because according to them, they do not use emails to communicate with other students and their friends. The participants were then informed about the way they were to participate, and were given the choice either to forward the emails to a specified email or to click on a provided link, copy and paste their emails into a template, and then click on a "Send" button to forward the email to the researcher. Since the target participants were Saudi whose L1 was Arabic, two links were provided, one in English and another in Arabic (a translated version of the English Form), just in case the participant did not have a sufficient knowledge of English to ensure that the request was understood clearly.

Various politeness studies that have focused on academic emails (see Chapter 2) explored a corpus of 200 emails sent by university students (e.g. Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Bella and Sifianou, 2012). However, other studies have gathered an

email data sample set that constituted less than 200 emails (e.g. 120 emails were used in Bloch's (2002) study). In the study, the total number of emails that was gathered was 140 emails; 70 emails were collected from women, and 70 from men. Each sub-group of participants (by role) provided 35 emails. The actual number of emails received was 165, but from this total pool, different participants provided different numbers of messages. In order to balance the data sample so that each subgroup provided the same amount of emails, a smaller number was selected (in line with the smallest number of emails submitted by a single participant: i.e. seven emails). Some of the emails submitted by the respondents that seemed to be irrelevant to the academic context were discarded, and whenever the number of emails exceeded the required number per participant (i.e. seven), the remaining emails were discarded.

Among the collected emails, there were two emails that seemed to be sent to a group of participants. Since I was unable to determine how many there were in said group, I discarded both emails. Moreover, some of the emails that were forwarded to me included attachments which were irrelevant to my study, and so these emails were also discarded. In the emails that were collected for the study, there were many instances where it was hard to identify whether an email was an exchange opener or not. All of these matters are considered to be limitations.

Since the size of the current data sample was quite small, statistical tests were not used. I will still use descriptive statistics to analyse the data. In contrast, in other studies of (im)politeness, some researchers (e.g. Culpeper, 2001, 2005) did apply statistical tests when the data sample was large enough, but here it was not appropriate. As a result of the relatively small sample size that was collected in this study, I will not attempt to generalise from this small sample to claim, for instance, that all people in Saudi Arabia have the same opinion about politeness and rapport and that all people behave as the participants of this study have behaved. Instead, I will use the quantitative data collected to help articulate, and then to support, my arguments regarding politeness and rapport.

3.6.2 Interviews

An interview is an essential qualitative research method that helps to get an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon which otherwise would not be able to be explored through a quantitative method alone. Edley and Litosseliti (2010: 157) described an interview as a "mechanism by which one party (i.e. the interviewer) extracts vital information from another (i.e. the interviewee)". Thus, an interview is considered to be an eliciting tool that allows the researcher to shed a light on people's opinions regarding an aspect which is, in one way or another, relevant to the target study. Through an interview, a researcher may be able to understand what people do and say when they participate in a study (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995: 4). An interview is also a type of linguistic qualitative research that requires investigating "language users' opinions and experience of their language practice", which thus helps in gaining an *emic* perspective (Page et al., 2014: 94).

In this research study, the participants' opinions were taken into consideration to expand our understanding of how the collected emails (the quantitative data) were interpreted, and how the phenomena under investigation was perceived by the participants. This follows the example of the previous studies of (im)politeness by Mills (2003) and by Das and Herring (2016). As mentioned in Section 3.2, whereas Culpeper (2011) collected the participants' perspectives using an impoliteness perception questionnaire, Mills (2003) and Das and Herring (2016) carried out interviews. Mills (2003) used structured interviews in order to explore people's perspectives about politeness. However, in the current study, a semi-structured (see Section 3.2 for the definitions) type of interview was conducted instead. The rationale for choosing this type of interview was that a semi-structured interview is the most common form of interview employed in the applied linguistic research area (Dornyei, 2007: 45). Semi-structured interviews have allowed me to gain more relevant information by focusing on some of the more particular aspects of the quantitative data that has already been collected.

Since there was enough information about the phenomenon under investigation (gained through the quantitative email data that were collected earlier), I was able to

choose the topics of the questions that were relevant to the present study. Using open-ended questions eliminated any possible restrictions in answering the questions, and encouraged the respondent to talk freely. This helped in adding a degree of flexibility to the interview. In contrast, the closed questions in the interview kept it more focused on the particular research aspects that I aimed to explore. Therefore, a semi-structured interview was the most appropriate choice to conduct an interview with in order to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon, and to clarify some of the matters that had arisen in the participants' quantitative email correspondences.

As for the process of interviewing itself, I arranged by email a convenient date, time and place, all of which were chosen by the willing participants. All of the female participants were interviewed face-to-face, and were recorded using an iPhone recording application. One of the female participants, who was a lecturer, was a relative and two of the student participants were friends of mine. Thus, they were comfortable in answering and discussing the questions which helped me in gathering the relevant information. In contrast, since in Saudi culture men and women are separated, I delegated a male relative to conduct the interviews with the male participants. The interviews lasted from a half an hour to an hour and a half, with most of the interviews taking around an hour.

I was initially aiming to interview all of the participants (20 participants) who provided me with their email data, but since the response rate was quite low, I interviewed only the eight participants who volunteered to do the interview (40% of the total number of research participants). Since my study used the semi-structured interview method to gather more in-depth data about particular aspects of the email-sourced data, the small sample size of interviewees did not affect the validity and applicability of the research. This view is supported by Buchstaller and Khattab (2013: 82-83), who pointed out that the sample sizes used in linguistic studies are considered to be very small compared to those used in the sciences, and thus rely on a "fraction of the sample size commonly used in other social sciences". According to Buchstaller and Khattab (2013: 83), such a small size may be adequate because "linguistic research can

attain a relatively large number of observations by relying on a smaller number of informants".

As explained earlier, the interview questions in this research study contained both open and closed questions (see Appendix B). Some of the questions required the the respondents to choose the appropriate answer in a multiple choice question, to rank the given elements in order, and to identify particular words from a given email that represent particular politeness aspects (e.g. deference, solidarity). The researcher tried to elicit as much information as possible by avoiding interrupting the respondents while they were talking.

3.7 Data Analysis

In order to analyse the data, the data was first transcribed (particularly the interview data). According to Dornyei (2007: 246) transcribing data means transforming "the recording into a textual form", which is necessary to begin with when conducting the kinds of textual analysis that has been used here. Since the current research was mainly interested in the content of the data rather than the form of the verbal data and the way that it was delivered, a detailed description (that is often used in conversation analysis) of the naturally occurring data was not needed. Similarly, the current study was not aiming for a conversation analysis that captured the way that words were said, thus it did not require an elaborate "representation of the linguistic and interactional features of the talk" (Ehrlich and Romaniuk, 2013: 464).

Since all of the interviews except two were conducted in Arabic, and because Arabic was the language used in most of the email data that was provided, all of the Arabic material needed to be translated. I tried to keep the grammar, structure and meaning of the translated text (English) as close as possible to the original one (Arabic) in order to ensure an accurate analysis. Because some of the interview extracts seemed to not make sense in English, an additional layer (third layer) of translation that expresses the same extract idiomatically was provided. Whenever I felt that part of the email was unclear or needed further explanation, this was added in square brackets. The

translated texts were sent to a bilingual (Arabic and English) specialist along with the original texts, in order to have them re-checked.

In the data obtained, there were few instances where the participants in the study used code-switching, either in written (emails) or spoken (interviews) form. Hughes et al. (2006: 8) defined code-switching as the "use of complete sentences, phrased, and borrowed words from another language". The use of code-switching in the current data set might be as a solidarity marker strategy, or used as a means to minimize the distance between interlocutors (Holmes, 2001; Pardina et al., 2013). However, in order to investigate the code-switching, further research is needed to analyse the use in the context of the current data and to elicit the participants' perspective about their reason for employing this strategy.

Once the data was completely obtained, it was then important to "make sense of it and to look for patterns in it" through analysing the data (Page et al., 2014: 136). Coding was essential at this stage of the analysis process. Coding is defined as a method that helps in arranging the data through bracketing and labelling words, such as a categorisation noted down in the margin (Rossman and Rallis, 2012). Initially, it emerged from my preliminary analysis of the email data that the main strategies in the emails are classified around opening, thanking, requesting, apologising and closings. Thus, I devoted my analytical chapters to these strategies and divided the current thesis chapters accordingly[15].

The current research data was coded using a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software called ATLAS.ti, which is a "tool for supporting the process of qualitative data analysis" (Friese, 2012: 1). ATLAS.ti allows the user to code or label specific terms as well as to organise them into groups that share particular

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[15] Since openings and closings are very close in terms of their functions and because they were treated together in previous literature on politeness (e.g. Crystal, 2006; Page, 2014), I discussed openings and closings together in one chapter.

specifications, called "family codes" in accordance with the research needs. The family codes were assigned according to the main features in each chapter. For instance, in terms of thanking, the family codes included compound thanking (e.g. thanking with stating a reason). For requesting, the family codes included mood derivable (imperative), performative, hedged performative, and hints. In the current study, the quantitative analysis was based on the surface reading of the emails. However, there were a few cases where a strategy which seemed to be, for example thanking, was not (because it served a different function i.e. pleasing) and thus were excluded (see the discussion in Chapter 5).

Based on Eelen (2001: 96), the way that politeness and impoliteness is conceptualised is determined by "the speaker-hearer interactional dyad", where the focus should be on the "production of behaviour by a speaker and the evaluation of that behaviour by the hearer" (ibid.). However, Eelen (ibid.) argued that there is a lack of attention paid to the evaluative aspect of the hearer's side in judging politeness and impoliteness, which is evident in Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory as well as other frameworks; e.g. Lakoff (1973) and Leech (1977) (see Section 2.4.1). In this study, I assessed politeness by focussing on the production of behaviour using particular previous politeness frameworks (see Chapters 5, 6, and 7) and taking on the hearer's perspective in evaluating politeness by conducting interviews to elicit the participants' perspective.

At a macro level of analysis, the focus was on linguistic politeness from a pragmatic perspective. The current research began with a second-order politeness approach, while taking into consideration Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) framework of politeness when coding and analysing the data. This follows on from the previous politeness studies that drew on Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) framework; e.g. Kummer (1992), Herring (1994), Spencer-Oatey (2000) and Bella and Sifianou (2012). For most of the analytical chapters in this thesis (Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8), other relevant frameworks, obtained from the previous literature on politeness, were used to code the strategies. Thus, a number of differently-focused approaches, rather than a single framework, were used to code the politeness strategies under investigation. The

decision to use different approaches for most of the analytical chapters also helped me as a researcher to gain a more in-depth view about the strategies that I focussed on. These frameworks are more specific and relevant, than devoting the whole analysis on a broader framework like Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) alone. In order to avoid the limitations of such an etic approach in determining some of the politeness terms, a first-order politeness approach was vital to complement and compensate the possible limitations that may arise from using a second order politeness approach in isolation.

In the current research, the quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics, specifically through measuring the frequency of each politeness strategy. This is in contrast to Culpeper's (2011) study, which incorporated statistical tests in the analysis of a large data sample. Descriptive statistics are described as a "valuable set of simplifications that allow us to capture the essence of a dataset - and compare it to other datasets - using a few numbers" (Johnson, 2013: 314). It also helps to interpret the data without attempting "to answer questions (make inferences) about the larger populations from which the samples are drawn" (Johnson, 2013: 288). Additionally, descriptive statistics offer brief findings through "describing general tendencies in the data and the overall spread of the scores" (Dornyei, 2007: 213). The reason for employing descriptive and not inferential statistics is twofold. The aim of the research study was exploratory, which made the choice of using descriptive statistics efficient without having to worry about applying inferential statistics (Johnson, 2013: 314). Another reason is that the sample size was relatively small, which, according to Johnson (2013: 288), can make it unnecessary to use statistics and rather, to substitute it with adding in an inspection and discussion of "every observation or data point." Thus, the quantitative data was analysed and only normalised to the level of using frequencies and percentages in order to compare parts of the data with each other and to provide a clear picture.

In the early stage of the analysis, the quantitative data was analysed using inferential statistics and, more particularly, a one variable Chi-Square test was applied to investigate whether there was a significant association between the frequency of particular email features and the sex of the email sender. This test was found not to be

applicable as there were a number of observations that were under the required number of five, which is considered to be the minimum acceptable number for implementing a Chi-Square test. Another reason for deciding not to use a Chi-Square test is because the participants did not all belong to the same educational field, and did not use emails for the same purpose. In other words, there were too many confounding variables that made the explanations of variation using inferential statistics impossible. The quantitative comparisons in this thesis should be treated as tentative observations that reflect on the limitations of this particular dataset, and should not be used as the basis for generalising about all Saudi faculties and their email correspondences. Nonetheless, as a first step, the data and quantitative analysis has suggested interesting trends that could go on to provide a point for further exploration via interviews with the participants. In my analysis of the quantitative data (emails), I will focus on analysing the politeness features that are relevant to the following strategies: opening, closing, thanking, requesting and apologising. Various specific frameworks were used to help in selecting and labelling the politeness features, as I will show in the analytical chapters in this thesis (see Chapters 5, 6 and 7).

Because the email data sample in this study was a mixture of emails that were originally written in English and emails that were originally written in Arabic (although in exceptional cases, there were emails that used both languages), further investigations had to be made. I divided the results by the language of the email, to examine whether the use/choice of some of the politeness strategies varied according to the type of language used in the writing. My initial results suggested that in some cases, this division by language did not help explain the data as there were only a small number of instances in some of the cells in the detailed tables. However, in other cases, there were some differences in the use/choice of features (relevant to the politeness strategy) based on the language of the email. This was particularly so concerning the specific features that were found in the current study, but that had not been reported in previous studies. These specific features were examined and discussed in Chapters 4 and 6. However, the remaining chapters (Chapter 5 and 7) I will not present or discuss them, since they will not help in explaining the data. For instance, for the thanking strategies, the results showed that the majority of the specific Saudi thanking methods were only used in the

emails that were originally written in Arabic. Similarly, for the apology strategies, the specific Saudi apology patterns (e.g. *I wish from you + an explicit apology* and *I wish from you + accept my apology*) were only used in the emails that were originally written in Arabic as well.

3.8 **The Email Data: An Overview**

This section will introduce the email data that was collected in this study. It will discuss the range of factors which provided the backdrop to the detailed analysis provided in Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7. The factors discussed are:

- the word length of the email message
- the language used in writing the email
- the sex of the participants involved in the interaction
- the direction of communication between the email participants
- the topic and purpose of the emails.

This section provides a general overview of the data. It specifically demonstrates the characteristics of the sample to provide a background for the analysis that then follows in Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7.

3.8.1 **The Word Length of the Email Data**

In the current dataset, the email messages varied in terms of word length from one email message to another. The email data was counted in terms of word length for both the female and male participants.

	Emails sent by women		Emails sent by men		Total	
	No.[16] of words in the emails	% [17]	No. of words in the emails	%	No. of words in the emails	%
Total	5714	50.7	5553	49.3	11267	100
Average per email	81.6	-	79.3	-	80.5	-

Table 1-1: The word length of email messages according to the sex of the sender.

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[16] "No." is number here and henceforth.
[17] The percentage in this table was counted out of the total number of words included in all the emails.

As shown in Table 3-1 above, men and women sent emails that were similar in length. However, women's emails (in this study) were on average slightly longer than those written by men (81.6 words per email versus 79.3 words per message respectively). This finding runs counter to what Herring (1994: 280) found in her study that explored CMC users' behaviour in internet discussion groups. Herring (ibid.) found that the male participants posted longer messages than the women. Herring's (1994) finding might be affected by the fact that it was carried out more than two decades ago, and perhaps because the CMC medium that she explored is quite different (messages sent on internet discussion groups are obviously different to those sent in emails). Additionally, the cultural context that Herring (ibid.) explored was different than the cultural context that I am focussing on, since she examined American culture.

The results were then disaggregated according to the participants' roles.

	Emails sent by female lecturers		Emails sent by female students		Emails sent by male lecturers		Emails sent by male students	
	No. of words	%[18]	No. of words	%	No. of words	%	No. of words	%
Total	4160	36.9	1536	13.6	3025	26.9	2528	22.4
Average per email	118.9	-	43.9	-	86.4	-	72.2	-

Table 3-2: The word length of email messages in terms of the role of the sender

Table 3-2 indicates that the lecturers, particularly the female lecturers in this study, wrote longer email messages (average number of words per message is 118.9) than both the female students (average number of words per message is 43.9) and their male counterparts (average number of words per message is 72.2). This is perhaps because of a lecturers' tendency to send emails that contain advice and answers to students'

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[18] The percentage in this Table were counted out of the total number of words included in the email data which makes it impossible to get a maximum percentage of 100 in any percentage column

questions in their messages (see Table 3-12 later), which may require more elaboration in the content of the message. Another reason might be the lecturers' higher social status compared to their students, which allows the lecturers to send long messages to their students, while the students may see long messages sent by them to their lecturers as face-threatening.

In this dataset, the shorter emails (those under 50 words) were often sent as a reply to a question in a previously received email.

Example (1) – in Arabic[19]:

لم يحدد موعد المناقشة بعد

The time for viva is not determined yet

The time of your viva hasn't been fixed yet.

(Written by ML3, a male lecturer to his female student)

Other emails with a low word count included requests, thanks or reminders to the recipient about an appointment or test, as Example 2 attests.

Example (2) – in English:

Tomorrow there is a quiz on hand simulation. Be ready.

(Written by ML4, a male lecturer to his male students)

In this data set, the longer email messages (those above 51 words) included examples where the lecturers replied to their students' problems and requests, e.g., regarding extending a scholarship. There were also a few quite long examples (those above 300 words), with one of them sent by a student to his supervisor to explain issues that were relevant to the student's dissertation. Additionally, another long email message was written by a male lecturer to a group of colleagues to discuss his opinion about a

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[19] All Arabic examples in the current study are represented in 3 levels as follow: the first level is the Arabic original, the second is the literal translation and the third level is the idiomatic translation. However, in examples where the word for word and colloquial translation are the same, only two levels were used to avoid repetition.

departmental issue that was raised in their previous meeting (i.e., post-graduate students who were studying abroad and who seemed to have frequently moved from one university to another). A long message was also written by a Head of department in response to a students' requests for a summer term module. The lecturer started his message by apologising about the delay in replying, and then explained why the requested module was not made available for them. After that, he suggested (as advice) a list of alternative ways that the student could improve their study skills and continue with their studies during summer (see Chapter 6 for more details). The longest email (which contained 664 words) in the current dataset was an email sent by a female lecturer in reply to a series of annoying emails from a student. This particular email started with an imperative directive statement: *Dear X, read the report carefully*, followed by comments on some details of the student's work, followed by a reminder of the action that the lecturer had taken. Then the female lecturer (FL1) drew attention to the student's carelessness in doing her work, scolded the student for this carelessness, and emphasised that she was offering this student a chance to make amends. The lecturer ended her email with a list of advice and matters that the student should bear in mind when contacting the lecturer in the future (concerning the student's attitude, interactional style and behaviour in writing to the lecturer). In this long email, some of the lecturer's advice was expressed in a scolding way (underlined) which was therefore face-threatening to the addressed student, as Example 3 attests.

Example (3) – in English:

Lastly, I advise you to carefully read my message and think more than one time before you get very excited and send back several messages with controversies. I asked you to contact me for further clarification at any time. Therefore, if you do not understand my message, you should politely ask me to make it clearer for you. I do not accept your aggressiveness in discussing issues with me. Be careful in choosing your words. You should show some respect when you answer me back.

(Written by FL1, a female lecturer to a student)

3.8.2 The Language Used in Writing the Email

The emails were analysed according to the language that was used to write the original email. The language used varied according to the department that each lecturer or student was affiliated to. Participants in the medical school or in the English department tended to use English more when writing their messages. In some cases, there were a few words of English used in Arabic emails, or Arabic words used in English emails. I classified these on the language of the majority of words that were used.

Language used in writing the emails	Emails sent by women		Emails sent by men		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Emails written in English	39	27.9	10	7.1	49	35
Email written in Arabic	31	22.1	60	42.9	91	65
Total	70	50	70	50	140	100

Table 1-3: The language used in writing the emails in terms of sex
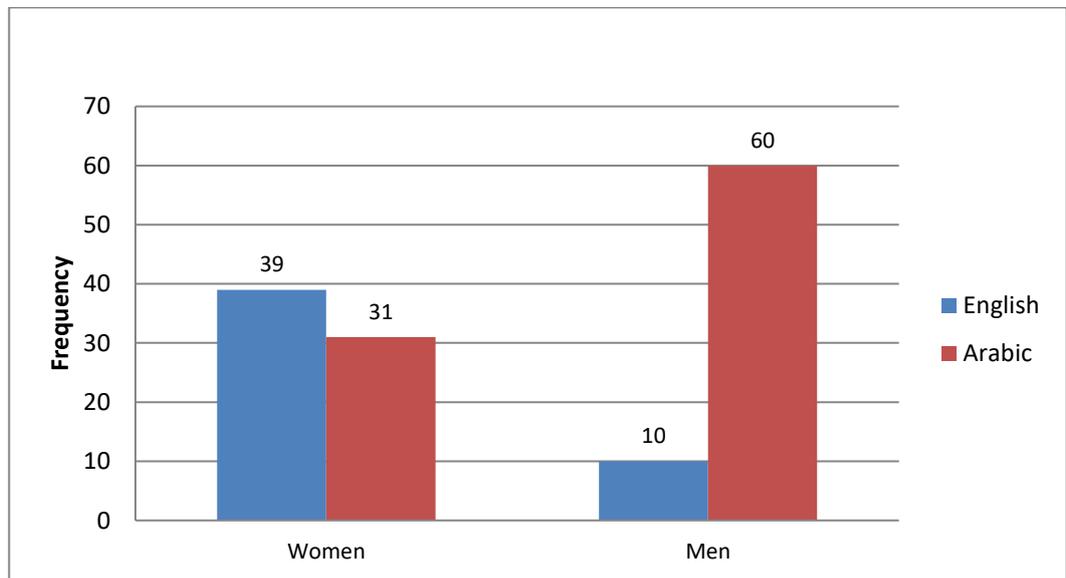
Figure 3-3: The language used in writing the emails in terms of the writer's sex

Table 3-3 above reveals that the majority of emails that were sent in the current data set were written in Arabic (65% of all the emails that were sent) which is unsurprising, since Arabic is considered to be the L1 in Saudi Arabia. Men in particular sent more emails that were written in Arabic (42.9% of all the emails) than women

(22.1% of all the emails). In contrast, women tended to send emails using English (27.86% of all the emails) at a rate more than three times greater than men (7.1% of all the emails). This might be partly explained by the fact that two female students and one female lecturer were affiliated to the medical school, and three female lecturers taught English. None of the men were affiliated to the medical school or to the English department.

Given that the considerable disparity between women and men regarding the language choice in emails could affect the comparison, further investigated and divided the results by the language of the email to examine whether the use/choice of particular features differed according to the language of the emails (see Appendix E for the results). As noted above, this division by language did not help to explain the patterns in some of the data because of the small number of instances in some cells. In other cases, there were some differences in the use/choice of features based on the language of the email. In this thesis, I will only focus on the instances where obvious differences seemed to have occurred, particularly those concerning the features that were found in the current study, but were not reported in previous studies.

Table 3-4 shows the results by language, disaggregated according to the participants' role.

Language used in writing the emails	Emails sent by female lecturers		Emails sent by female students		Emails sent by male lecturers		Emails sent by male students	
	Freq.[20]	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Emails written in English	22	15.7	17	12.1	8	5.7	2	1.4
Emails written in Arabic	13	9.3	18	12.9	27	19.3	33	23.6
Total	35	25	35	25	35	25	35	25

Table 1-4: The language used in writing the emails in terms of the sender's role

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[20] *Freq*. is the frequency here and henceforth.
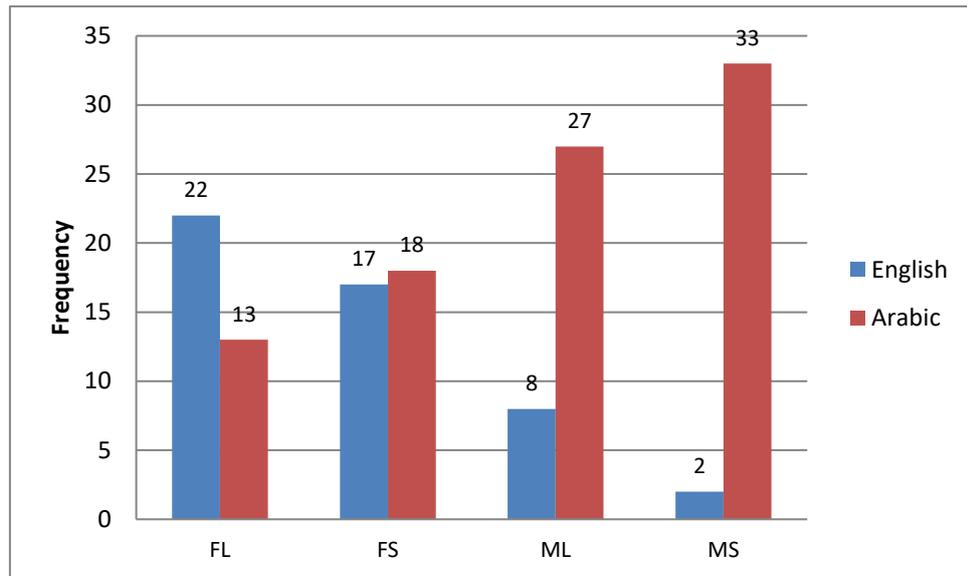
Table 3-4 demonstrates that lecturers, in this study, tended to write their emails more in English (21.4% of all the emails) compared to students (13.6% of all the emails). This is either because of their departmental affiliation or because English is perceived to be prestigious. In contrast, the students were more inclined to write their emails in Arabic (36.4% of all the emails), which is their L1, compared to the lecturers (28.6% of all the emails).

3.8.3 The Sex of the Participants Involved in the Interaction

Despite the Saudi culture and traditions that do not allow men and women to intermingle in most workplaces (see Chapter 1), men and women can still communicate with each other through email, as and when needed. In the current email data set, the interactions were either men-men, women-women or between women and men. Since the Saudi culture and context is mostly sex-segregated, men and women tend to have less in-person contact. This may influence their linguistic choice in writing the emails (which might be an interesting area to further investigate in the future). However, the

[21] Female lecturers are FL, female students are FS, male lecturers are ML and male students are MS here and henceforth in the figures.

email messages in this study were still analysed according to the sex of participants involved in the interaction (see Table 3-5).

Recipients' gender	Emails sent by women		Emails sent by men	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Emails addressed to women	51	72.9	12	17.1
Email addressed to men	19	27.1	56	80
Emails to unknown	0	0	2	2.9

Table 1-5: The sex of the participants involved in the interaction
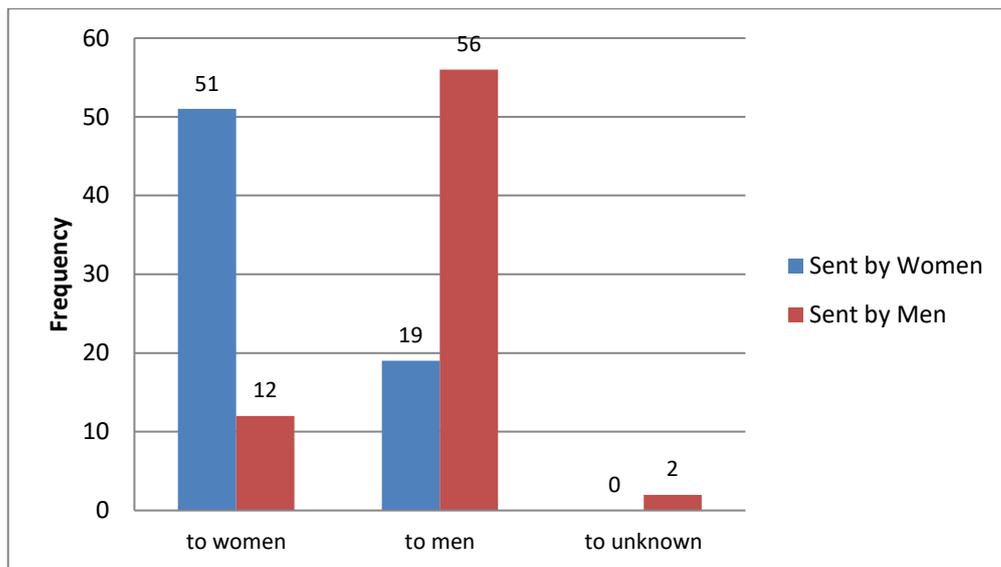
Figure 3-5: The sex of participants involved in the interaction

Table 3-5 shows that the majority of interactions in the current dataset were single sex interactions (i.e. interactions between women or between men), which is not surprising. This type of interaction seems to adhere to the Saudi culture that is against the practice of men and women intermingling in the workplace, educational settings (schools and universities), and in social life. Thus, sex asymmetry regarding interactions seems, more or less, to resemble Saudi face-to-face segregation. Of all of the emails that were sent by men, male to male interactions accounted for 80% of them. Of all of the emails that were sent by women, women to women interactions accounted for slightly less than the men, namely 72.9%. In this study, 27.1% of all the emails that were sent by women were sent to men, whereas 17.1% of all the emails that were sent by men were sent to women.

The emails in the data set were then analysed also according to the sex of the participants involved in the data, and in terms of the senders' role,

Recipients' gender	Emails sent by female lecturers		Emails sent by female students		Emails sent by male lecturers		Emails sent by male students	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Emails addressed to women	29	82.9	22	62.9	12	34.3	0	0
Emails addressed to men	6	17.1	13	37.1	21	60	35	100
Emails to unknown	0	0	0	0	2	5.7	0	0

Table 1-6: The sex of the participants involved in the interaction in terms of the email sender's role
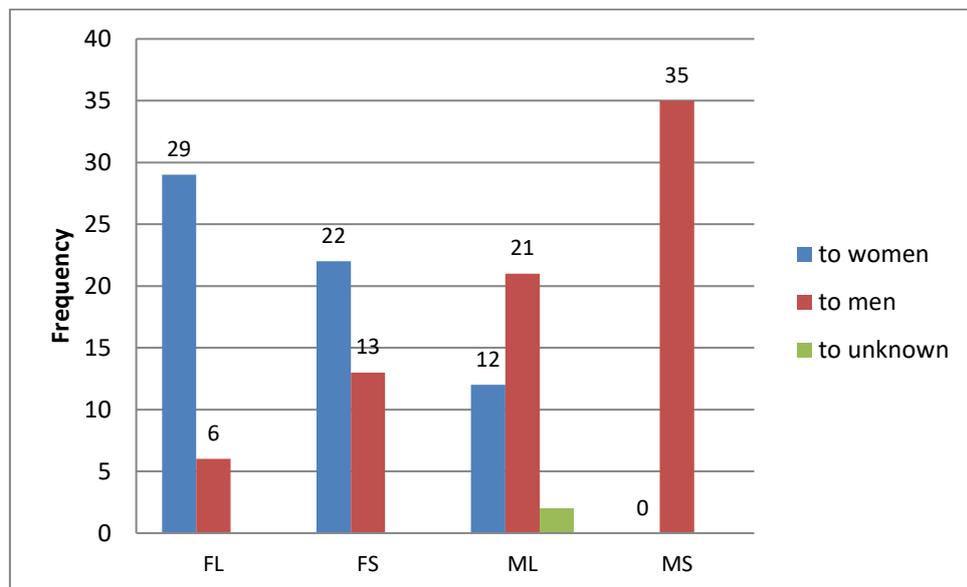
Figure 3-6: The sex of the participants involved in the interaction in terms of the emails sender's role

Table 3-6 demonstrates what was found in the previous table: that the majority of the interactions were single sex by all sub-groups of participants. However, female students in this study also sent emails to men (37.1% of all emails that were sent by female students), whereas male students did not send emails to women at all. This is to be expected, because female students can be taught by men as well as by female lecturers and therefore might need to contact these lecturers, but male students can only be taught by male lecturers (see Chapter 1). Male lecturers contacted women (34.3% of all emails sent by male lecturers were to women) almost twice as much as female lecturers

contacted men (17.1% of all the emails sent by female lecturers were to men). Many male lecturers taught female students and sometimes supervised them, which meant that they had to reply to their female students' emails, whereas female lecturers contacted men less because they did not teach male students[22].

3.8.4 The Direction of Communication in the Email Dataset

In daily interactions, emails can be sent to recipients who are similar to or different from the sender in terms of social status. The difference in social status can be interpreted as a hierarchy. Students, for instance, may send emails upward when they contact their lecturers, whereas lecturers send emails downward when they contact or reply to their students' questions and enquiries. An email may also be sent laterally if it is exchanged between people of a similar social status. For example, from a lecturer to another lecturer (a colleague) or from a student to another student. However, while the students were asked to provide messages to fellow students as well as to lecturers, they did not offer any emails that were sent to other students. This is possibly because the students tend to talk to each other face-to-face. Additionally, in this study, the lecturers and students selected the messages themselves, which may not be representative of the emails that they have actually produced and received. Thus, such asymmetry in the direction that a message was sent in the hierarchy (see Figure 3-7) and the fact that the participants selected the data they provided may affect the representativeness of the data sample. Nonetheless, as an initial investigation into email communications in the Saudi academic context, the current study still contributes new and interesting findings to the field.

In this study, the emails were analysed according to whether they were addressed downward, laterally or upward.

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[22] In the current dataset, when FL contacted men it was either that the FL was also a post-graduate student who contacted her supervisor or colleague. There was also a case where the FL contacted a male student who asked her to fill in a questionnaire for him, although she did not teach him.

Direction of communication	Emails sent by female lecturers		Emails sent by female students		Emails sent by male lecturers		Emails sent by male students	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Emails sent downward	26	74.3	0	0	3	94.3	0	0
Emails sent lateral	7	20	0	0	2	5.7	0	0
Emails sent upward	2	5.7	35	100	0	0	35	100

Table 1-7: The direction of communication for emails
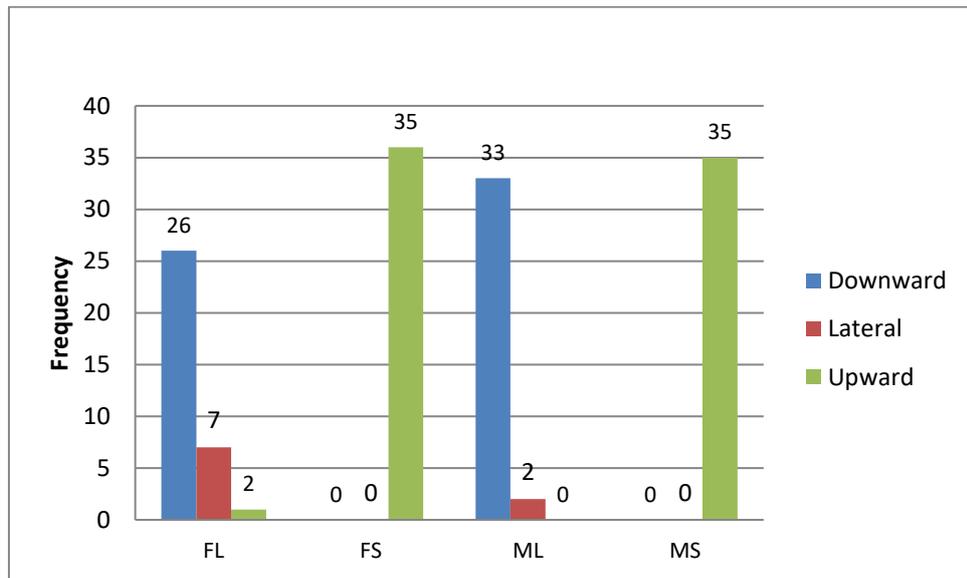
Figure 3-7: The direction of communication for emails

The results shown in Table 3-7 indicate that in terms of role, lecturers (especially men) sent many emails downward (84.3% of all the emails that were sent by lecturers), whereas students did not (0% of all the emails). In contrast, the students tended to send more emails upward (100% of all the emails that were sent by students) compared to lecturers (2.9% of all the emails that were sent by lecturers). This finding may suggest that the majority of the emails that were sent by lecturers, in this study, were addressed to their students, whereas all of the collected emails that were sent by students were addressed to their lecturers. This is unsurprising, because the lecturers in this study tended to send emails more to their students, perhaps to reply to their emails (which is also part of their role), while the students tended to contact and send more emails to their lecturers to request or ask questions. There were also a few emails that were

directed laterally to colleagues: 12.9% of all of the emails that were sent by lecturers were sent to other lecturers.

3.8.5 The Topics of the Emails in Saudi Academic Context

The topics of the emails in this study varied considerably among the participants, and from one email to another. Some of the emails were exchanged for course-related matters, social reasons and personal relationship, in addition to other topics (e.g., projects and administrative matters). Table 3-8 below summarises the topics of the emails.

Topics of the emails	Emails sent by women		Emails sent by men		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Course related	60	85.7	63	90	123	87.9
Social & personal relationship	7	10	1	1.4	8	5.7
Other	3	4.3	6	8.6	9	6.4

Table 1-8: The topics of the emails in terms of the sender's sex
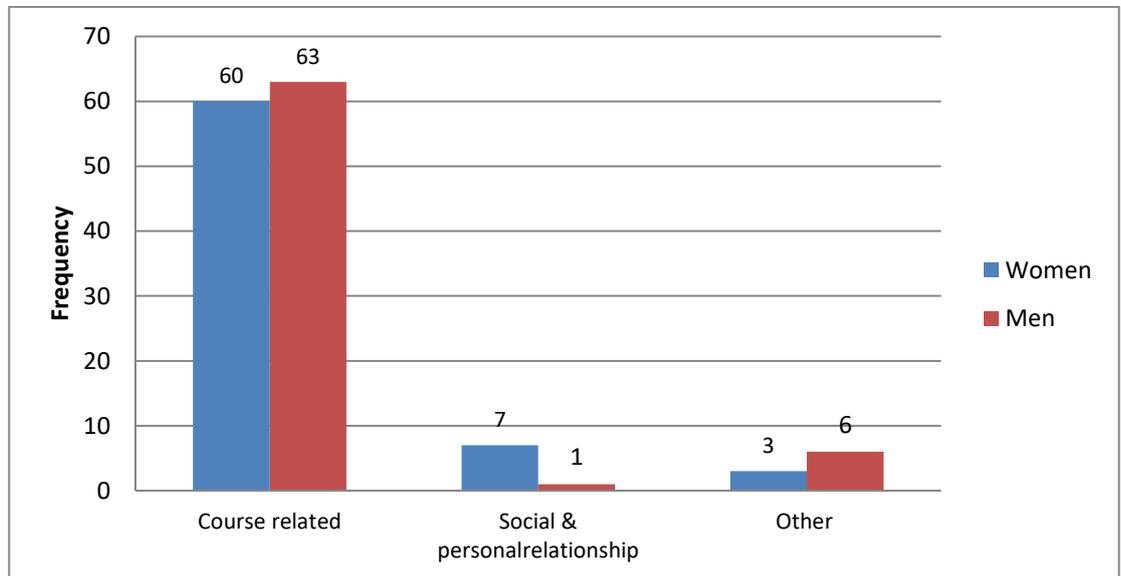
Figure 3-8: The topics of the emails in terms of the sender's sex

Table 3-8 above illustrates that the majority of the emails in the current study were about course-related topics (87.9% of all the emails), which is unsurprising, especially since these emails were exchanged in an academic context. However, there were various emails that were sent for social and personal relationship reasons (5.71% of all

the emails). The women in this study sent almost five times more emails with social and personal relationship topics (10% of all the emails that were sent by women) compared to the men (1.4% of all the emails that were sent by men). This suggests that the women in this study, by exchanging more emails with social and personal topics, were more concerned with rapport-building than men. It might also be as a result of my data collection method, since the participants selected their own emails and provided them for the current study. Of the emails that were exchanged about other topics, more were sent by men (8.6% of all the emails that were sent by men) than by women (4.3% of all the emails that were sent by women).

The results in Table 3-8 above were then disaggregated according to the participants' role.

Email topics	Emails sent by female lecturers		Emails sent by female students		Emails sent by male lecturers		Emails sent by male students	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Course related	28	80	32	91.4	31	88.6	32	91.4
Social & personal	4	11.4	3	8.6	0	0	1	2.9
Other	2	5.7	1	2.9	5	14.3	1	2.9

Table 3-9: The topics of the emails in terms of the sender's role
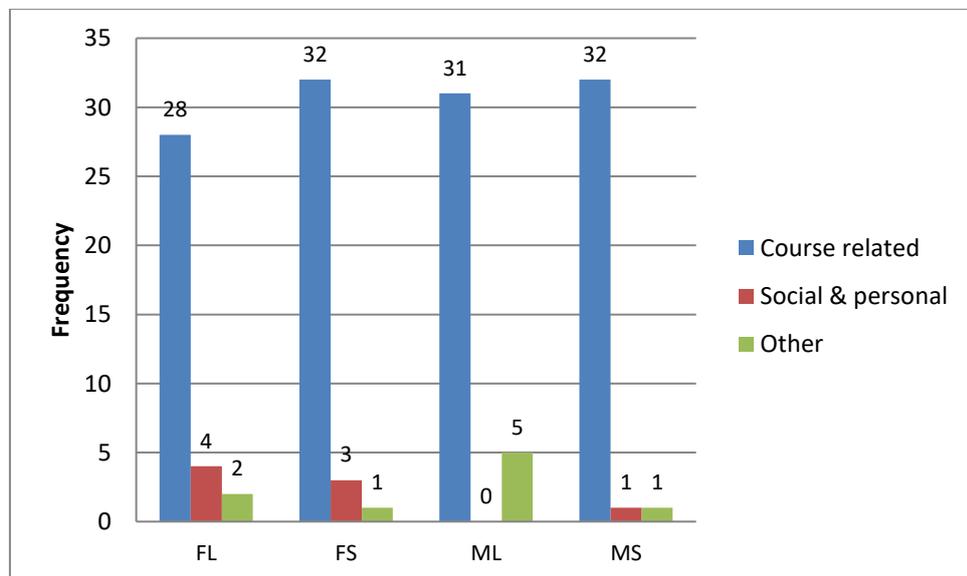
Figure 3-9: The topics of the emails in terms of the sender's role

All of the participants, regardless of their group, sent more emails concerning the academic course than any other topic. In terms of social and personal emails, these were sent slightly more by the female lecturers (11.4% of all the emails that were sent by female lecturers) compared to the female students (8.6% of all the emails that were sent by female students), and male lecturers (0% of all the emails sent by male lecturers). Emails that were sent with other topics as the focus were sent more by male lecturers (14.3% of all the emails that were sent by male lecturers) than female lecturers (5.7% of all the emails that were sent by female lecturers). This is because some of the male lecturers who participated in this study worked on projects and business matters that required negotiation through emails.

In the current email dataset, the emails were frequently centred on the academic course topics ongoing at the university e.g. asking about or explaining a previous lecture.

Example (4) – in English:

Hi X[23],

No No… Emily Dickenson's poetry is so much sophisticated to be one of the fireside poets.

As I told you before, she is a different poet and categorising her is not definite.

Anyway, she is more an anti-transcendentalist than anything else.

Good luck.

(Written by FL4, a female lecturer as a reply to her female student's question)

Other emails that were on academic topics were particularly about asking for an extension.

Example (5) – in Arabic:

الموعد محدد من الكلية وليس لي صلاحية في ذلك التسليم رسمي عن طريق المشرفة وأنا أستلمها منها رسمي

---

[23] X is the person's first name here and henceforth.

The deadline is specified by the faculty, and I haven't got the right for that. Submission is officially through the supervisor and I receive it from her officially

The deadline is set by the faculty and I haven't the right to postpone it. Submission is officially through the supervisor and I'm just told the deadline by her.

(Written by ML3, a male lecturer to his female student)

3.8.6 Purposes of the Emails

In this particular email dataset, the email purpose also varied considerably. The purpose of the emails in this study might be for advising, apologising, phatic communication, requesting, thanking, warning or for other purposes. Emails in the current study were analysed according to the purpose of the email. When coding the purpose of the email, each email was given only one purpose. For the emails which seemed to have more than one purpose, they were classified as emails with *more than one purpose* (last rows in Tables 3-10 and 3-11).

Email purpose	Emails sent by women		Emails sent by men		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Advising	3	4.3	2	2.9	5	3.6
Apologising	1	1.4	4	5.7	5	3.6
Phatic communication	3	4.3	0	0	3	2.1
Requesting	38	54.3	37	52.9	75	53.6
Thanking	2	2.9	1	1.4	3	2.1
Warning	1	1.4	2	2.9	3	2.1
Other	11	15.7	20	28.6	31	22.2
More than 1 purpose	11	15.7	4	5.7	15	10.7

Table 3-10: The purpose of emails in terms of the sender's sex
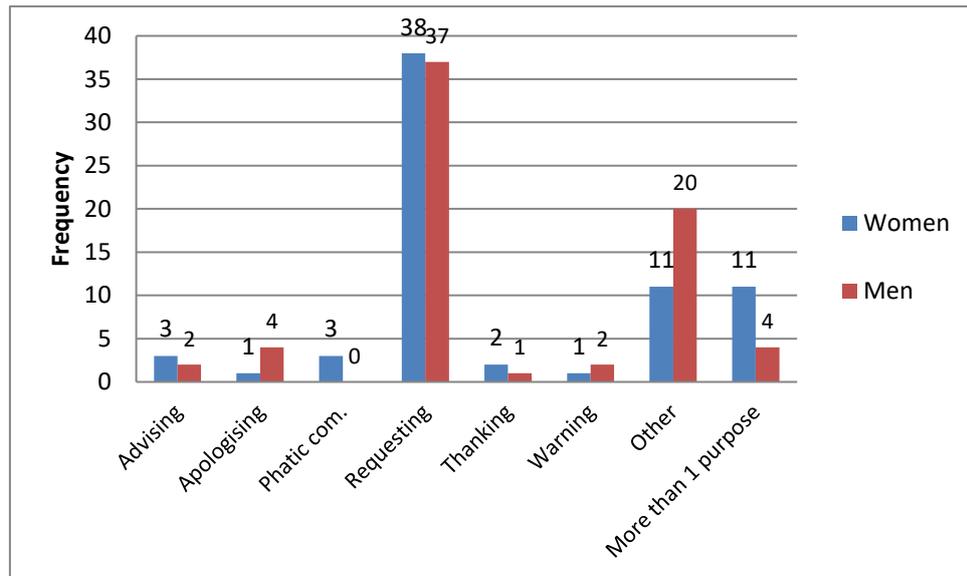
Figure 3-10: The purpose of emails in terms of the sender's sex

The majority of emails that were sent in this study were sent for requesting purposes (53.6% of all the emails). Many emails (22.2% of all the emails) were sent for other purposes (other than the purposes listed in the above Table), particularly by men, (28.6 % of all the emails that were sent by men) compared to women (15.7% of all the emails that were sent by women). Table 3-10 above shows that there were only a few emails that were sent for advising (3.6% of all emails), apologising (3.6% of all the emails), phatic communication (2.1% of all the emails), thanking (2.1% of all the emails), warning (2.1% of all of the emails) or for more than one purpose (10.7% of all the emails). However, the emails that were sent in this study for phatic communication purposes were only sent by women (4.3% of all the emails that were sent by women), as men did not send any emails at all for phatic purposes. This suggests that, in the current study, women attempted to build a rapport with others through sending more emails with a phatic purpose, which is also evident in the female participants' use of phatic elements as a closing feature (see Chapter 9) to establish and maintain solidarity with the recipient(s).

The results in Table 3-10 were then disaggregated according to the participants' roles.

Email purpose	Emails sent by female lecturers		Emails sent by female students		Emails sent by male lecturers		Emails sent by male students	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Advising	3	8.6	0	0	2	5.7	0	0
Apologising	1	2.9	0	0	2	5.7	2	5.7
Phatic communication	0	0	3	8.6	0	0	0	0
Requesting	11	31.4	27	77.1	13	37.1	24	68.6
Thanking	1	2.9	1	2.9	0	0	1	2.9
Warning	1	2.9	0	0	2	5.7	0	0
Other	7	20	4	11.4	14	40	6	17.1
More than 1 purpose	10	28.6	1	2.9	3	8.6	1	2.9

Table 1-11: The purpose of email in terms of the sender's role
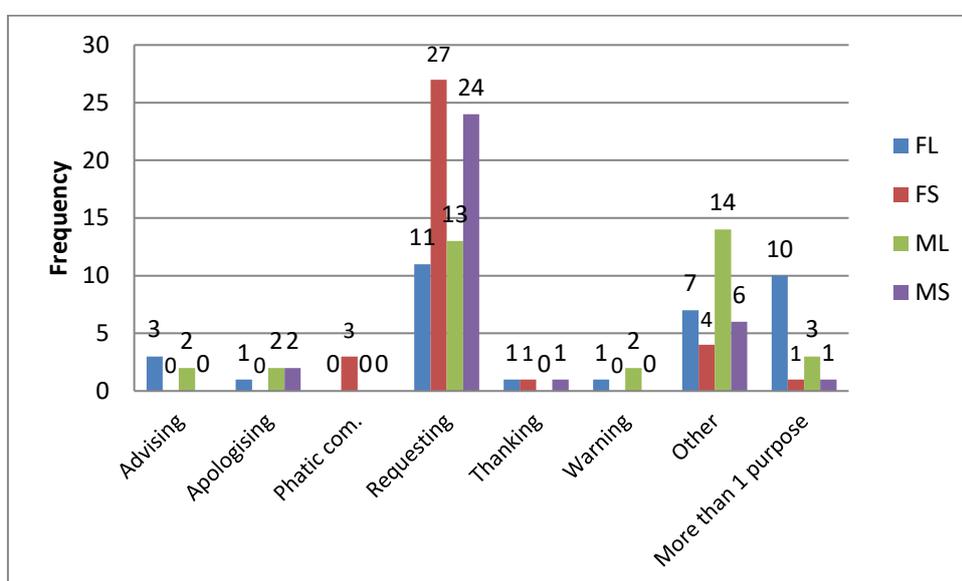
Figure 3-11: The purpose of the email in terms of the sender's role

As shown in Table 3-11 above, it was only the lecturers in this study who sent advising (14.3% of all the emails that were sent by lecturers) and warning emails (8.6% of all the emails that were sent by lecturers), probably because of the face-threatening nature of both of those particular speech acts (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Additionally, it may be because some of the lecturers felt that it was part of their role to care about their students, to give them advice and sometimes to warn them when necessary. Emails that were sent for phatic purposes were sent, in this study, only by female students (8.6% of all the emails that were sent by female students) which suggests their concern in relation to building a rapport with their lecturers.

Students in the study sent more emails for requesting purposes (72.9% of all the emails that were sent by lecturers) than their lecturers (34.3% of all the emails that were sent by lecturers). This finding is unsurprising because students tend to ask their lecturers for various things, such as help, extensions and results, through emails. Emails that were sent for thanking purposes were sent equally by all of the groups of participants (2.9% of all the emails that were sent by each subgroup, for each group of participants) except the male lecturers. Emails that were sent for other purposes in this study were sent the most by male lecturers (40% of all the emails that were sent by male lecturers) compared to male students (17.1% of all the emails that were sent by male students) and their female counterparts (20% of all the emails that were sent by female lecturers).

In the current data set, many emails were sent to serve a variety of purposes. Emails 6 through 10 below, illustrate some of these purposes.

Example[24] (6) – request – in English:

hello Ms, X
when will we take the extra class of X?
have you decide when, and if you dont mind to give me the date
thank you

(Written by FS3, a female student to her female lecturer)

Example (7) – advice – in Arabic:

اكملي بحثك ولا حاجة للارسال مرة اخرى فالوقت قصير
Complete your research and there is no need to send it again as the time is short

Finish your study and submit it. No need to send it to me again; there's no time.

(Written by ML3, a male lecturer to his female student)

---

[24] Since the Email was originally written in English, all spelling mistakes and words are kept as they are here and henceforth

Example (8) –apology – in Arabic:

<div dir="rtl">

سعادة الدكتور X Y[25]

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاتة

أود فقط ان اعتذار عما حصل مني من قصور حول البحث بسبب ظروف خاصة

ولكن أيضاً أنا متمسك بك يا دكتور في الاشراف لي في بحث الماجستير وارجو منك ان

تعتذر لي ونبداء صفحة جديدة وأنا اوعدك اني سوف أشرفك في البحث واجتهد في دراستي

خلال الأسابيع الجاية دون اي قصور ان شاء الله

وشكراً

أخوك الطالب

XZY

</div>

Honourable Doctor XY

May Allah's peace, mercy and blessing be upon you

I'd only like to apologize about what is done by me from idleness around the research because of personal circumstances

But also I'm holding on to you doctor in supervising me in the master dissertation and I wish from you to forgive me and we start a new page and I promise you that I'm going to let you be proud in the research and I'll do my best in my studies during the next weeks without and idleness in Allah's willing

And thanks

Your brother the student

XZY

Honourable Doctor XY

May Allah's peace, mercy and blessing be upon you

I'd just like to apologise for my laziness with the research project, because of my personal circumstances. But I'd like to keep you as my supervisor and I hope you can forgive me and that we can start with a clean slate. I promise that you'll be proud of me and the dissertation. I'm going to do my best in the next weeks and work hard, God willing.

Thanks

Your brother the student

---

[25] Y is the person's surname here and henceforth.

XZ[26] Y

(Written by MS4, a male postgraduate student to his male supervisor)

Example (9) – thanking – in English:

Hello Dr.

I would like to thank you deeply for helping me through the long journey of application. It took me months to finish all that mess of applying abroad and you have been there for me. Thank you for all the recommendation letters you send and for all your valuable advises. Thank you for your patience and commitment. I have been a headache, I know. It is all over now and I am waiting for the results. All I need now is your prayers to get an acceptance in the best place that would suit me and my family.

Regards

X

(Written by FL3, a female lecturer to another senior female lecturer)

Example (10) – phatic communication[27] – in English:

Hi Dr. X

Really I don't know what to say or how to thank you. What amazing doctor you are. Really you you made me so happy. Thank you very much. And I didn't forget to pray to god to give you whatever you want or ask him in your whole life inshalaa [if Allah's willing]. You really deserve it

Agene and agene thank you so much

Your student

 X X X

(Written by FS1, a female student to her female lecturer)

---

[26] Z is the person's middle name here and henceforth.

[27] In some cases, classifying an email is not quite straight forward as there might be an overlap. For instance in example 10, the email could be classified in terms of purpose either as phatic communication or as thanking. However, since most of the email was about complimenting the interlocutor and praying for her, I decided to classify it as a phatic email.

Various emails were sent for purposes other than the previously mentioned types, such as lecturers replying to their students' questions, or postgraduate students who wrote to their supervisors to inform them about the progress of their work and relevant details.

3.9 Limitations of the Study

Since the data sample size was limited, this study is not aiming to generalise its findings to all of the Saudi population or even to all students and lecturers in Saudi Arabia. The email data in this study was collected from a heterogeneous and mixed set of participants from different faculties, specialties, backgrounds and ages, and who were enrolled in different Saudi universities. The relatively small number of emails that were collected was due to the privacy of the email messages which made it challenging to collect them, and then to interview people about them as well. Apart from the limited sample size, there are other limitations in relation to the email sample which may have had a possible influence on the results. For instance, the sample lacked student-to-student email data to balance out the lecturer-to-lecturer emails. In addition, the fact that the participants self-selected the data that they submitted meant that the sample might have had fewer forwarded messages involving face-threat. It was also unclear as to which messages were sent one-to-one and which were to groups, and which messages were the first in an exchange. These two limitations might have had an impact on the quantitative data in relation to openings and closings. Finally, the lack of more specific information about the participants' social roles (e.g. the rank of lecturers, the undergraduate/postgraduate status of students) meant that additional nuanced analysis within each role was not possible.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the methodological framework of the research and provided an overview of the email data. The current research involves an exploratory sociolinguistic study of the key areas of politeness in Saudi academic emails. In this study, the choice of research method, data collection method and analysis was made according to the research topic and questions. A mixed methods research approach was adopted which combined both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This was so as to consider the

various strategies found in the emails and in the data gathered from semi-structured interviews in relation to their potential for indicating politeness and giving rise to rapport between participants. This mixed methods approach also provided an in- depth examination of the phenomena under investigation. In terms of the sampling method that was used to collect the email data, a convenience sampling method was adopted.

In this chapter, I also reviewed the various different aspects of the dataset to provide the backdrop to the detailed analysis illustrated in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7. This included the word length of the emails, the language of the emails, the sex of participants involved in the interaction, the direction of communication between email participants, and the topic and purpose of the emails. In the next analytical chapters, I will demonstrate how the choice and form of the email strategy will differ according to the sex of the email sender, and how the direction of communication (whether upward or downward) will be shown in the opening and closing chapter.

Chapter 4:   Openings and Closings in Saudi Emails

4.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the openings and closings of the emails found in the data that was collected for this study. In particular, the openings and closings which occurred in the emails exchanged between Saudi students and lecturers have been explored in relation to their potential for indicating politeness, giving rise to a rapport between the participants (see chapter 2, Section 2.4). This chapter builds on the previous literature on openings and closings to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent do participants use openings and closings, and how does the use of opening and closing features in the emails vary according to both the sex and role of the participants?
2. Which features are used in the openings and closings of emails?
3. What do the features used in the opening mean to the participants in this study in terms of rapport-building strategies?
4. What is the difference between the participants' practices and perceptions regarding the features typically found in openings and closings in the Saudi Arabian context?

In this chapter, I will provide some background from previous research studies on opening and closing in Section 4.2, which includes the functions of openings and closings, and the factors that influence the choice of openings and closings. Section 4.3 will be devoted to the forms of openings and closings that were used in the previous work, and the opening and closing patterns that are specific to the Saudi context along with a number of examples from the current data. In Section 4.4, both the quantitative (Section 4.4.1) and qualitative (4.4.2) findings will be discussed. Section 4.5 provides a brief overview of the findings in this chapter. Many findings in this chapter were consistent with previous studies, e.g., that despite the fact that openings and closings are optional (Crystal, 2001, 2006), the majority of participants still started their emails with openings, and ended them with closings as a rapport-enhancing strategy, to establish and maintain solidarity in interpersonal communication. This study also found

that there were some differences in the use, choice and form of opening/closing used in Saudi Arabia, and in other studies. For instance, in a Saudi context, the participants tended to resort to using the addressee's first name combined either with titles, greetings or salutations. Thus, H*i + title + first name initial; Hello + surname; and Dear Sir* are examples of the opening patterns that were not used in the Saudi academic context.

4.2 Background and Previous Research on Openings and Closings

Openings are conventionally thought of as the first portion of a message, with closings being the last portion of a message, which can include a range of different features. Bou-Franch (2011: 1772) identified opening and closing linguistic conventions as a form of "*discursive practice*[28]" that any society member might employ. Brown and Levinson (1987: 235-236) fore-grounded openings and closings as politeness strategies and social lubricants in interpersonal communication, which implicitly shows their rapport-building potential. Das and Herring (2016: 55) provided a brief outline of greetings in terms of politeness, which is "a common politeness ritual in opening moves". A greeting expression was referred to by Crystal (2001: 106) as a "greeting formula". In contrast, Waldvogel (2007: 460) described greetings and closings as "*politeness markers*" which are "oriented to the addressee's face needs". In this work, I will follow Waldvogel (2007: 460), who gave an operational definition of an email opening as "the use of a person's name and or greeting word to initiate the email" and closing as "any name sign-off, farewell formula (e.g., cheers), or phatic comment (e.g., Have a good day) used to end the email". Since prefacing a message with an opening and ending it with a closing was argued, in previous literature, to have a positive impact on the receiver for establishing

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[28] Discursive practice is a "theory of the linguistic and socio-cultural characteristics of recurring episodes of face- to-face interaction; episodes that have social and cultural significance to a community of speakers" (Young, 2009: 270).

rapport (Page, 2014: 4) and facilitating social interpersonal relationships (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 235-236), this study will adopt and build on this claim and assume that openings and closings are rapport-building strategies (see section 2.4). Despite the numerous definitions and descriptions of openings and closings in the previous research literature being contradictory at times, they have all shaped the studies that have emerged about these interactive features.

4.2.1 An Overview of Message Openings and Closings in Previous Literature

A message opening and closing/farewell is seen of as an important resource and an interesting area of study that continues to attract scholarly attention (Goffman, 1967; Coulmas, 1981; Sherblom, 1988; Crystal, 2001; Waldvogel, 2007; Bagwasi, 2008; Bou-Franch, 2011; Page, 2014 and Chejnova, 2014).Most of the pragmatic studies have looked at openings and closings situated within naturally-occurring data, such as letters, which are the offline antecedent from which emails originated (Bagwasi, 2008), spontaneous conversations (Rababa'h and Malkawi, 2012 and Turjoman, 2005), and social media contexts such as Twitter (Page, 2014) and Orkut[29] (Das and Herring, 2016). Additionally, some of the linguistic studies that have explored openings and closings in authentic data investigated them in emails that were particularly exchanged in the academic context (Crystal, 2001; Waldvogel, 2007; Bou-Franch, 2011; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Chejnova, 2014 and Hallajian and David, 2014). Few studies on message openings and closings explored openings and closings from a pragmatic dimension (i.e. Bagwasi, 2008), whereas Waldvogel (2007) and Bou-Franch (2011) examined openings and closings using discourse and conversation analysis approaches. Page (2014) looked at openings and closings in relation to rapport, in a different mode of CMC; specifically, Twitter. Openings and closings were investigated in a range of other languages (other than English), such as Spanish (Bou-Franch, 2011); Czech (Chejnova,

[29] Orkut is a social networking site that was designed by Google and is (according to Das and Herring (2016) extensively used in South Asia.

2014); Jordanian Arabic (Al-Nasser, 1993 and Rababa'h and Malkawi, 2012); and Saudi Arabic (Turjoman, 2005). Many of the above named studies dealt with both openings and closings.

Two of the previous studies are particularly important for the interpretation of the data collected for this thesis. Waldvogel (2007) looked at the relationship between greetings and closings, and workplace culture using different evidence, including interview surveys. She compared the manufacturing and educational contexts. She concluded that in the manufacturing sector, there was more solidarity and the culture was friendlier, because she found that greetings and closings were used more in the manufacturing than in the educational sector. Waldvogel (ibid.) also looked at other evidence and features (e.g., thanking) in the same study. Page (2014) investigated the use of openings and closings in apologies posted on Twitter and its relationship to rapport. She found that employing greetings and closings on Twitter conveys social distance rather than rapport. Most of the previous studies on openings and closings (except Page, 2014) did not talk about rapport, although in their interpretation of the data, the notion of rapport (see Section 2.5) was sometimes implied.

While most of the politeness studies on openings and closings, as stated above, remain influential in both linguistic and pragmatics fields, it is important to have a closer look at the methodologies that were used and to take into account limitations and other aspects that may affect the results. In terms of the data, Bagwasi (2008) examined openings and closings in letters that were sent during the period 1885-1966, which may not accurately represent letters that are written nowadays. Rababa'h and Malkawi (2012) examined 100 spontaneous conversations, and drew on literature and models that were published in the period between 1968 and 1998. In Rababa'h and Malkawi's (2012) study, there seems to be nothing in relation to politeness work beyond the mid-1990s. Unlike Rababa'h and Malkawi (2012) who used authentic data, Lee and Park (2010) explored data that was not authentic, but rather, was artificial. In Lee and Park's (2010) study, the participants were asked to write a message for a given situation through a questionnaire, by using open-ended direction to elicit their responses. Chejnova's (2014) email data (260 email messages) was all addressed to the same

female lecturer (the author) and had been sent by students of Humanities only in the Czech Republic. This might influence students' choice of openings and closings. Waldvogel (2007), who compared the organisational and manufacturing sectors in their use of openings and closings, also collected emails, although not the same number of emails from both sectors. The educational emails that were collected were over three times more (394 emails) compared to the manufacturing number of emails (121 emails), which also might have affected Waldvogel's (2007) findings. Apart from exploring the types of data that some of the previous material drew on, it is also useful to shed a light on some of the methods that were employed in the previous studies on politeness, especially in terms of a first-second order distinction (see section 2.5).

Some of the previous politeness work adopted a second-order approach, such as Lee and Park's (2010) interpretation of the results. They relied on the analyst's judgment of whether an utterance or item was polite or not, without taking the participants' perspective into consideration. Similarly, Chejnova (2014) analysed her data mainly according to Brown and Levinson's model, without taking into account a first order politeness approach which is more participant-focused. Despite the numerous studies that focused on openings and closings, most of them were text-based (Sherblom, 1988; Bagwasi, 2008; Rababa'h and Malkawi, 2012; Lee and Park, 2010; Economou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Chejnova, 2014; Bou-Franch, 2011; Page, 2014) which seems to warrant adopting a second order of politeness (Watts et. al, 1992) approach. Nevertheless, there are a few studies that have taken the participants' perception into account. In Waldvogel's (2007) study, the participants were surveyed about their use, attitude and practices regarding emails. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) used a perception questionnaire to elicit the participants' (particularly lecturers) perceptions through a questionnaire that included many authentic students' emails. The respondents were then asked to imagine that they received the emails from one of their students, and were asked to provide their perception by evaluating each given email on a 5-point Likert scale in terms of both politeness and abruptness. They were also asked to explain their choice. Neither of the studies overlooked the participants' perspective, but they did not canvass them through interviews. However, the current study combines both quantitative and qualitative

approaches, which helps in analysing the data while taking into consideration the participants' perspectives obtained through interviews.

Some of the previous studies explored openings and closings in Arabic (Rababa'h and Malkawi, 2012). However, there is a lack of studies that have focused on the Saudi dialect and context (except Turjoman, 2005). In her study that explored openings and 203 leave-takings in authentic data recorded from people's gathering, Turjoman (2005: 142) proposed a proto-type of leave-taking in a Saudi context consisting of the following stages:

- Permission to leave
- Denial of the permission
- Excuse to take leave
- Reason to stay (optional)
- Agreement
- Leave-taking formulaic expression
- Reply to leave-taking

However, these steps seem to be restricted to face-to-face spoken leave-takings when people are physically in the same place, which may not be applicable to CMC. Thus, this present study is considered to be important not only because a new cultural context has been taken into account, but also because the current study has a balanced data sample (based on gender of the participants) and uses more up to date politeness approaches (Watts 1992; Mills 2003 and Spencer-Oatey, 2000) that combine both first and second order perspectives by looking at the contents of the emails and the interview data (see Chapter 3). From all the above discussion of definitions and previous studies on closings, there are many functions that closings may serve in a given message that were pointed out either explicitly or implicitly in the definitions of closings mentioned.

4.2.2 Functions of Openings and Closings

While including an opening and closing in an email is considered optional, compared to the obligatory main body of the email (Crystal, 2001: 104), there are many previous studies that have highlighted the importance of including an opening and closing in an email, message or letter (Goffman, 1967; Angel & Heclop, 1994; Waldvogel, 2007 and

Bagwasi, 2008).There is a degree of rapport-enhancing potential in starting a message with an opening and/or ending it with a closing. In an email guide book that suggests some useful techniques for writing a better email within a shorter amount of time, it was pointed out that an email opening adds a "friendly touch" to an email and gives it a more personal flavour (Angell & Heclop, 1994: 21-22). However, the rapport potential of an opening varies in level from one message opening to another. Some openings seem to be more rapport-building than others through showing more solidarity, for instance, through the use of cultural forms of address when contacting people within the same hierarchical level or when a message is directed downward but not upward. In contrast, other openings convey more respect or project distance. Thus, the notion of rapport may sometimes be expanded as there seems to be a scale of rapport potential (see Figure 4-1 below).

This scale varies from a lower level of rapport-building strategy that implies a lesser level of solidarity, to a higher level of rapport-building strategy which seems to project greater solidarity. Starting a message with a greeting/salutation with an address form (or a friendly address form which is not directed upward) is an example of an opening form that is positioned on the right edge of the scale as a more rapport-building strategy which also shows respect and care for the addressee's face needs. Thus, it could be interpreted as being more polite. In contrast, starting a message directly with the addressee's first name alone or combining a name with the person's title may be placed on the left edge of the scale as a less rapport-building strategy that may not necessarily imply a lack of respect, but perhaps conveys a lesser level of deference. So, on this scale of rapport potential, the concept of respect/deference is flexible and can contribute to the items that are positioned anywhere on the scale. This is because some types of openings and greetings may show both solidarity and respect at the same time, e.g., the use of *dear* or socio-religious salutations (which will be shown in the discussion of the interview data). The greater the potential for an opening to be rapport building does not necessarily imply more respect and vice versa.

- Solidarity   + Solidarity

<———>

Less rapport building/managing   More rapport building/managing

Figure 4-1: The proposed scale of rapport potential

In Arabic, there is a common proverb that also suggests the use of greeting as *a conversation opener* "السلام يجر كلام". It translates literally in to English as "salutation pulls speech", which means that greeting someone encourages them to speak to you. Similarly, in a study that investigated differences and similarities in letter writing, Bagwasi (2008: 530) found that the function of greetings was twofold. Firstly, greetings were employed as a "conversation opener". Secondly, they were used as an essential technique by the writer to try to satisfy the other person and thereby to try and gain social approval. According to Goffman (1967: 41), the aim of a greeting is that it "compensates for the weakening of the relationship caused by the absence just terminated". Apart from the important role that they play in establishing social relationships, greetings also contribute to introducing business matters. Waldvogel (2007: 14) demonstrated that openings and closings help to establish and maintain relationships at work.

In terms of closings, Waldvogel (2007: 457) pointed out that using a closing promotes rapport and "establish[es] a relational basis for future encounters". As illustrated in Section 4.2 above, closings were also described as politeness strategies and social lubricant in interpersonal communications. A closing might show that a message is more or less friendly, and possibly the degree of formality that it conveys as well. For example, ending a message with *See you soon* or *Have a nice day/weekend* for instance, is perhaps perceived as less formal, or even informal and more friendly compared to ending it with *Thank you*, for example (see participants perspective in Section 4.4.2). An email closing marks a communicative unit and shows that the message has come to an end, which according to Crystal (2006: 110), functions as a "boundary marker". It adds a more personal flavour to an email, by offering a more precise identification of the sender. It also has "an extended identity function" which introduces the sender to both the recipient and to others who may receive the message (ibid.).

An email identity/identification (here and henceforth, referred to as ID) could be added either manually or automatically (Crystal, 2006: 108). The manual signature could occur by adding the sender's first name, initial letter, or first name coupled with the surname. It is also possible to have the title, qualification or the name of the organisation after the sender's name depending on the "formality of the message" (ibid: 108). Crystal (2006: 109) also noted that a signature can also be added automatically "by the mailer software, using text created by the sender and stored in a file". It marks a communicative unit and shows that the message has come to an end, which according to Crystal (2006: 110), functions as a "boundary marker". It adds a more personal flavour to an email, by offering a more precise identification of the sender. It also has "an extended identity function" which introduces the sender to both the recipient and to others who may receive the message (ibid.). An email identity/identification (here and henceforth ID) could be added either manually or automatically (Crystal, 2006: 108). A closing can also express different types of feelings, intent and future expectations. According to Crystal (2006: 108), a closing formula can show "affection, gratitude, expectation, communicative intent, and so on: Lots of love, Thanks for everything, See you soon, Let me know if this isn't clear, etc.*" Closings may as well function as a text mitigator for minimising FTAs and projecting relative distance in interpersonal relations (Spilioti, 2011: 81).

Apart from having a rapport-building impact, a closing might also be considered as rapport threatening. Based on Brown and Levinson's (1987: 70) perception of politeness, a leave-taking is considered as an FTA since it threatens the host/ess' negative face by impeding on their "basic want to maintain claims to territory and self-determination". Turjoman (2005: 143) argued that in Saudi Arabia, leave-taking not only threatens the host/ess face, but the guest's face as well, when the guest becomes unsure about the right time to leave. In order to minimise the FTA that arises from leave-taking, excuses are often provided by the guest prior to leaving. The host then resorts to refusing and making an effort to convince the guest to stay (ibid.: 144). Apart from the different functions that a message opening and closing may have, there are also various factors that have an impact on the choice of openings and closings, which will be discussed in the next section.

4.2.3 Factors that Influence the Choice of Openings and Closings

Drawing on the previous research literature, a range of factors can influence the choice and presence of opening features. Social distance (for the definition of social distance see Section 2.2.1) is one of the factors that affects the choice and use of openings in exchanged messages and emails.

The study of openings and closings in email correspondence highlighted the potential influence of the participants' status and social position on their choice of opening and closing strategy. Social status[30] also affects the choice and use of openings and closings. In the current study, social status was determined through the direction of communication and whether a message was sent upward to a person of higher status in the organisational hierarchy or downward to an inferior-status individual. Bou-Franch (2011: 1779) found that despite the salient presence of greetings in the opening move in online interaction, greetings occurred slightly less in emails that were sent down to inferior-status people. Similarly, Waldvogel (2007) found that greetings tended to be involved in emails that were sent up to superiors. Sherblom (1988: 49-50) explored the effect of social status on the use of particular forms of closing, specifically signatures, in emails that were sent to managers in a business organisation, and concluded that employing a signature could exhibit and build power relations. This is because Sherblom found that emails sent up the hierarchy were more often signed than those sent to an equal. Waldvogel (2007: 467) also pointed out that one way of conveying deference and respect, and thereby attributing the recipient as having a higher status, is by including a closing to a message. In the educational sector, Waldvogel found that messages that were sent upward in the hierarchy (96%) tended to be signed more than those sent down (57 %), which also agrees with Sherblom's (1988) finding. Waldvogel (2007: 467) also found that in his data, half of the messages that were sent to equals contained a

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[30] Vollmer and Olshtain (1989, 200) described social status as "the perception of power relations" in different situations.

closing, which according to Waldvogel, signals more solidarity between people with an equal position.

There also tends to be a relationship between the inclusion of a greeting or closing, and the gender/sex of the participants. Waldvogel (2007: 470) found that in the educational sector, women tended to acknowledge the recipient in greetings and ending with their names more compared to men.

The opening and closing of a message may be influenced by whether the message is an exchange opener or not: an exchange opener is more likely to include both openings and closings.

The response time between receiving a message and replying to it may also affect the choice or inclusion of a greeting or not. According to Crystal (2006: 105), the later the response is, the more it is expected to start with a greeting. Crystal (ibid.) also found that in his email data, the emails that lacked greetings were because people sent a reply to a previous message promptly, which in his study, made the replier think that the message did not need a greeting. This idea might be demonstrated using a scale of response time and rapidity in CMC (see Figure 4-2).

More greetings needed   Less greetings needed

⟵——————————————————————————⟶

Less rapid return time   More rapid return Time

Figure 4-2: The Scale of Response Time and Rapidity in CMC

As shown in Figure 4-2 above, and based on Crystal (2006: 105), the more rapid the return time to a received message, the less need there is for greetings, whereas the longer the return time, the greater the need for greetings. It is perhaps because the closer the interaction comes to synchronous exchange, the more it feels like a spoken conversation and thus the responder perceives the message as "the second part of a two-part interaction (an adjacency-pair)" (Crystal, 2006: 35/105).

The purpose and time of the email can also determine the choice of opening and closing features. Examples from the data (see Examples 1 and 2 below) suggest that on many occasions, there was a rapport building/maintaining potential through the choice

of the closing formula that was relevant to the purpose and time of the message. For instance, when the student submitted his work late (Example 1 below) and when the female lecturer could not do what she had promised the student to do (fill in the questionnaire and send it back to him) on time, as Example 2 attests.

Example (1) – in Arabic:

تحياتي لك

و اعتذر عن التأخير

My respect to you

And I apologise for the delay

Yours Sincerely

And sorry for the delay

(Written by MS3, a post-graduate student to his supervisor)

Example (2) – in Arabic:

أعتذر لك مرة أخرى

دمت بخير

I apologise again

May you be fine

Sorry again

Take care

(Written by FL1, a female lecturer to her student)

Both the student and the lecturer, when sending the required task back after the delay, ended their emails with an apology (*and sorry for the delay* and *sorry again* respectively). This is to acknowledge any inconvenience caused by them and functions as a rapport-enhancing strategy to build and maintain the solidarity between them. Similarly, on occasions where socio-religious prayers were used in the data, their choice seemed to

adhere to the purpose of the email (for more explanations and examples about socio-religious prayers see Section 4.3.2). In the Saudi context, all of the above factors have shaped and influenced the linguistic form of the openings and closings, as I will demonstrate in the rest of this chapter.

4.3 The Forms

4.3.1 The Forms of Openings

Based on the previous studies (Crystal, 2001; Waldvogel, 2007; Bagwasi, 2008 and Bou-Franch, 2011), there are a variety of opening features that are commonly used at the beginning of an email message. Table 4-1 below demonstrates the various studies that have explored each opening feature with the relevant examples from the current study.

The opening feature	Studies where the feature was reviewed	Example[31] from the data
Dear x (x is the first name)	Crystal, 2006; Waldvogel, 2007 and Bou-Franch, 2011	Dear X (first name)
Hi x	Crystal, 2006; Waldvogel, 2007 and Bou-Franch, 2011	Hi X
Hi Professor (or any other title) D (first name initial)	Crystal, 2006 and Bagwasi, 2008	No examples
Hello Y (Y is the surname)	Crystal, 2006	No examples
Hello X	Bou-Franch, 2011	Hello X
Dear Mr. Wales (lives in Wales)[32]	Crystal, 2006	No examples
Dear X Y	Crystal, 2006	Dear X Y
Dear all (when sending to a group)	Crystal, 2006	Dear all, If there is any complaint about your

[31] In cases were the emails were originally written in Arabic, the original Arabic text (from the emails) are provided here and henceforth.
[32] This opening is a computer generated error that Crystal received as part of an email in his junk mail.

		grading, Please contact me in Email
Dear list member (when sending to a group list)	Crystal, 2006	No examples
Good morning all (when sending to a group)	Waldvogel, 2007 and Rababa'h and Malkawi, 2012	No examples
Good day	Chejnova, 2014	Good day Dr. X (first name)
X	Waldvogel, 2007; Bou-Franch, 2011	No examples
Dear sir	Bagwasi, 2008	No examples
Your honor	Bagwasi, 2008	No examples were found at the beginning of an email
Honored + title	Bagwasi, 2008	سعادة الدكتور Xحفظه الله Honor Doctor X (first name) may Allah bless him

Table 4-1: Opening features found in research literature with examples from the email data

As shown in Table 4-1 above, many but not all of the opening features found in earlier studies also occurred in the email data set considered in my research. The following patterns: *Hi + title + first name initial; Hello + surname*; *Dear list member*; *Good morning all: First name only; Dear sir;* and *Your honour* did not occur in any of the emails exchanged between the students and lecturers in the Saudi context. This may be because, in Saudi culture, the most common polite way to address a person is to use the addressee's first name combined with another form of address or greeting (e.g., socio-religious greeting, or the person's title), especially if the addressee is a stranger (social distance is high) or belongs to a higher hierarchical level (e.g., a student contacting a lecturer or supervisor). Thus, it is inappropriate[33] in a Saudi context to address a person using the addressee's surname and title, as might be the case in Western contexts, to use titles that depend on the social status and social distance between interlocutors, or first name without a title. However, using the addressee's first name, regardless of what

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[33] The notion of appropriateness will be discussed later in this section.

it is combined with, helps in establishing and maintaining a rapport with the addressee. In the current data, most of the emails were either exchanged between students and lecturers, and just a few of them were between colleagues. The students in the Saudi academic context tend to call faculty members by their titles, e.g., *Dr.* alone, or coupled with the first name, so the address form of *Dear sir* is an uncommon form that is not expected, and indeed, was absent in the Saudi context.

In the current study, an opening could start with a formulaic greeting, such as a salutation e.g. *Hi* or *Hello* that is often combined with the recipient's first name, as illustrated in the following couple of examples.

Example (4) – in English:

Hi X

(Written by FL4, a female lecturer to her student)

Example (5) – in English:

Hello X

(Written by FL4, a female lecturer to her student)

However, sometimes a writer might start off baldly, by stating the recipient's name combined with the title, without preceding it with any type of salutation. As discussed earlier, this might be taken as a less rapport-building strategy.

Example (6) – in Arabic:

د. X

السلام عليكم

Dr. X

Peace be upon you

(Written by ML1, a male lecturer to a colleague)

Example (7) – in Arabic:

م. X

مرفق لكم عرض ندوة الأربعاء

Eng. X [Eng. Is a formal title for engineer in Saudi Arabia]

Enclosed to you [plural] a presentation about Wednesday's seminar

Mr. X

Please find attached a presentation about the seminar or Wednesday

(Written by ML1, a male lecturer to a colleague)

As shown in Example 6, although the writer chose to start his message with an un-prefaced opening form, he followed this up with a socio-religious salutation. The effect of this sequencing is ambiguous, for although the socio-religious greeting is appropriate and shows concern for the addressee's face needs, it may not have the same level of effect on the addressee as if the salutation had been stated earlier. This is because the socio-religious salutation *peace be upon you* is a crucial politeness strategy that conveys solidarity and rapport in communication (Turjoman, 2005: 83). Thus, the lack of a salutation in Example 7 conveys a lesser degree of rapport and solidarity, and thus lies on the left side of the rapport potential scale, regardless of the form of address, i.e., title plus first name (see Figure 4-1, Section 4.4.).

A writer of an email might also start their email by an honorific term such as *Honour*ed which is sometimes combined with a salutation or greeting. In the current data, this opening pattern was mostly used in asymmetrical relations, particularly when someone in a lower hierarchical level was contacting a person in an upper hierarchical level to show more respect to the addressee.

Example (8) – in Arabic:

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته وبعد
سعادة الدكتور X حفظه الله ووفقه

May Allah's peace, mercy and blessing be upon you and after

Honoured Doctor X may Allah bless him and grant him success

May Allah's peace, mercy and blessing be upon you

Honoured Doctor X may Allah bless you and grant you success

(Written by MS3, a male student to his supervisor)

Honorifics are described as "direct grammatical encodings of relative social status between participants, or between participants and persons or things referred to in the communicative event" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 276). According to Pizziconi (2011, 45), an honorific is a linguistic device that functions as a deference marker to people of higher status. According to Hudson (2011, 3690), people's speech varies depending on who is listening to them. In an interview that was conducted by Kokuritsu-Kokugo-Kenkyujo (2008: 72-73) college students in Japan reported that they used casual forms of language when interacting with friends and honorifics when communicating with their professors and supervisors; these choices suggest that social distance and status do play a role in the use of opening choice in emails. Indeed, the way that the speaker evaluates the addressee influences the use of honorifics more than the relative status between the speaker and the hearer (Tsujimura, 1992).

In emails, a salutation may include a formulaic greeting like *Hi* or *Hello* for instance that is not bound to a specific time. It also may include phrases such as *good morning/afternoon*, which are to some extent conversational, more expected in spoken discourse and are considered to be time specific.

Example (9) – in Arabic:

مساء الخير دكتور X

Good afternoon, Doctor X

(Written by MS2, a male student to his supervisor)

Apart from the time specific forms of greetings, there is also a common type of opening that seems to be only used in written forms of interactions which is the "endearment" (Crystal, 2006: 106) term of deference *Dear*. *Dear* is employed as a rapport managing strategy that is normally coupled with the first name. This opening item was used more in the current data set in the emails that were originally sent in English, as shown in the following couple of examples.

Example (10) – in English:

Dear X

(Written by FL1, a female lecturer to her student)

Example (11) – in English:

Dear X Y

(Written by ML4, a male lecturer to his student)

Goffman (1967: 56) described deference as an appreciation that is shown to others through the use of actions or words. According to Goffman, deference is exhibited in "salutation, compliments, and apologies" that signal social relations and was identified by him as a "status ritual" or "interpersonal ritual". Goffman (1967: 60) considered deference to be what a subordinate owes to someone higher up in the hierarchy (superior-status people). The deference item *Dear* is used as a rapport-enhancing strategy at the beginning of an email, especially between interactants with an asymmetrical status because of its more formal quality. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011: 3209) considered openings that lacked the term of deference *Dear* to be very direct, and maybe even abrupt. Although still linguistically acceptable, Economidou-Kogetsidis also concluded that the absence of the address strategy and lack of a term of deference, *Dear* may lead to pragmatic failures in asymmetrical electronic communication. For example, in the case of a student emailing a lecturer, the lack of address and term of deference may impose on the lecturer, implying that there is "*no choice in complying with the request*" and simultaneously "failing to acknowledge the imposition involved" (ibid.: 3193).

The email data collected for the present thesis contained some opening features, particularly salutations that were not covered in the previous studies. In addition to the previous opening features (stated in Table 4-1 earlier), the following list of items and patterns were included:

- Hello/Hi Dr.

- Peace be upon you (the short form)[34]

- May Allah's peace, mercy and blessing be upon you (long form)

- Cultural address form[35]

In the email data, there were some instances where the students used either the formulaic greeting or the salutation *Hello/Hi* combined with a *title* on its own, without adding the recipient's name. This form of greeting is more likely to be a spoken form of greeting, as, in Saudi Arabia, the students normally call a faculty member *Doctor* on its own. This is without necessarily adding a name in English and Arabic, which therefore might be transformed into their writing style, as demonstrated in the following set of examples.

Example (12) – in Arabic:

السلام عليكم د

Peace be upon you Dr.

(Written by FS1, a female student to her male lecturer)

Example (13) – in English:

Hello Dr.[36]

(Written by FL3, a female lecturer to a colleague who is a senior lecturer)

In the Saudi academic context, an email writer not only has the option to use formulaic greetings, but also has the choice to couple a greeting with a socio-religious salutation as an attempt to establish or maintain solidarity and rapport with the addressee.

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[34] Both *peace be upon you* and *May Allah's peace, mercy and blessing be upon you* occurred in the Arabic emails as السلام عليكم و رحمة الله و بركاته and السلام عليكم respectively.
[35] Cultural address forms were found in both the English and Arabic email data.
[36] The opening strategies that seem to be appropriate and common in Arabic e.g. coupling the greeting with a title were transferred to English, since this email was originally written in English, although in English, surname is needed.

Example (14) – in English:

Dear Prof X

Alssalamalaikum [peace be upon you]

(Written by FL1, a female lecturer to a colleague)

In some cases, a religious salutation is used on its own, in its short form of *peace be upon you*. This form of greeting might be perceived as a less rapport managing/building strategy (i.e. lying to the left side of the rapport potential scale (Figure 5-1) as compared to combining it with an appropriate address form. For instance, *peace be upon you* is a generic formulaic salutation that may be used for anyone, as shown in example 15 below. Thus, by coupling the *socio-religious salutation* with an addressee's *name*, the writer would be able to perhaps personalise it, which is also the case with the elaborated form in example 16.

Example (15) - in Arabic:

السلام عليكم

Peace be upon you

(Written by ML1, a male supervisor)

Sometimes the elaborated form of the *socio-religious salutation* is used, which seems to be, to some extent, more formal compared to the short form.

Example (16) – in Arabic:

السلام عليكم و رحمة الله و بركاته

May Allah's peace, mercy and blessing be upon you

(Written by FL3, a female lecturer to her students)

Blum-Kulka (1992: 275) argued that there is a relationship between the selection of "*linguistic encoding*" and a conveyed social meaning on some occasions and in relation to some speech acts. Based on Blum-Kulka's (ibid.: 276) scale of social meanings,

politeness is attached to appropriateness[37] and tactfulness, which thus are determined by cultural expectations for what constitutes appropriate social behaviour. This relationship (between politeness and appropriateness) was also evident in my data and discussion as examples 19, 20 and 21 attest. In this study, I will expand on Blum-Kulka (1992: 276) to produce Figure 5-3.

Inappropriate   Appropriate

⟵————————————————————————————————⟶

Less polite   Polite

Rapport threatening   Rapport building

Figure 4-3: The proposed scale of appropriateness

As shown in Figure 4-3 above, the right side of the scale constitutes the following items: *appropriate*, *polite* and *rapport building*. In contrast, on the left side of the scale, there is a cluster that includes *inappropriate*, *less polite* and *rapport-threatening*. However, this display or grouping of items on the scale is not set in stone, as each item is independent of the others. An appropriate linguistic form tends (but is not guaranteed) to be considered polite and rapport-building, whereas the items *inappropriate*, *less polite* and *rapport threatening* are more likely to go together, all of which will be revealed in the following discussions on the opening features that were employed in the current data[38].

The writer of an email may choose to employ what is referred to in this study as *cultural address forms* to establish or maintain rapport and solidarity with the recipient. Cultural address forms are perceived as an important resource that convey a range of rapport meanings. For example, people in Saudi Arabia might address a person using a

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[37] Locher (2004: 90) described appropriateness as "a synonym to politic behaviour". According to her, what is appropriate "depends on the speech situation with all its facets" (ibid.).
[38] "Dear sir" is, in a Saudi context, an example at an intermediate point in this scale between the two extremes. This is because "Dear sir" is neither inappropriate nor appropriate, but rather uncommon and not appropriate in the Saudi context and culture.

generic term such as *sister* or *brother,* either on its own or with the first name, at the beginning of a message which normally has a positive effect on the recipient in promoting rapport in interpersonal communications.

Example (17) – in Arabic:

الإخوة الزملاء المرشحين

Brothers, Colleagues, Candidates

(Written by ML1, a male lecturers to a group of colleagues)

This use of *brothers* as a type of cultural address form is particularly culturally specific, since it is the Saudi and most specifically, the Islamic convention, that all people are brothers and sisters as they are originally the offspring of Adam and thus should always cooperate and be friendly to each other. The specific cultural address terms *brother* and *sister* are common address forms that are normally used in formal contexts where social distance exists, as in the following example.

Example (18) – in Arabic:

الأخ الطالب X بن ZY

السلام عليكم و رحمة الله و بركاته

The brother the student/ X son of Z Y

May Allah's peace, mercy and blessing be upon you

(Written by ML2, a male lecturer to his student)

In Example 18 above, the male lecturer chose to use a rapport-enhancing strategy which not only had potential to promote rapport and solidarity between him and his student, but also helped him to establish a humble identity for himself. In this study, although the cultural address term *brother* tends to be employed in formal contexts where social distance occurs, it also seems to minimise the gap between the lecturer and the recipient. Both *brother* and *sister* exhibits certain levels of equality, which is not always acceptable to have in a country like Saudi Arabia with high power dynamics and a distance culture (Bjereke and Al-Meer, 2006). The lecturer in Example 18 above seemed to be aware of the effect that the generic cultural address item might have created in minimising the gap and establishing solidarity, so she chose to balance this through

adding another generic item - *the student* - to maintain social distance and to keep the relationship formal between them.

Although using a cultural address form by a lecturer when addressing a student might be a rapport enhancing strategy that establishes friendliness and solidarity between them (which lies on the right side of the rapport potential scale), it sometimes leads to a collapse in a hierarchy, which may affect the hearer negatively. Using the term *brother*, for instance, is normally accepted when a message is directed downward (as shown in Example 18 earlier) or when the interaction is between people of the same hierarchical level (as demonstrated in Example 17 earlier). However, in a Saudi Arabian academic context, it is not considered appropriate for a student to use the term *brother* when addressing a tutor. This did not stop students using this strategy, though, as the following example attests.

Example (19) – in Arabic:

أخي العزيز

My dear brother

(Written by MS1, a male student to his supervisor)

People may sometimes choose to ignore starting a message with an opening and rather, start the email baldly by going directly to the topic. This is perhaps to save time or because the message itself was given more priority than the way that it was delivered. However, the absence of an opening may result in the message being perceived as less appropriate and less polite, and thus becomes rapport threatening, as shown in Examples 20 and 21 below (see the participants' perspective about this in Section 4.4.2).

Example (20) – in Arabic:

انتظري اتصالي

Wait for my call

(Written by ML3, a male lecturer to his female student)

Example (21) – in Arabic:

ماهو رأيك و ملاحظاتك حول عنوان الورقة العلمية

What's your opinion and comments about the title of the scientific paper?

What feedback do you have about the title of the article?

(Written by MS2, a male student to his supervisor)

Thus, the various forms of opening and greetings encompass a range of politeness strategies, which are considered appropriate, less appropriate or inappropriate according to context. The more appropriate the opening or greeting form is, the more likely it is to be polite, and consequently, the more rapport building it is likely to be. (see Figure 4-3 earlier). In contrast, the more inappropriate the form of opening or greeting is, the less polite, and consequently the more rapport threatening that it becomes (as shown in Example 19 earlier). However, as I will demonstrate in Section 4.4.2 below which gives the participants' perspective, using an inappropriate form of opening or greeting does not necessarily imply impoliteness. A form that is *polite* seems to function as a rapport-building term more than a form that is just appropriate. In Saudi culture, starting a message with a salutation/greeting plus a suitable address form is perhaps more polite than starting with either a salutation or address form alone, which is still technically appropriate (In contrast, it is inappropriate but not necessarily impolite in a Saudi culture to address a person by *Dear Sir* or to start a message baldly without any salutation/greeting combined with an address form[39].

4.3.2 The Forms of Closings

Based on previous studies (Hymes, 1971; Columas, 1981; Rubin, 1983; Crystal, 2001; Lee and Park, 2011; Bou-Franch, 2011; Waldvogel, 2007; Page, 2014 and Chejnova, 2014), there is variety in the closing features that are commonly used at the end of an email message. Table 9-1 below demonstrates the various studies that explored each closing feature with the relevant examples from this current study,

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[39] However, as discussed in section 4.2.3 on factors, the status of the message as exchange-initiating is relevant, since the greeting/salutation maybe considered to have already been given in an earlier message.

The Closing feature	Studies where the feature was reviewed	Example from the data
Thanks/ Thank you	Hymes, 1971; Columas, 1981; Rubin, 1983; Crystal, 2006; Waldvogel, 2007; Lee and Park 2011; Bou-Franch, 2011 and Chejnova, 2014	My sincere thanks and respect to you All thanks and regards to you
Cheers	Waldvogel, 2007	No examples
Regards	Waldvogel, 2007; Bou-Franch, 2011 and Chejnova, 2014	Regards Best regards Accept my regards
A closing formula/ Phatic element	Crystal, 2006; Bou-Franch, 2011 and Chejnova, 2014	Enjoy the rest of the weekend my sweeties The best
Identification (ID)	Crystal, 2006; Waldvogel, 2007; Bou-Franch, 2011 and Chejnova, 2014	Automatic signature: Regards X Y Lecturer, English Literature (X University) PhD. Researcher (University of X) Manual Signature: Teacher of personal state/ circumstances module X son of Z Y (lecturer's full name)
Apologies	Page, 2014 and Chejnova, 2014	Sorry for any inconveniences And I apologize for the delay

Table 4-2: Closing features found in research literature with examples from the email data

As shown in Table 4-1 above, many but not all of the closing features found in earlier studies also occurred in the email data set that has been considered in my research. *Cheers,* as a closing feature, for instance, did not occur in any of the emails exchanged between Saudi students and lecturers because of its connotation with drinking alcohol, which is forbidden in both their religion and culture (see Chapter 5 on thanking). This may have influenced the Saudi participants' decision to avoid using it (for more relevant details about *Cheers* and how it was perceived by some of the participants in this study see Chapter 6, Section 6.6). In the next section, I will discuss the various closing strategies that has been covered in the previous literature, as well as what occurred in the data set demonstrated with authentic examples. *Thanks* is used as a closing feature either with or without the writer's name at the end of a message, which substitutes the

final greeting of a message (Chejnova, 2014). It was one of the salient moves that occurred frequently in the closing of many messages (for more details about thanking see Chapter 6).

Example (22) – in English:

Thank you

(Written by FS3, a female student to her lecturer)

There were a few instances where the writer of an email ended their message with *Thanks in advance* for a favour that the writer is expecting the reader to do later. However, this may have the negative impact of imposing on the hearer, as well as being assumptive (see Chapter 6, Section 6.5). In some cases, the writer of an email ended her/his message with an apology (for more discussion of apologies see Chapter 8) that was sometimes combined with other types of closing (the previous Examples 1 and 2 that were given earlier in Section 4.3.1 are reproduced as Examples 23 and 24 below).

Example (23) – in Arabic:
تحياتي لك
و اعتذر عن التأخير
My respect to you
And I apologise for the delay

Yours Sincerely,
Sorry for the delay
(Written by MS3, a post-graduate student to his supervisor)
Example (24) – in Arabic:
أعتذر لك مرة أخرى
دمت بخير
I apologise again
May you be fine

I apologise again
 Take care
(Written by FL1, a female lecturer to her student)

The above examples (23 and 24) show how some writers may end their emails by apologising for either a mistake that was made (even if they have already apologised for it at the beginning of the email) or for an imposition that was made by writing the

message in the first place. Through using this rapport-managing strategy, the writer acknowledges the mistake and therefore shows concern for the hearer/reader's negative face. In both of the examples above, the apology, which in these cases functions as a closing formula, was coupled with another different closing formula (either *regards* or a phatic element) perhaps to show respect to the hearer and as a rapport-building strategy that seeks to establish and maintain solidarity with the reader. This choice of closing might have been influenced by the purpose and time of the message (as mentioned in Section 4.2.3). For example, the student in Example 23 contacted his supervisor for a studying purpose, apologised for not sending the work on the agreed time and therefore selected a closing formula (i.e., an apology) that was congruent with the situation and purpose of the message.

It is interesting to see from the data how some female lecturers attempted to employ rapport-building/enhancing strategies and tried to build solidarity with their students through adding phatic elements[40] at the end of their emails.

> **Example (25) – in English:**
> I wish you a nice weekend my sweeties and take care
> (Written by FL2, a female lecturer to a group of post-graduate students)

> **Example (26) – in English:**
> Good luck
> (Written by FL4, a female lecturer to her student)

Example 25 particularly conveys how the female lecturer chose to end her email with two different phatic elements; *I wish you a nice weekend* and *take care* with the endearment term of *my sweeties* in between. However, this is not very common in emails sent by other female lecturers, and may be influenced by the fact that the group of students to whom the female lecturer addressed her message were post-graduate students who were taking a short preparatory English course, as a requirement to get a scholarship to pursue their studies abroad. The female lecturer seemed to have tried to

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[40] By *phatic* elements, in this study, I mean any expression that consists of or express positive hopes and wishes for the interlocutor e.g. *Best wishes*, *Best* and *good luck*.

minimise the social distance between her and the students which might perhaps project a friendly relationship with them that shows both proximity and caring. However, this kind of behaviour did not reveal itself when this particular female lecturer was interviewed afterwards. Ending a message with *Good luck* in Example 26 earlier also suggests that although the female lecturer finished her message with a phatic comment (*Good luck*), this is considered to be less rapport managing than those used in the other forms (*I wish you a nice weekend, my sweeties* and *take care*). *Good luck* was perceived to be a more formal feature compared to *I wish you a nice weekend, my sweeties and take care* in Example 25 (see participants' perspective, Section 4.4.2).

There were also some closing features that were found in this email data set, but that has not been covered in the previous research. So in addition to the previous features (which were identified in previous studies, except *Cheers*), the following items were included and on some occasions, coupled with thanking:

- Socio-religious prayers[41]
- Cultural address terms

In Saudi culture, most people's behaviour is governed by religious values and prayers. For example, it is common to reward somebody for a favour by praying for him/her verbally, which often pleases him/her. Socio-religious closing formulae were found in various emails exchanged between lecturers and students (see Section 4.2.3 on factors).

> **Example (27) – in Arabic**
> الله يوفقك
> May Allah grant you success
> (Written by FL3, a female lecturer to her student)
> **Example (28) – in Arabic**
> أسأل الله لك النجاح والتوفيق في الدنيا وفي الآخرة
> I ask Allah success and prosperity for you in the present and the hereafter.
>
> May God grant you success and prosperity now and for ever

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[41] By socio-religious prayers, I mean the religious expressions that convey positive wishes (which are normally for the addressee's sake) and often occurs at the end of Arabic emails.

(Written by ML2, a male lecturer to his student)

Unlike some of the other previous closings e.g. *Good luck* and *Regards*, which seem to be a conventionalised formulaic way of finishing/closing an encounter, in the Saudi context, there are a number of closings in which the writer wishes the recipient success or offers prayers for them. The degree to which these closings are sincere, rather than formulaic, would be an interesting direction for future study. In Examples 27and 28 above, since the lecturers were aware of the students' eagerness to succeed in their studies, they tried to show that they could feel what it is like to be a student and what they might look forward to, i.e., success and prosperity in the future. They prayed for their students to achieve their goal, namely success and prosperity, which also fulfils the hearer's wants (Brown and Levinson, 1987). As a result, it conveyed sincerity, especially since the lecturer did not use a formulaic expression.

Sometimes, the choice of the socio-religious closing at the end of an email is based on the main theme of an email. When a female lecturer was replying to an issue that was raised by an individual student (who was criticising this lecturer for being nervous at some point and was complimenting her at the same time), the lecturer admitted that she found it hard to hide her emotions. She admitted that she found the students' general behaviour at the university campus annoying. The lecturer then concluded her email with a socio-religious prayer which was chosen from the theme of the conversation. She specifically related the bad behaviour of the general students as well as her nervousness with the request that Allah should give them some help to improve their manners for the university community.

Example (29) – in Arabic:

متعنا الله وإياك بأخلاق حسنة ورزقنا الفردوس الأعلى من الجنة

May Allah grant us all good manners and praise us with the highest level in Paradise

(Written by FL5, a female lecturer to her student)

Some types of socio-religious prayers are time-focused in the Saudi context. These are more typically associated with a specific time of the year and with a specific religious occasion, such as after the Muslims' Holy Month (Ramadan or Hajj) or after the Eid festival, which comes twice a year.

Example (30) – in Arabic:

و تقبل الله طاعاتك

And may Allah accept your obedience

May God reward your obedience
(Written by MS1, a male student to his lecturer)

All of the above uses of socio-religious prayers as an email closing establishes rapport and solidarity between lecturers and their students for showing concern and care to the interlocutors, and as an attempt to please them (as discussed earlier in this chapter).

As with greetings and openings (see Section 4.3.1), what I call in this study "*cultural address terms*", in addition to occurring at the beginning of a message, could sometimes be used at the end of an email as well. They are perceived as an important resource that conveys a range of rapport-managing strategies. The use of cultural address forms (e.g. *Your brother/sister,* or coupling the eldest child's name along with the generic term *father*), combined with thanking at the end of a message, establishes a rapport with the hearer/reader and would therefore have a positive effect on him/her, as illustrated in Example 31.

Example (31) – in Arabic:

شكرا أبو X

Thanks X's (eldest son's first name) father
(Written by ML1, a male lecturer who is working on a project sent to his secretary)

In Arabic, it is common to express solidarity by addressing a person using the eldest son's name coupled with father/mother (as in Example 31 above). For example, if someone's eldest son is Mohammed, this person could be addressed as Mohammed's father/mother. However, the cultural address forms can sometimes lead to collapsing a hierarchy which may affect the hearer negatively, especially when they are addressed upward, as in a student-lecturer interaction.

Example (32) – in Arabic:

أخوكم الطالب X بن Z Y

Your [plural form] brother the student X son of Z Y
(Written by MS3, a post-graduate student to his supervisor)

Example (33) – in Arabic:

و شكرا

أخوك الطالب X

And thanks

Your brother the student X

Thanks
Your brother, the student X
(Written by MS4, a post-graduate student to his supervisor)

The cultural address term *your brother*, is, in the Saudi context, normally used with peers who are equal, and sometimes downward by a superior-status person when addressing an inferior-status person. Nonetheless, in both of the previous examples, this was not the case. In Examples 32 and 33 above, both students called themselves *Your brother* at the end of their messages, which is not really appropriate when contacting their lecturers, who are their superiors. Therefore this is not a "politic linguistic behaviour that is appropriate to the ongoing social interactions" (Watts, 2003) (see Section 4.4.2 for the lecturer's, ML1, opinion).

Thus, openings and closings have a variety of forms, some of which were listed in the previous studies done on politeness, while others were identified solely in the current study. This suggests that despite the similarity of some forms of openings and closings among different contexts and cultures, there are still some forms that seem to be context and culturally specific. These openings and closings may vary according to the social, cultural and conventional norms. In the next section, various forms of closings and patterns will be quantified according to their frequency of occurrence in the email data set that has been considered in my research.

4.4 Further Findings

This study adopts a mixed method approach that combines quantitative and qualitative findings. I will first discuss the quantitative findings of the openings and closings, and then move on to the qualitative findings.

4.4.1 Quantitative Findings

4.4.1.1 The Frequency of Opening features within the email dataset

A common rapport-enhancing strategy is to start an email with an opening, rather than to start baldly (see Chapter 2, Section 2.4). Each email was analysed according to whether it contained an opening or not. The number of emails, and whether or not each contained an opening, has been summarised in Table 4-3. The results have been normalised as a percentage of all of the emails that were sent by each sub-group, and contrasted according to the email writers' sex.

Feature	Emails written by women		Emails written by men		Total	
	Frequency	%[42]	Frequency	%	Freq.	%
Opening	60	85.7	55	78.6	115	82.1
No opening	10	14.3	15	21.4	25	17.9
Total	70	100	70	100	140	100

Table 4-3: Emails with or without an opening according to the sender's sex

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[42] All percentages in tables 4-3, 4-4, 4-5, 4-6, 4-7 and 4-8 were calculated out of the total number of emails sent by each sub-group (70 for women, 70 for men and 140 for the total column).
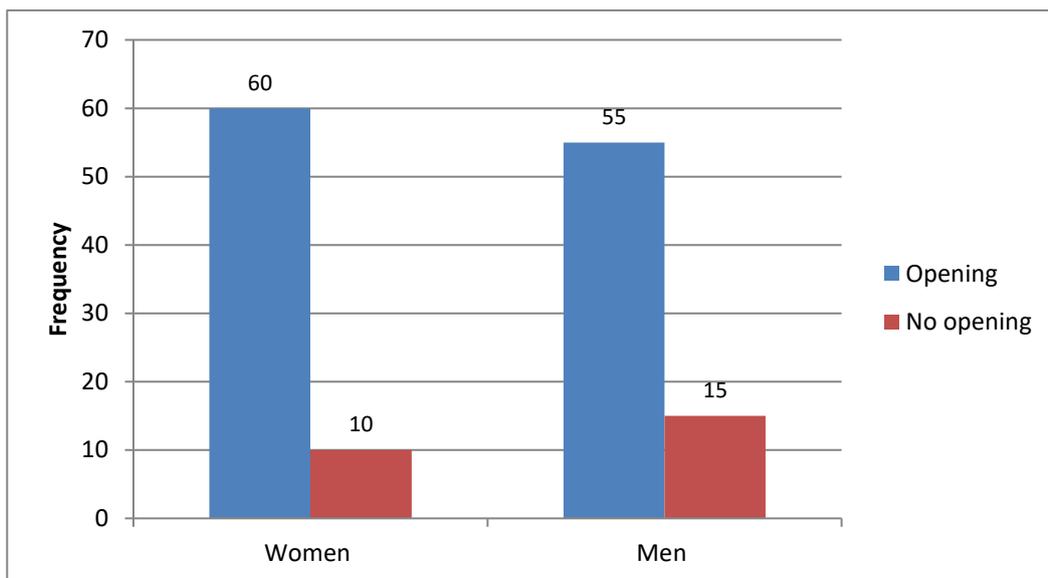
Figure 4-4: Number of emails with or without an opening according to the sender's sex

As shown in Table 4-3 and Figure 4-4 above, out of the 140 emails, 115 emails (82.14%) contained one opening. In contrast, emails that were sent by participants without an opening numbered 25 (17.9 % of all the emails). The percentage of emails with openings outranked the emails without openings by a ratio of 4.5:1. Thus, despite the fact that openings are optional, the majority of the participants still started off their emails with an opening as a rapport-enhancing strategy, to establish and maintain solidarity in interpersonal communication. Emails that contained an opening were sent slightly more by the female participants (85.7% of all the emails that were sent by women) than by the men (78.6% of all the emails that were sent by men). This result is in line with Waldvogel's (2007: 470) finding that women were more inclined to start their emails with a greeting than men. Men, in this study, therefore sent more emails that did not include openings (21.4% of all emails that were sent by men) than women (14.3% of all emails that were sent by women). The emails' inclusion of an opening was further analysed according to the participants' role as has been summarised in Table 5-3 below.

Feature	Emails written by female Lecturer		Emails written by female Student		Emails written by male Lecturer		Emails written by male Student	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Opening	32	91.4	29	82.9	25	71.4	30	85.7
No opening	3	8.6	6	17.1	10	28.6	5	14.3

Total	35	100	35	100	35	100	35	100

Table 4-4: Emails with or without an opening according to the sender's role
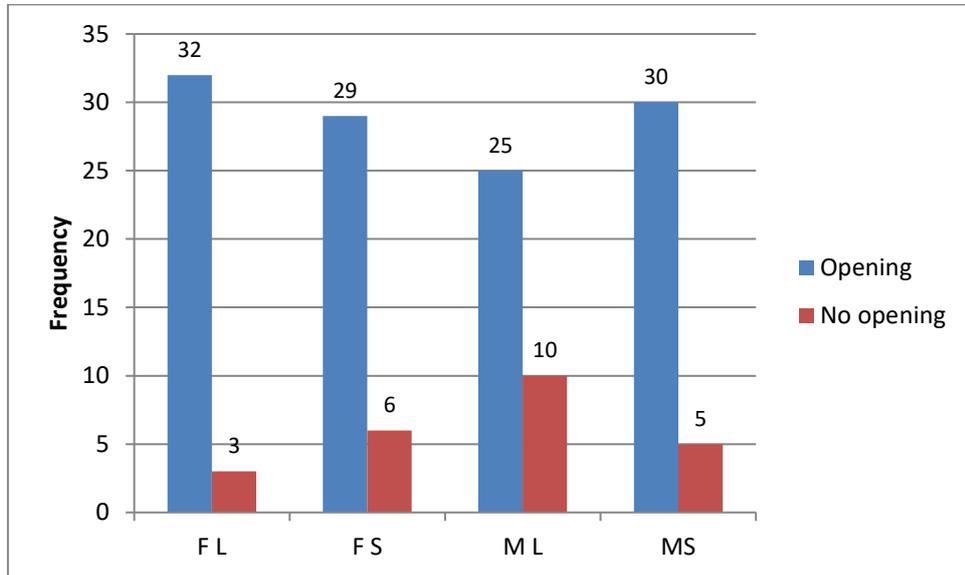
Figure 4-5: Number of emails with or without an opening according to sender's role

Table 4-4 and Figure 4-4 above indicates that male students sent slightly more emails that contained openings (85.7% of all emails that were sent by students) than male lecturers (71.4% of all emails that were sent by male lecturers). This is perhaps to build a rapport with them, and perhaps to satisfy their lecturers and thereby get social approval (Bagwasi, 2008: 530). Additionally, through the greater use of opening strategies, it may be that the students were attempting to select a strategy that would inspire the addressee (lecturer) to comply with and fulfil their needs (Chejnova, 2014: 179). However, in terms of the women, it seems to be the opposite, as female lecturers sent slightly more emails (91.4% of all emails sent by female lecturer) that contained openings than the female students (82.9% of all emails sent female students). So, male students may have employed more openings and greetings to convey distance and warmth, crucial elements in establishing and maintaining relationships (Hallajian and David, 2014: 87), which is not the case with female students. This finding is partially in line with Waldvogel's (2007) finding that greetings tended to be involved in emails that were sent up to superiors. It thus indicates that in this study, the burden of establishing rapport through an opening is more often taken up by male students than male lecturers, but for women, it was the opposite. Thus, the second part of the findings concerning the female students' less frequent use of openings and greetings compared

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to female lecturers does not support Waldvogel's finding (2007) that openings and greetings tend to be included in the messages that were directed upward.

The quantitative differences among the varieties of sub-groups were quite small, which may be an accident of the sampling. However, I will discuss these slight differences, in order to explore the features more fully. Emails that did not contain openings were sent almost twice as often by female students (17.1% of all emails that were sent by female students) than by female lecturers (8.6% of all emails that were sent by female lecturers). Male lecturers, in contrast, sent more emails (28.6% of all emails that were sent by male lecturers) that did not contain openings than male students (14.3% of all emails that were sent by male students). Thus, rapport building was directed upward for men, while for women, it was the opposite, as it was directed downward. This finding concerning men agrees with what Bou-Franch (2011: 1779) found, which was that while there was a marked presence of greetings in the opening move in online interactions, they appeared to be slightly less frequent in the emails that were sent to inferiors. In this study, the male lecturers' and female students' less frequent use of openings compared to their counterparts confirms Waldvogel's (2007: 473) finding that the priority was given to the main body of the email message rather than prefacing it with an opening of some kind, which in Waldvogel's case appeared to be a characteristic of an educational institution rather than a manufacturing one.

The opening strategy was then coded according to whether it included a salutation (e.g., *Hi, Hello*), or a socio-religious salutation (e.g., *Good morning* and *Good afternoon*). In contrast, starting a message with the recipient's name was not considered a salutation in this study and therefore these instances were excluded.

Feature	Emails written by women		Emails written by men		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Salutation included	40	57.1	49	70	89	63.6
Salutation not included	30	42.9	21	30	51	36.4

Total	70	100	70	100	140	100

Table 4-5: Emails with and without salutation according to the sender's sex
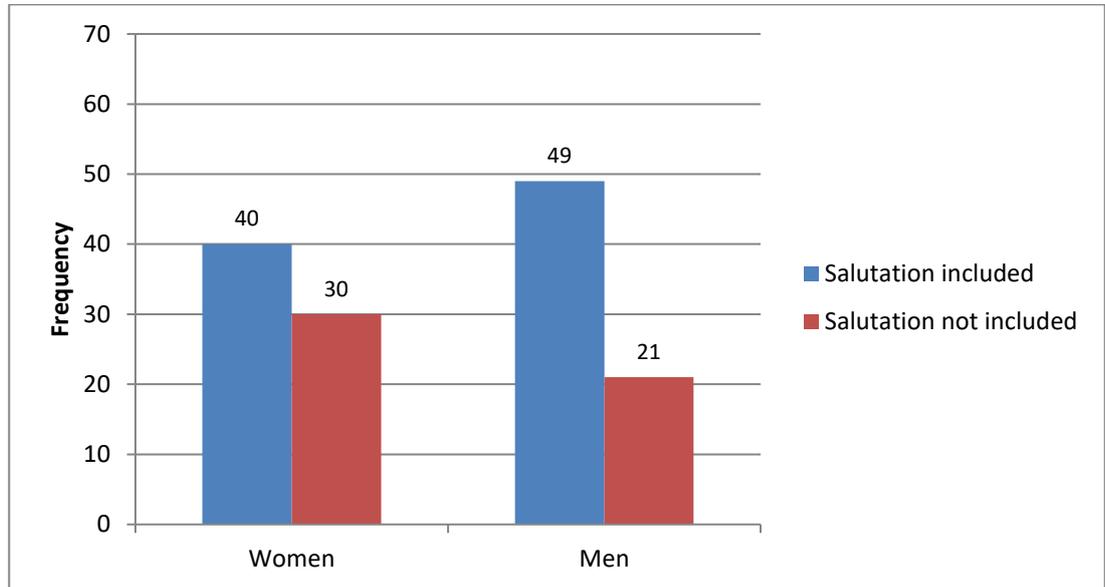
Figure 4-6: Number of e-mails with and without salutation according to the sender's sex

The results in Table 4-5 and Figure 4-6 indicate that the majority of the emails in the current study included salutations (63.6% of all emails that were sent), whereas just 36.4% of all the emails that were sent did not include salutations. The results in Table 4-5 indicate that the participants' choice of whether to include a salutation or not seems to differ according to the gender of the email sender. Men in this study tended to include salutations slightly more (70% of all emails that were sent by men) than women (57.1% of all emails that were sent). This finding conveys that the male participants' interactive style was of starting their email with rapport strategies through employing formulaic greetings, socio-religious salutations or sometimes a combination of both, which is quite surprising, especially since the previous results concerning the inclusion of openings (Table 4-4) suggested the opposite; that women, in this study, tended to use openings slightly more (85.7% of all emails that were sent by women) compared to men (78.6% of all emails that were sent by men). However, these findings are not contradictory, but rather suggest that there were a variety of rapport strategies used and that they differed according to the gender of the email sender. In this study, the women's preference to use more opening features in general, including address forms, shows that although women often used salutations less frequently, they also tended to start directly with addressing the recipients either by using their first name or by using titles coupled with

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the names more than men (see Table 4-6 below). Based on the scale of rapport potential (see Figure 4-1), this conveys a lower level of rapport strategy, compared to combining a salutation with an address form. Women also employed the pattern *Dear + title* in the data more than men (see Table 4-7 below) as illustrated in Examples 34 and 35 below.

Example (34) – in English

Dear Dr. X

(Written by FL1, a female lecturer to a colleague)

Extract (35) – in English

Dear Dr. X

(Written by FS2, a female student to a male lecturer)

The email openings were also coded according to whether they included a salutation or not according to the participants' role.

Feature	Emails written by female Lecturer		Emails written by female Student		Emails written by male Lecturer		Emails written by male Student	
	Freq.	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
Salutation included	18	51.4	22	62.9	19	54.3	29	82.9
Salutation not included	17	48.6	13	37	16	45.7	6	17.1
Total	35	100	35	100	35	100	35	100

Table 4-6: Emails with and without salutation according to the sender's role
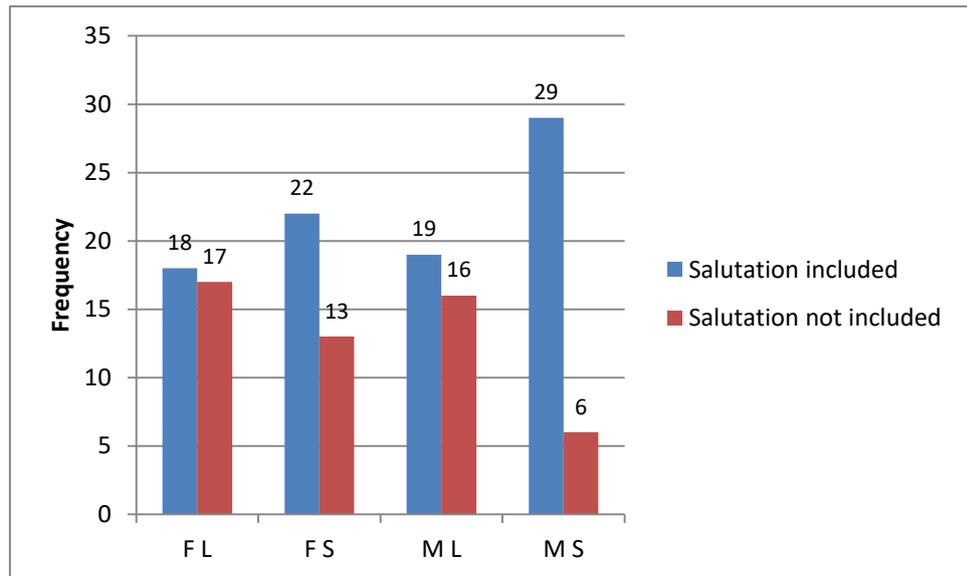
Figure 4-7: Number of emails with and without salutation according to the sender's role

In terms of role, the student participants tended to use salutations slightly more (72.9% of all emails that were sent by students) than lecturers (52.9% of all emails that were sent by lecturers). This may suggest the role that salutations play in signalling deference from the students to their lecturers in this study, which is common in student-lecturer relationships in a country with a high power distance culture like Saudi Arabia (Bjerke and Al-Meer, 2006; also see Section 4.5.2 on interviews).

The emails' openings were then coded according to the type of opening features used either alone or in combination according to the sender's gender. The rationale for counting some of the opening features in both ways is to confirm whether there are some differences in their usage.

Feature	Emails written by women		Emails written by men		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%[43]
Dear + 1ˢᵗ name	5	7.1	2	2.9	7	10
Dear + cultural address form	1	1.4	1	1.4	2	2.8
Dear + title	7	10	0	0	7	10
Title + 1ˢᵗ name	15	21.4	9	12.9	24	34.3
Cultural address form + 1ˢᵗ name	5	7.1	5	7.1	10	14.2
Title + honor/ your excellency/honorable/respec ted/respectful	5	7.1	12	17.1	17	24.2
Greeting + 1ˢᵗ name	7	10	1	1.4	8	11.4
Greeting alone	3	4.3	0	0	3	4.3
Title alone	7	10	0	0	7	10
Peace be upon you	10	14.3	14	20	24	34.3
May Allah's Peace and mercy be upon you	16	22.9	32	45.7	48	68.6

Table 4-7: Opening features used alone or in combination according to the sender's sex

[43] All percentages in tables 4-7 and 4-8 were calculated out of the total number of opening features that were sent by each sub-group.
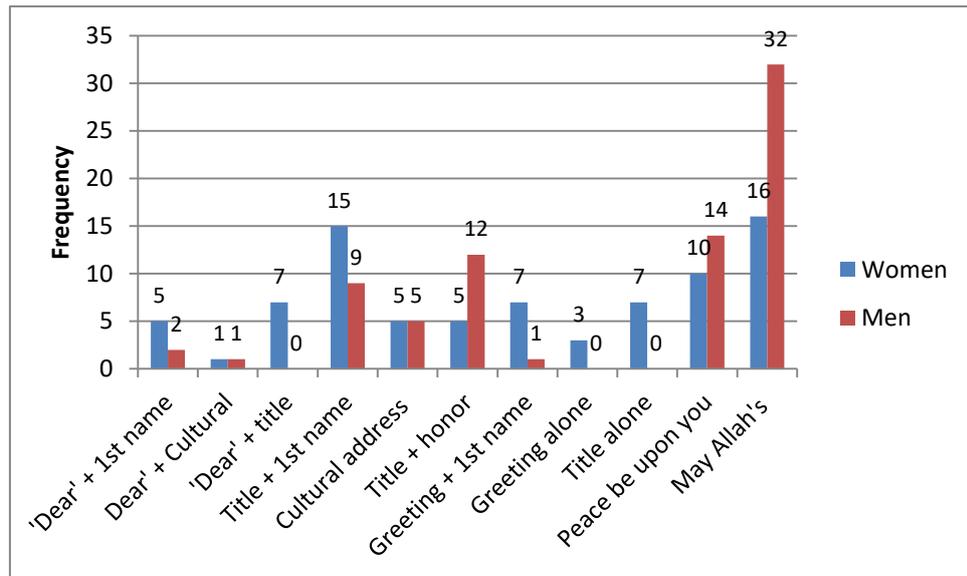
Figure 4-8: Frequency of opening features used alone or in combination according to the sender's sex

In the current data, the opening features varied in terms of whether they were employed alone or in combination. Table 4-7 above shows that the most common opening feature that was used in the data set was the socio-religious elaborated form of *May Allah's peace and mercy be upon you*, which was used in 68.6% of all the opening features that were sent. Thus, the participants tended to employ a type of "interactional ritual", which is a crucial politeness strategy to convey solidarity and rapport as well as to create a religious identity for themselves which is particularly associated with Islam (Turjoman, 2005: 83). This finding about the participants' extensive use of the elaborate socio-religious salutation does not agree with what Turjoman (2005: 84) found in the Saudi context. In Turjoman's (2005) study, the elaborate form of greeting was "often used by close friends and family members" (p. 84), indicating that the relationship was intimate and that the social distance was less. Instead, in the current study, the elaborate socio-religious salutation also occurred in a professional academic context with more social distance, and was thus used in formal relationships. In this study, both men (45.7% of all the emails that were sent by men) and women (22.9% of all the emails that were sent by women) tended to employ this elaborate socio-religious salutation more than other alternative forms. The male participants used it almost twice as frequently as the women in the study.

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The next most frequent opening feature in the data was the short socio-religious form *peace be upon you* that was employed in 34.3% of all of the emails that were sent as well as the combined opening pattern *title+ first name* (34.3% of all the emails that were sent). The first part of this finding agrees partially with Turjoman's (2005: 88) conclusion that the short form of the socio-religious salutation occurred in "all relationships, including close friends, relatives, acquaintances, and strangers" more than any other greeting. The other socio-religious salutation was the opening feature that was employed the most in the current data (as discussed above). Men in this study used *peace be upon you* slightly more (20% of all the emails that were sent by men) than women (14.3% of all the emails that were sent by women). Thus, both short and elaborate socio-religious forms of greeting/salutation were used more by the men in this study than the women, which perhaps echoes men's religious ritual, such as the requirement in Islam that men are required to attend prayers at mosques (i.e. publically) five times a day. In contrast, women are urged to perform their five prayers at home.

As shown in Table 4-7 above, there were also other forms of opening that were used frequently in the data set. The opening pattern *title + honour/your Excellency/honourable/respected/respectful* was used in 24.2% of all of the emails that were sent. Men in this study used it more than twice as frequently than women (17.1% of all the emails sent by men, compared to 7.1% of all the emails that were sent by women), which shows the male participants' preference for using opening features that show more deference and maintain distance in their interactions. In contrast, greetings combined with first names were used 11.4% of all the emails that were sent, but were used more often by the female participants (10% of all opening features) than by the men (1.4% of all the emails that were sent by men). This highlights the women participants' desire, in this study, to build and manage rapport and solidarity, as well as to minimise distance through the use of more informal types of greetings. As the figures indicate, men seemed far less concerned with rapport management.

Another kind of frequently used informal type of greeting was a cultural address form along with the first name, which was used in 14.2% of all the emails that were sent (7.1% of all opening features used by each gender). Table 4-7 also shows that there were

two opening features, namely greeting alone (4.3% of all opening features used) and title alone (4.5% of all emails that were used), that were only used by women and not by the men. A combination of *Dear + title* was also employed only by the women in this study (10% of all the emails that were sent by women).

The opening feature that was used the least in the data set was the pattern *Dear + cultural address form*, which was only used in 2.8% of all of the emails that were sent. This suggests that while this opening type conveys a sort of balance between formality (expressed by the use of the term of deference *Dear*) and informality/solidarity (showed by the use of the cultural address form), the participants tended to avoid using it. This is perhaps because the term of deference or endearment *Dear* (as discussed earlier) in the Saudi context tends to only to be used in the messages that were originally written in English, whereas the cultural address forms seem to occur mainly in the email messages that were originally written in Arabic, which makes them less likely to occur together in the Saudi context, except twice as shown in Examples 36 and 37 below.

Example (36) – in English

My dear sweet students

(Written by FL2, a female lecturer to a group of postgraduate student who were attending a short course in English as a pre-requirement for having a scholarship)

Example (37) – in English

My dear brother

(Written by MS1, a male postgraduate student to his supervisor)

The emails' openings were also coded according to the type of opening features used either alone or in combination, but according to the email sender's role.

Feature	Emails written by female Lecturer		Emails written by female Student		Emails written by male Lecturer		Emails written by male Student	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Dear + 1st name	5	14.3	0	0	2	5.7	0	0
Dear + cultural address form	1	2.9	0	0	0	0	1	2.9

Dear + title	4	11.4	3	8.6	0	0	0	0
Title + 1st name	1	2.9	14	40	1	2.9	8	22.9
cultural address form + 1st name	5	14.3	0	0	5	14.3	0	0
Title + honoured/your Excellency/honourable/respected/respectful	2	5.7	3	8.6	1	2.9	11	31.4
Greeting + 1st name	2	5.7	5	14.3	1	2.9	0	0
Greeting alone	2	5.7	1	2.9	0	0	0	0
Title alone	0	0	7	20	0	0	0	0
Peace be upon you	4	11.4	6	17.1	5	14.3	9	25.7
May Allah's Peace and mercy be upon you	7	20	9	25.7	14	40	18	51.4

Table 4-8: Opening features used alone or in combination according to the sender's role
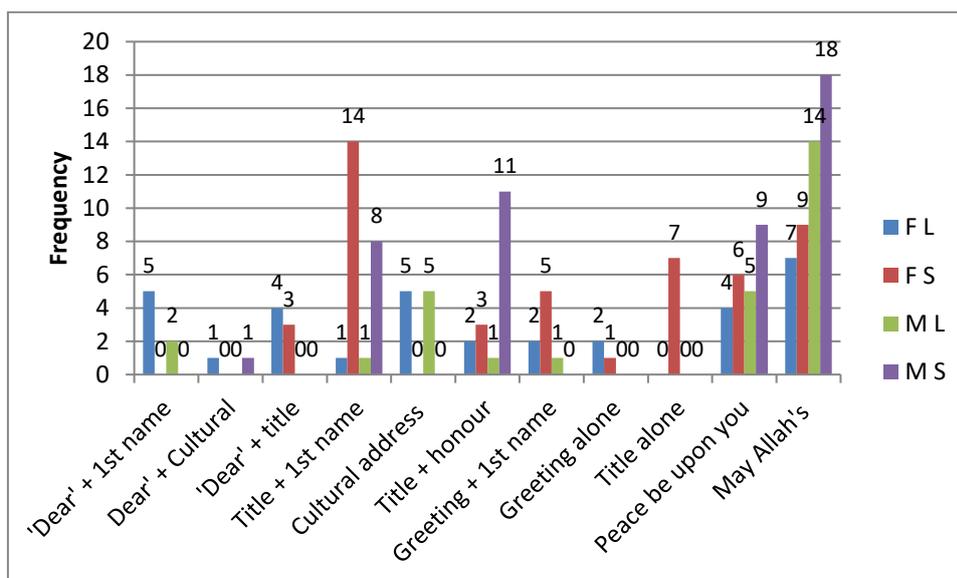
Figure 4-9: Frequency opening features used alone or in combination according to sender's role

For certain opening features, role bears an influence on the choice used. As shown in Table 4-8 above, students used the opening pattern *title + 1st name* (62.9% of all the emails that were sent by students) and *title + honoured/your Excellency/honourable/ respected /respectful* (40% of all the emails that were sent by students) more than lecturers (5.8% and 8.6% respectively of all the emails that were sent by lecturers). The students' use of their lecturer's first name added to their title helps (in this context) to minimise distance and to convey friendliness and solidarity with the addressee (Hallajian

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and David, 2014:89). The students also tended to use socio-religious salutations more than the lecturers, which suggests the use of socio-religious salutation as a deferential marker, which students tended to resort to more than the lecturers. The brief form of socio-religious salutations *peace be upon you* was used more by the student participants (42.8% of all the emails that were sent by students) than by lecturers (25.7% of all the emails that were sent). This suggests that the student participants attempted to build solidarity and rapport with their lecturers through the use of the brief form of a socio-religious salutation. Similarly, the elaborate socio-religious form *May Allah's peace and mercy be upon you* was also used more by students in this study (77.1% of all the emails that were sent by students) than by lecturers (60% of all the emails that were sent by lecturers). Since this elaborate type of socio-religious salutation was used in a Saudi academic context and not necessarily between people who know each other, this finding does not echo Turjoman's (2005: 88) finding that the "*elaborate greeting is often used by close friends and family members*".

As shown in Table 4-8 above, there were two opening features which were restricted to the lecturer participants, and were not used by the students. The opening pattern *Dear + first name* was only used by lecturers (20% of all the emails that were sent by lecturers), and the student participants did not show any use of it at all when contacting their lecturers[44]. However, students may or may not use the pattern *Dear + first name* when they contact other students, which might be interesting to investigate in the future. Likewise, the pattern of *cultural address form + first name* was used mainly by lecturers (28.6% of all the emails that were sent). This is not surprising, especially in a context where the power distance is high, as in Saudi Arabia (Bjerke and Al-Meer, 2006), where students are not allowed to address their lecturers using the lecturer's first name alone (i.e. without coupling it with a proper title).

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[44] I did not receive any emails that were written by students and addressed to other fellow students.

Several opening features were used mainly by women in the data. The pattern *Dear + title* was only used by women, particularly by the female lecturers who used it slightly more (11.4% of all the emails that were sent) than students (8.6% of all the emails that were sent by female students). Similarly, *greeting alone* was used more by female lecturers (5.7% of all the emails that were sent) than by female students (2.9% of all the emails that were sent by female students) and was not used by men in this study at all. Thus, the female lecturer participants tended to employ opening features that had less rapport enhancing strategies through the use of the formal pattern *Dear + title,* as well as the greeting alone without combining it with a suitable address form.

Other forms of opening were also used frequently in the data set. Starting a message with a title alone was only used by female students (20% of all the emails that were sent), which therefore echoes their spoken communication style. In the current study, the pattern *Dear + cultural address form* was directed downward by women (2.9% of all the emails that were sent by female lecturers and addressed to female students) and upward by men (2.9% of all the emails that were sent by male students to lecturers). This suggests that rapport enhancing strategies seem to be employed more by female lecturers, whereas in terms of the male participants, the students were more concerned with building and managing rapport with their lecturers. *Greeting + first name* were used by all groups of the participants except male students. This was perhaps because the majority of the students' emails were addressed upward to lecturers and in Saudi culture, it is inappropriate for a student to address a lecturer using his/her first name, even if it is preceded with a greeting.

Hence, unsurprisingly, the analysis of the results of some of the combined opening features was similar to the quantitative results of the same features when they appeared in isolation. For instance, greetings were used either individually or combined with the first name more, in this study, by women than by men. Male students, in the current study, did not show any use of greetings either individually or when combined with the first name. However, in terms of titles, the men tended to use titles sometimes combined with the recipient's first name, or with honorifics, but never employed titles alone. In contrast, women tended to use titles either combined or in isolation. Thus,

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titles were used more by women either in isolation or combined with first names, except when coupled with honorifics. Similarly, greetings were used, in this study, more by women either combined or isolated.

In the current study, the term of deference (endearment) *Dear* was used occasionally in three different opening patterns *Dear + first name*, *Dear + cultural address form* and *Dear + title*, but these combinations were to some extent restricted to some sub-groups of the participants, i.e., female lecturers (see Table 4-8 above). This finding does not agree with Crystal's (2001: 106) that the most popular greeting formula used in his sample was "Dear David". This might be explained by cultural differences, or the nature of the data, since Crystal was looking at emails that were exchanged between peers as well as upward and downward. Whereas in this study, a great deal of the emails were exchanged between people with hierarchical power relationships, and so the emails were directed either upward or downward. The term of deference عزيزي is the Arabic equivalent to the English term *Dear* that closely mirrors it. It can be used with the same sort of social distance of *Dear* in English, used with foreigners or people whom we know less. Although the messages that were originally written in Arabic do not often employ the term of endearment *Dear* as a rapport-enhancing strategy that conveys formality and some level of distance, this may not necessarily lead to a pragmatic failure in asymmetrical electronic communication, as Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011: 3209) claims. In the Saudi context, the writer of an email should not worry too much about omitting the item عزيزي *Dear* in emails, especially in those that were originally sent in Arabic.

4.4.1.2 *The Frequency of Closing features within the email dataset*

As with openings, the writer of an email has the choice to end his/her communication with a closing, or not to include a closing and to thus end the message baldly. Each email was analysed according to whether it ended with a closing or not. The number of emails that either contained or did not contain a closing has been summarised in Table 4-9

below. The results have been normalised as the percentage[45] of all emails and contrasted according to the email writers' sex.

Feature	Emails written by women		Emails written by men		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Freq.	%
Closing	54	77.1	40	57.1	94	67.1
No closing	16	22.9	30	42.9	46	32.9
Total	70	100	70	100	140	100

Table 4-9: Number of emails with or without a closing according to the sender's sex with percentage
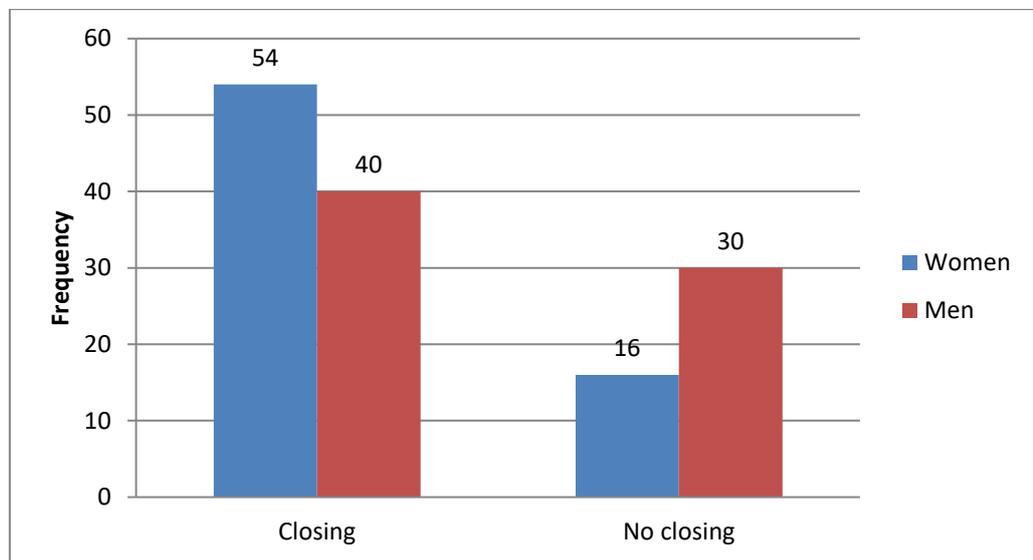
Figure 4-10: Emails with or without a closing according to the sender's sex

As shown in Table 4-9 and Figure 4-10 above, out of all 140 emails, 94 emails (67.1%) contained a closing. In contrast, the emails that were sent by participants without a closing numbered 46 (32.9%). The percentage of emails ending with a closing outranked the emails that did not end with a closing to a ratio of 2:1 approximately. Thus, despite the fact that closings are optional (Crystal, 2006), the majority of participants still ended

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[45] All of the percentages in the tables were calculated out of the total number of emails sent by each sub-group of participants.

their emails with a closing as a rapport-enhancing strategy, to establish and maintain solidarity in interpersonal communication. This finding confirms the previous findings by Crystal (2006), who found that most of the author's email data (80%) ended with a closing, particularly combining a "*pre-closing formula*", which is a label that Crystal used for a closing element or phrase which comes at the end of a message (e.g. a phatic comment), excluding the ID of the sender. Table 4-9 also shows that women in general tended to use closing features more (77.1% of all the emails that were sent by women) than men (57.1% out of all the emails that were sent by men). This finding supports Waldvogel's (2007: 470) results that, in the educational sector, women tended to end their emails with a closing more frequently than men. This tendency of the women to use more closings compared to men conveys their communicative style,[46] and their wish to establish and maintain solidarity through the use of closing as a rapport-enhancing strategy with others. The emails' inclusion of a closing was then further analysed according to the participants' role as summarised in Table 4-10 below.

Feature	Emails written by female Lecturer		Emails written by female Student		Emails written by male Lecturer		Emails written by male Student	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Closing	33	94.3	21	60	17	48.6	23	65.7
No closing	2	5.7	14	40	18	51.4	12	34.3
Total	35	100	35	100	35	100	35	100

Table 4-10: Number of emails with or without a closing according to the sender's role in frequencies and percentages

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[46] By *communicative style* here, I mean the way that a sender of an email chose to close his/her message, which was also mentioned in Chapter 2.
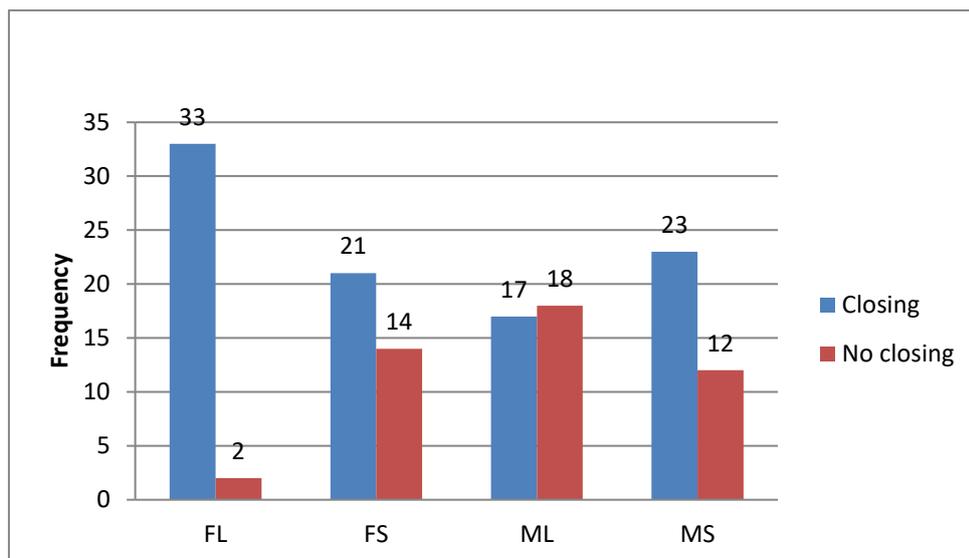
Figure 4-11: Emails with or without a closing according to the sender's role

In terms of role, it seems that the relative status of the participants influences their use of closings for some groups of the participants. Table 4-10 and Figure 4-11 shows that male students sent more emails that contained closings (65.7% of all emails that were sent by male students) than male lecturers (48.6% of all emails that were sent by male lecturers) as a rapport-building strategy, which is not the case with the female students. This also indicates that male students are perhaps more aware of the higher social status that their lecturers have over them (superiors). Therefore they have attempted to employ more closing features as a way of showing respect or deference and building a rapport with them. Male students also used farewells more frequently, perhaps to create the most polite reply and to help them to achieve what they want, compared to female lecturers.

Based on Waldvogel's (2007: 467) study in both educational and manufacturing organisations, greetings and closings were used more when writing to superiors. Similarly, Sherblom (1988) found that none of the messages that were sent to inferiors included a specific form of closing, which is a signature, compared to one-third of the messages that were sent up, which were signed. While agreeing partially with Sherblom's (1988) finding that closings were found more in emails that were sent up to superiors, my results do not confirm Sherblom's (1988) other finding that no message that was sent down to inferiors included a closing. This is shown in Table 4-10, as many female and male lecturers used closings in their emails, which are mostly sent to their

students. Female lecturers particularly used more closings (94.3% of all emails that were sent by female lecturers) than their male counterparts (48.6% of all emails that were sent by male lecturers) or their female students (60% of all emails that were sent by female students).

This suggests that lecturers in general and female lecturers in particular tend to employ rapport strategies more when exchanging emails with their students, through ending their emails with a closing. This contributes to building solidarity and rapport with them. In contrast, the emails that were sent with no closings were sent the most by male lecturers (51.4% of all emails that were sent by male lecturers), followed by female students (40% of all emails sent by female students), whereas female lecturers sent the fewest emails that did not include openings (5.7% of all emails that were sent by female lecturers). Hence, although the participants had the choice not to end their emails with closings, they (especially women) tended to resort to ending their emails with a closing perhaps to establish and maintain rapport with the receiver of the message. In this study, the influence of role on the use of closing tended to be more obvious in the men's case than in the women's, as male students sent more emails that included closings when contacting their lecturers than their lecturers, which is the opposite with women (see Appendix E for the email data, Section 1.2.3 for the discussion). The students would have been expected to use more closings than their lecturers, because of the social and hierarchy difference, a trend that the men participants in this study followed, but the women did not. Thus, in terms of closings, the rapport building was for men directed upward (which is not surprising), whereas for women, it was directed downward (which is not as expected).

A closing might not only function as a positive politeness strategy that conveys rapport and solidarity. It is also, as pointed out by Waldvogel (2007: 467), a way of conveying deference and respect, and thereby attributing status to the recipient, which explains why students attempted to use closings more in their emails that were sent to their lecturers. In the observed data, some of the closing features occurred individually at the end of the emails and sometimes they occurred in combinations. Table 4-10 below

outlines the types of closing features that occurred individually (alone) at the end of the emails in terms of sex.

Feature	Emails written by women		Emails written by men		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Freq.	%
Writer's name	2	2.9	3	4.3	5	3.6
Apology	2	2.9	1	1.4	3	2.1
Regards	2	2.9	0	0	2	1.4
Phatic comment	7	10	4	5.7	11	7.9
Socio-religious prayer	2	2.9	6	8.6	8	5.7
Thanking	15	21.4	8	11.4	23	16.4
Total	30	42.9	22	31.4	52	37.1

Table 4-11: Email closing features occurred individually in the data in terms of the sender's sex with frequencies and percentages

As shown in Table 4-11 above, gender seems to have an influence on the use of some of the closing features that occurred individually in the observed data. Table 4-11 indicates that the women in this study were more inclined to employ individual closing features more (42.9% of all emails that were sent by women) than men (31.4% of all emails that were sent by men). The results in Table 4-11 above demonstrate that thanking was the favourite option that participants chose to end their emails with (16.4% of all emails that were sent). This confirms another previous finding by Waldvogel (2007: 466), who found that in both the educational and manufacturing sectors, the most common closing used was *thanks*, which was used sometimes to express gratitude, and sometimes as a farewell formula. In the current study, the women tended to end their messages with a thanking alone almost twice as frequently as the men (21.4% of all emails that were sent by women, compared to (11.4% of all emails that were sent by men), which perhaps conveys the women participants' caring attitude towards other people's faces through the use of more rapport managing strategies.

Phatic comments (see Section 4.2.3 for an explanation) were also found to be used more as a closing formula by women (10% of all emails that were sent by women) than by men (5.7% of all emails that were sent by men), which reflects the female participants' communicative style, being more concerned with positive politeness and building rapport with others, than men. This finding is in line with what Herring (1994) found about the preference of women to use positive politeness in contrast to men, who favoured negative politeness more. The male participants tended to finish their emails with just their names (4.3% of all emails that were sent) more frequently than women (2.9% of all emails that were sent by women), indicating that men, in this study, are perhaps less concerned with building rapport and solidarity with others.

However, socio-religious prayers were used to end the male participants' emails three times more (8.6% of all emails that were sent by men) than the women' (2.9% of all emails that were sent by women), which could suggests that, in this study, the male participants were more influenced by the religious norms. This is perhaps influenced by the fact that for men, the public articulation of the prayer is marked by their visit to the mosque (although not everybody complies with this, as some of them pray at home) five times a day (unless, at work, they can pray with colleagues) in a way that women are not required to do. It may be that the men's emails in this study echo this public articulation by using more socio-religious prayers at the end of their emails than women. Moreover, ending with either an apology (see Chapter 8 on apologies) or *regards* also occurred occasionally (2.1% and 1.4% respectively of all emails that were sent) in the current data. The emails' closing features that occurred individually (alone) at the end of the emails were then analysed in terms of role in the following Table.

Feature	Emails written by female Lecturer		Emails written by female Student		Emails written by male Lecturer		Emails written by male Student	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Writer's name	1	2.9	1	2.9	2	5.7	1	2.9
Apology	2	5.7	0	0	0	0	1	2.9
Regards	2	5.7	0	0	0	0	0	0

Phatic comment	7	20	0	0	3	8.6	1	2.9
Socio-religious prayer	2	5.7	0	0	3	8.6	3	8.6
Thanking	5	14.3	10	28.6	1	2.9	7	20
Total	19	54.3	11	31.4	9	25.7	13	37.1

Table 4-12: Email closing features occurred individually in the data in terms of role with frequencies and percentages
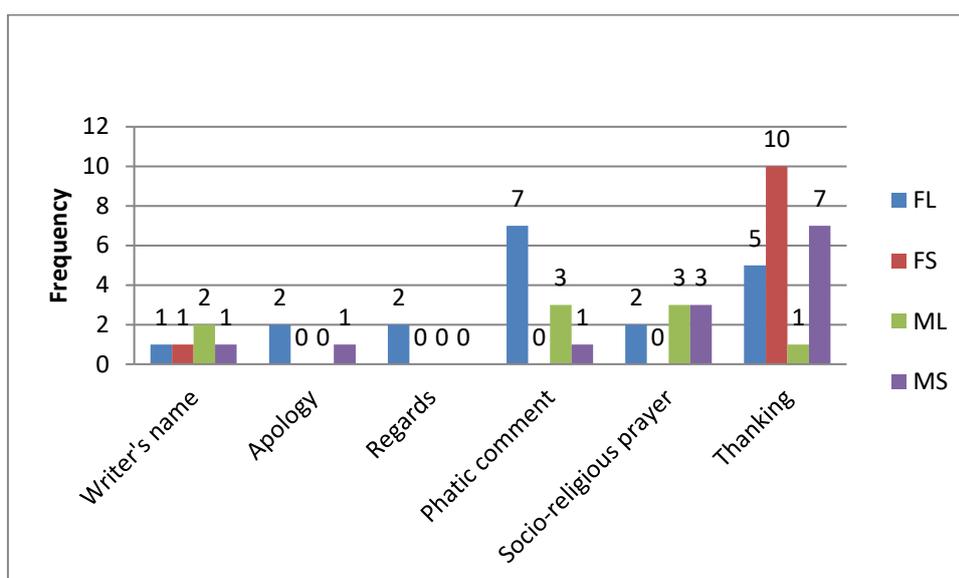
Figure 4-11: Email closing features occurred individually in the data in terms of the sender's role

When the results were dis-aggregated below according to role, for certain features, there were subtle differences according to role among the different groups. Thanking as a closing feature, for instance, tended to be used, in this study, more by students, both female (28.6% of all messages that were sent by) and male (20% of all emails that were sent by male students), compared to their lecturers (male 2.9 % and female 14.3 % respectively). This conveys the influence of social distance and status on the students' use of thanking in the current study. As a result, most of the students' emails contained requests that are rapport sensitive, especially if they were sent to their lecturers/supervisors, who are superior to them. Thus, the student participants tended to mitigate the imposition of their requests, show respect, and acknowledge what their lecturers have done for them, by thanking them, and in some cases, showing gratitude. This finding confirms Waldvogel's (2002) observation of a New Zealand context where

thanking moves occurred eight times more in emails that were sent up the hierarchy compared to emails sent down. Waldvogel (2002) explained that this was because students were aware of their non-dominant role and therefore employed expressions of gratitude more to exhibit respect and deference. The students tended to also use more thanking, according to Waldvogel, because most of their emails were requests, which are often rapport-sensitive. Students therefore tended to use thanking to mitigate and compensate the imposition, which is also true in this study, as the majority of emails that were sent by students to their lecturers concerned their academic work, and included requests. In contrast, the phatic element was used more, in this study, by lecturers (28.6% of all emails that were sent by lecturers) than students (2.9% of all emails that were sent by students). Female students showed no uses of phatic elements as a closing feature at all. This suggests that the lecturers in this study, regardless of their gender, attempted to build and maintain rapport more with their students (nine times more) compared to their students doing the same, which helped the lecturers to create a friendly and kind identity for themselves in a way that makes them appreciated and liked by their students. Table 4-13 below outlines the types of closing features that occurred in combination, at the end of the emails in terms of the sex of the participants.

Feature	Emails written by women		Emails written by men		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Freq.	%
Phatic comment + Name	10	14.3	4	5.7	14	10
Regards + name	5	7.1	1	1.4	6	4.3
Socio-religious prayer + name	1	1.4	4	5.7	5	3.6
Socio-religious prayer + thanking	3	4.3	2	2.9	5	3.6
Thanking+ name	6	8.6	4	5.7	10	7.1
Total	25	35.7	15	21.4	40	28.6

Table 4-13: Email closing features occurred in combination in the data in terms of the sender's gender with frequencies and percentages
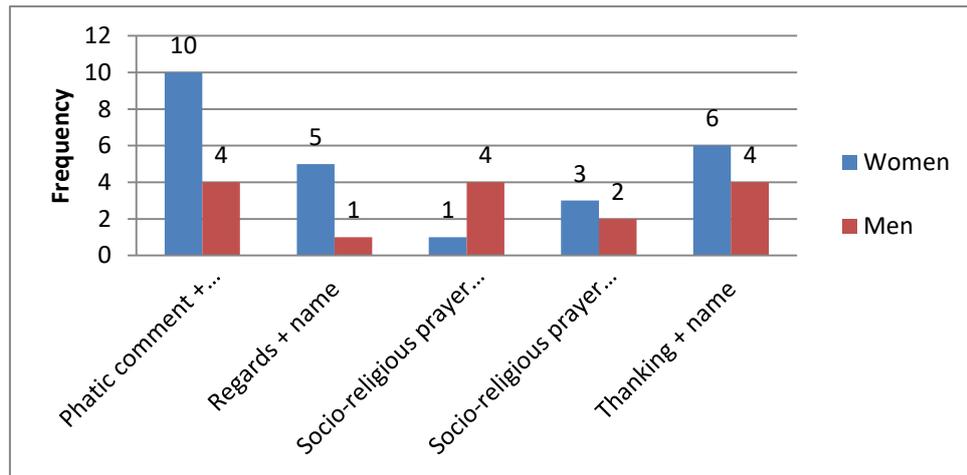
Figure 4-13: Email closing features occurred in combination

In terms of the closing features that occurred frequently in combination in the observed data, Table 4-13 above shows that the most common pattern for closing used in the data was the phatic comment coupled with the writer's first name (10% of all emails that were sent). Women, in this study, sought to establish an identity of caring and rapport building in their professional context. This finding is similar to Gilligan's (1982) finding that women tend to have an attitude of caring and co-operating. The female participants, in the current study, were inclined to end their messages with a phatic gesture plus the writer's name more than twice as frequently (14.3% of all emails that were sent by women) as men (5.7% of all emails that were sent by men). Table 4-13 also indicates that the female participants used positive politeness more than men, which is similar to what Herring (1994) and Gilligan (1982) found.

The next closing pattern that was used frequently in combination in the current data was thanking with the writer's name (7.1% of all emails that were sent). This agrees with Waldvogel's (2007: 466) finding that, in both the educational and manufacturing sectors, the most frequently used closing was thanks coupled with the writer's name. Women, in this study, used this pattern more (8.6% of all emails that were sent by women) than men (5.7% of all emails that were sent by men). The closing pattern *Regards* with the writer's name was also used frequently in the data (4.3% of all emails that were sent). Ending a message with *Regards* is maybe more used in formal interactions, which seems to be formulaic and conventionalised in some cultures (e.g. Saudi and English). Women, in this study, used R*egards* plus the writer's name more (7.1% of all emails that were sent by women) than men (1.4% of all emails that were

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sent by men). Since this pattern is relatively formal, its uses, in this study, indicate that women prefer to keep some boundaries between them and other people more than men. This was also evident in the participants' data (see Section 4.4.2) when the female lecturer FL2 commented that she was annoyed because her students removed barriers between them and thought that they were equal. Other patterns that included socio-religious prayers were also used occasionally in the data (7.1% of all emails that were sent), either coupled with the writer's name or with a thanking, which in both ways projects the participants' religious ties. Table 4-14 and Figure 4-14 below outlines the types of closing features that occurred in combination at the end of the emails in terms of the role of the participants.

Feature	Emails written by female Lecturer		Emails written by female Student		Emails written by male Lecturer		Emails written by male Student	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Phatic comment + writer's name	9	25.7	1	2.9	3	8.6	1	2.9
Regards + writer's name	5	14.3	0	0	1	2.9	0	0
Socio-religious prayer + Writer's name	0	0	1	2.9	2	5.7	2	5.7
Socio-religious prayer + Thanking	2	5.7	1	2.9	2	5.7	0	0
Thanking + writer's name	0	0	6	17.1	0	0	4	11.4
Total	16	45.7	9	25.7	8	22.9	7	20

Table 4-9: Email closing features occurred in combination in the data in terms of the sender's role with frequencies and percentages
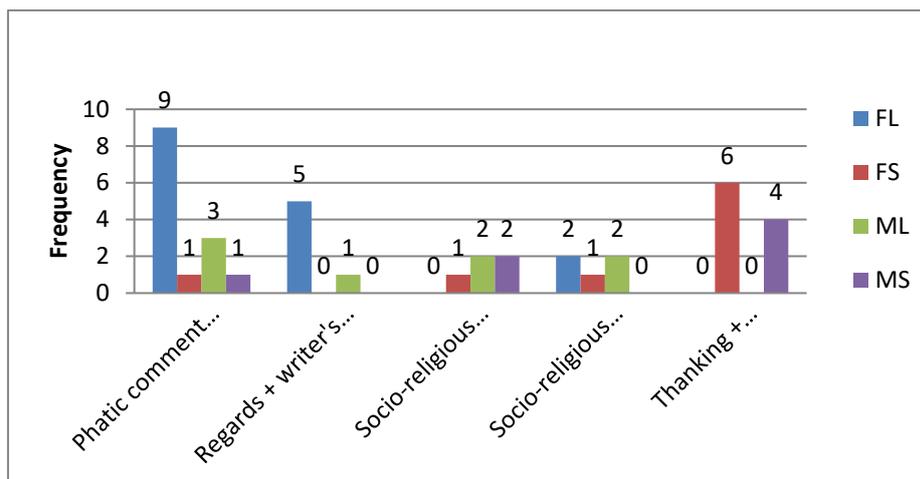
Figure 4-14: Email closing features occurred in combination

Table 4-14 above indicates that the role factor influences the use of certain closing features that were employed in combination. Lecturers, in this study, were inclined to use a phatic comment with their name at the end of their email messages more (34.3% of all emails that were sent by lecturers) than students (5.8% of all emails that were sent by students). As a result, it seems that the lecturer participants (particularly the female lecturers) were more concerned about building and maintaining rapport with their students compared to the students themselves, perhaps to minimise the gap formed by the difference in social distance which normally exists in Saudi Arabia and to help the lecturers to establish a friendly identity for themselves. In contrast, the students, in this study, tended to end their messages with a thanking coupled with their name much more (28.5% of all messages that were sent by students) when they contacted their lecturers, compared to lecturers who did not show any use of this pattern at all (although there was only a subtle difference in the percentage of requests that were sent by students (32.2%) and requests sent by lecturers (28.6%.) See chapter 6). This finding is not surprising, and is in line with what was found by Waldvogel (2002) in that thanking moves occurred more in emails that were sent up the hierarchy compared to emails that were sent down. This, again, indicates that students, in this study, were aware of the hierarchical levels that exist in their educational organisation and of their status as subordinates compared to their lecturers, which was also reflected in students' writing style concerning their tendency to finish their messages with a thanking (see Section 4.4.2 on interviews).

The lecturers, particularly women, in this study, were concerned about building a rapport with their students through the use of phatic elements and expressions either individually or in combination. However, this may have been perceived wrongly by some students who may have interpreted it as an indication that the students and lecturers are equal, which could lead to a breakdown in communication. This is especially so in Saudi Arabia, which is a high social distance level culture (Bjerke and Al-Meer, 2006). In fact, there is no evidence of this misunderstanding among the student participants, who seem to be fully aware of their social status as subordinates compared to lecturers, and of the face threats caused by requests (which form the main purpose of the majority of their emails as shown in Chapters 3 and 6). Therefore they resorted to thanking in order to mitigate any negative affect that may result from this. Socio-religious prayers seem to be employed more by the men in this study than by the women, which conveys the male participants' interactive style of building rapport. Accordingly, while the women attempted to build rapport through phatic elements/expressions and sometimes through thanking, the male participants built rapport through socio-religious prayers.

Apart from all of the above closing features, where the writer of an email was exercising his/her individual choice, there was also a closing feature that was generated automatically and was used frequently in the data. Since an automatic signature is normally generated by the email program, and because it usually provides the same information about the writer in every email, the automatic signature closing feature was examined separately in this study and it was not added to the other closing features (i.e. those that were introduced by the writer for that particular email, either individually or in combination). Additionally, because the automatic signature was restricted to the lecturers in this study, there was no need to disaggregate Table 4-15 into another table according to sex.

	Emails by women		Emails by men		Total	
Features	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Freq.	%
(Regards + Name)& automatic signature	0	0	1	1.4	1	0.7
Name& automatic signature	0	0	2	2.9	2	1.4
phatic element& automatic signature	5	7.1	1	1.4	6	4.3

Thanks & automatic signature	2	2.9	0	0	2	1.4
Automatic signature alone	1	1.4	3	4.3	4	2.9
Total	8	11.4	7	10	15	10.7

Table 4-15: The use of Automatic signature either individually or in combinations in terms of the email sender's[47] sex

In order to explore the use of the automatic signature at the end of the emails, a distinction was made between the emails ending in a personalised and individualised way by writing the name of the email sender (as in row 1 and 2 in Table 4-15 above), and the emails ending in a more depersonalised signature by signing off without a name (as in row 3, 4 and 5 in the above table). Based on Table 4-15 above, the lecturers who employed an automatic signature at the end of their emails resorted to a depersonalised automatic signature more (8.6% of all emails that were sent) than a personalised automatic signature (2.1% of all emails that were sent). The women in this study who used an automatic signature tended to only use a depersonalised automatic signature (11.4% of all emails that were sent by women), and they used a depersonalised automatic signature almost twice as frequently as men (5.7% of all emails that were sent by men). This may suggest that although the female participants were more concerned with rapport building through the type of closing that they favoured (e.g. phatic elements/expressions (see Tables 4-11 and 4-13 earlier)), when an automatic signature was employed, the women were less concerned with building rapport than the men, which was conveyed through the women's greater use of a depersonalised automatic signature. Thus, the women in this study might have been aware that this particular closing feature (automatic signature) was the least rapport building feature of those that have been studied here. As a result, they tended to avoid using it, but if they did, they were less concerned with the distinction between a personalised or depersonalised automatic signature. In contrast, the men used a personalised automatic signature quite a lot (4.3% of all emails that were sent by men), which conveyed their interest in

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[47] All participants who used signatures were lecturers.

establishing and maintaining rapport with their interlocutors while still taking advantage of the convenience of an automatic signature. Table 4-15 demonstrates some of the automatic signature closing patterns that were used more in the data which were (respectively) as follows:

- Phatic element and automatic signature (4.3% of all the emails that were sent)
- Automatic signature alone (2.9% of all emails that were sent)
- Name/thanks and automatic signature (1.4% each out of all the emails that were sent).

Table 4-15 above suggests that there was a gender effect on the choice of the form/pattern of signature in the current data. In this study, male participants tended to end their messages with an automatic signature alone (4.3% of all emails that were sent by men), whereas women favoured selecting the pattern *phatic element + automatic signature* (7.1% of all emails that were sent by women), both of which are depersonalised patterns conveying less rapport building.

I will now consider some of the opening and closing features according to what language the email used. Since the email data sample that was collected for this study contained emails that were written in both English and Arabic (though rarely both languages in the same email), further investigations were made. I divided the results by the language of the email to examine whether the use/choice of particular opening and closing features differed according to the language of the emails. In some cases, this division by language did not help to explain the data because it resulted in a small number of instances in some cells in the detailed tables. However, in other cases, there were differences in the use/choice of features based on the language of the email. Here, I will only focus on the instances where obvious differences seemed to have occurred.

Feature	Emails written by women		Emails written by men		Total	
	Ar[48].	E.	Ar.	E.	Ar.	E.
Dear + 1st name	0 0%	5 7.1%	0 0%	2 2.9%	0 0%	7 5%
Dear + cultural address form	0 0%	1 1.4%	1 1.4%	0 0%	1 1.4%	1 1.4%
Dear + title	0 0%	7 10%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	7 5%
Title + 1st name	7 10%	8 11.4%	912%	0 0%	16 11.4%	8 2.9%
Cultural address form + 1st name	0 0%	5 7.1%	3 4.3%	2 2.9%	3 2.1%	7 5%
Title + honour/ your excellency/honourable/respected/respectful	5 7.1%	0 0%	12 17.1%	0 0%	17 12%	0 0%
Greeting + 1st name	4 5.7%	3 4.3%	6 8.6%	1 1.4%	10 7.1%	42.9%
Greeting alone	0 0%	3 4.3%	6 8.6%	0 0%	6 4.3%	3 2.1%
Title alone	4 5.7%	3 4.3%	0 0%	0 0%	4 2.9%	3 2.1%
Peace be upon you	6 8.6%	4 5.7%	13 18.6	11.4%	19 13.6%	5 3.6%
May Allah's Peace and mercy be upon you	15 21.4%	1 1.4%	31 44.3%	1 1.4%	46 32.9%	2 1.4%
Total no. of frequency	41	40	81	7	122	47

Table 4- 16: Email opening strategies according to the sender's sex and language of email in frequencies

As shown in Table 4-16 above, socio-religious salutations, either in their short or elaborated forms, were used more in the emails that were written in Arabic (46.5% of all emails that were sent) than the emails that were written in English (5% of all emails that were sent). This suggests that despite the extensive use of socio-religious salutations by the Saudi participants (46.5% of all the emails that were sent), in this study, they tended to substitute them with other types of greetings when writing an email in English. Cultural address terms, which are opening forms that are quite distinct

[48] *Ar*. Refers to the emails that were originally written in Arabic in this study, while *E.* refers to the emails that were originally written in English.

to the Saudi context (such as *brother* and *sister*), seemed to have occurred slightly more (5% with first name of all the emails that were sent) in the emails that were written in English compared to the emails that were written in Arabic (2.1% of all emails that were sent). Titles combined with honorific address forms were restricted to emails that were written in Arabic (12% of all emails that were sent), perhaps because the participants in this study were aware that although these formal honorific openings were quite important in Arabic emails, when using a different language (English), this feature may lose its importance and is no longer needed. Table 4-16 above also indicates that the use of *Dear*, regardless of what it was combined with, was more common in the emails in English than those in Arabic. Formal address through the use of titles was extensively used in Arabic compared to English, which might have resulted from the difference in the norms of the language.

In terms of closings, the closing features were explored based on the language of the email.

Feature	Emails written by women		Emails written by men		Total	
	Ar.	E.	Ar.	E.	Ar.	E.
Writer's name	1 1.4%	1 1.4%	1 1.4%	2 2.9%	2 1.4%	3 2.1%
Apology	1 1.4%	1 1.4%	1 1.4%	0 0%	2 1.4%	1 0.7%
Regards	2 2.9%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	2 1.4%	0 0%
Phatic comment	3 4.3%	4 5.7%	1 1.4%	3 4.3%	4 2.9%	7 5%
Socio-religious prayer[49]	2 2.9%	0 0%	6 8.6%	0 0%	8 5.7%	0 0%
Thanking	8 11.4	7 10%	7 10%	1 1.4%	15 10.7	8 5.7%
Total no. of frequency	17	13	16	6	33	19

Table 4- 17: Email closings (alone) according to the sender's sex in frequencies

[49] In this study, socio-religious prayers closings were only restricted to the Arabic emails by all sub-groups of participants except the female students who did not use them at all.

Feature	Emails written by women		Emails written by men		Total	
	Ar.	E.	Ar.	E.	Ar.	E.
Phatic comment + Name	3 4.3%	7 10%	2 2.9%	2 2.9%	5 3.6%	9 6.4%
Regards + name	1 1.4%	4 2.9%	1 1.4%	0 0%	2 1.4%	4 2.9%
Socio-religious prayer + name	1 1.4%	0 0%	4 2.9%	0 0%	5 3.6%	0 0%
Socio-religious prayer + thanking	3 4.3%	0 0%	2 2.9%	0 0%	5 3.6%	0 0%
Thanking + name	1 1.4%	5 7.1%	4 2.9%	0 0%	5 3.6%	5 3.6%
Total no. of frequencies	9 12.9%	16 22.9%	13 18.6%	2 2.9%	22 15.7%	18 12.9%

Table 4-18: Email closings (in combination) according to the sender's sex and language of email in frequencies

Tables 4-17 and 4-18 indicate that the socio-religious prayers closings that were employed in the emails, either alone or combined, were restricted to emails that were written in Arabic. This is perhaps because the participants in this study are used to saying them in Arabic spoken communication, and are using them in their written communications as well.

4.4.2 Qualitative Findings

In order to test how far the interpretation of the quantitative findings (in Section 4.4.1) holds from the participants' perspectives, the following section takes into account the first order of politeness approach and draws on the information gained from the one-to-one interviews with the participants.

As discussed previously (Chapter 2), openings and closings play an important role in building a rapport between people. In the interview data, some of the participants commented that an email would be perceived as polite if it started with a greeting and ended with a thanking, regards or thanking in advance, as illustrated in the following extract.

دايما دايما يحتوي الإيميل على بعض العبارات اللائقة الجميلة المتعارف عليها مثل التحية في
البداية والشكر في النهاية thanks, thanks in advance or regards, something

> Always always the email includes some nice and appropriate expressions that are well known like greeting at the beginning and thanking at the end, thanks, thanks in advance.

> Emails should always include some nice, common expressions, such as greetings at the beginning and thanks at the end (e.g., T*hanks* or *Thanks in advance).*
> (ML1)

Additionally, when the participants were asked when an email would be perceived as polite, many of the participants (regardless of their roles and gender) thought that using *thank you* at the end of an email signals a polite email. For instance, the male lecturer (ML1) quoted above commented that *thanks* or *thanks in advance* at the end would indicate a polite email. However, this opinion seems to be somewhat different to the findings of a previous study by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011: 3208) who suggested that "*thanking in advance*" might be perceived negatively, as it may impose on the reader and assume that he/she is going to comply, which may lead to a breakdown in communication.

The participants were also asked when an email would be perceived as impolite. Some of the participants (particularly two female students) thought that when there was no *thank you* in an email, it signals impoliteness. Another participant (a female lecturer) said that if there is no thank you, *it's not impolite but not appropriate*[50]. This opinion differentiates between polite and appropriate behaviour. An appropriate behaviour, in addition to being polite, needs to be conventionally acceptable. That is, one that is in accordance with social norms and in particular, with status (see Chapter 5 for more discussion). Most of the women in this study thought that the lack of *thank you* in an email would be perceived as being either impolite or inappropriate, which again suggests the key role that *thank you* plays in an email closing, as a rapport building strategy.

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[50] This comment was originally said in English and not in Arabic. The interviewee meant that the lack of thanking expression is not appropriate.

In the interview data, most of the participants (7 out of 8) thought that including an opening in emails was really important. For example, a male student commented that an opening was important because of the conventional nature of the strategy.

It's the, you know, most common and followed way [the convention] to start your communication with people.   (MS1)[51]

This participant also added that he would prefer to have salutations in the emails that are sent to him.

As a receiver I'd want to see the salutation but it doesn't really matter having a closing.   (MS1)

Thus, including a greeting might function as a rapport enhancing strategy that establishes solidarity and friendliness with the recipient. Another male student thought that adding a greeting to an email would make it look friendly, whereas the lack of it would turn it into a less palatable message.

إذا كان في سلام أو تحية غالبا الإيميل يكون ودود أما إذا بدأ على طول في الموضوع فيكون جاف شويه و يتوقع الشخص أنه في تقليل يعني

If there were a salutation or greeting, then the email would be mostly friendly, but if he started directly with the topic, it is a little bit dry and the person feels that there is disrespect

An email is friendly if it includes a greeting or salutation, but if it starts directly with the topic, it's a bit too harsh and lacking in respect.   (MS2)

Starting an email with a greeting may indicate negative politeness[52] by showing respect and deference, as explained in Goffman's (1967; 56) description of deference. It also helps the writer of an email to establish the identity of a respectful person for himself.

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[51] MS1 interview was conducted in English not Arabic.
[52] Brown and Levinson (1987: 129) defined negative politeness as the "redressive action addressed to the addressee's negative face: his want to have his freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimpeded" which they described as "the heart of respect behaviour".

According to a female lecturer, receiving an email with all of the opening features including a salutation would result in her feeling that her status has been respected.

> If I received in the right way with all these things [opening features, particularly a salutation] I will consider it very respected from a respectful person.   (FL1)

The only participant, who did not think that an opening statement was important, explained that it was because of time constraints. They also said that a salutation should only be used with people who have not been in contact for a while, and not between people who are having frequent contacts.

> لا مو شرط لأنه خاصة من ناحية فلسفية يعني خاصة يعني الناس اللي تتراسل معاهم يعني مرة once يعني في الشهر أو السنة صح قد يكون أني أحتاج لكن الناس دائما في البزنس no time أنه كل شويه السلام عليكم hi hi dear يعني ما dear no time يعني بس direct اديله الماسيج تبعك و خلاص انتهي

> No doesn't have to because especially from a philosophical aspect means especially people who you contact with I mean once I mean a month or a year yes I may need but people always in business no time that every time peace be upon you hi hi dear I mean other than dear no time means just direct give him your message and that's it finish

> It's not necessary [to include an opening in an email], except if you only contact that person once a month or a year, because in business it's too time consuming to start each message with an opening other than *dear*. Just give him your message and be finished with it.   (ML1)

This participant's opinion agrees partially with Crystal (2006: 106), who argued that the more that a response is delayed, the more it is expected that the email should start with a greeting, as demonstrated in the scale of response time and rapidity in CMC (see Figure 5-2 earlier). This opinion could be influenced by the fact that the male lecturer participant was also engaged in business projects concerning improving administrative performance in different academic institutions. So the nature of this participant's work involves email communication every day, which makes it more convenient for him not to include openings in emails that were exchanged perhaps every single day.

In the interview data, the responses suggested that including a salutation in an email would create a positive impression on the reader. Various participants (4 out of 8) thought that starting an email with a salutation signals politeness in its general meaning.

This could indicate deference and project solidarity. Moreover, other participants (3 out of 8) thought that not starting an email with a salutation signalled a type of impoliteness. Some participants thought that not including a polite address form or title at the beginning, or even not choosing the polite form of address, could either signal impolite or inappropriate emails.

Similarly, socio-religious prayers in emails also have a positive effect on the receiver of the email. In the interview, a male lecturer was asked about the effect of students ending messages to their lecturers with socio-religious prayers. The lecturer thought that this would please lecturers and have a positive impact on them.

Positive بالعكس يعني happy yes because يعني تشعر أنك قدمت حاجة طيبة أسعدت الآخر delight the customer

Positive positive I mean happy yes because means you feel that you've offered a good thing that pleased the other delight the customer

[Lecturers like it when students ends a message to them with a socio-religious prayer because] it's positive, because we feel that we've done something that's pleased the students, we've "delighted the customer".   (ML1)

In the interview data, the male lecturer commented that the lecturers' use of religious prayers with students has a positive psychological effect on the students.

رفع معنوية الطالب ايوا يعني بيرفع معنوية الطالب

develop the student's morale yea means he is uplifting the student's morale

It develops the student's morale. It's uplifting for the student.   (ML1)

The relationship between the use of socio-religious prayers and establishing rapport and solidarity in a student-lecturer relationship was also evident in the follow-up interview that was conducted. A male lecturer thought that when a lecturer uses a socio-religious prayer with his students, this would have a good effect on them.

Yes يعني الطالب يشعر أنه هادا (الأستاذ) قلبه عليه أنه الأستاذ يهتم بيه يعني يعتبره يقدره يعتبره كأنه واحد من أبناءه

Yes I mean the student feels that his [the lecturer's] heart is on him that the lecturer is caring about him I mean he considers him respect him considers him as if he is one of his sons

The student feels that his lecturer cares about him and respects him as if he's a son.[53]　　　　(ML1)

This lecturer also recalled his own experience with his students at the university when he wished and prayed for all of his students to do well, which was in a face-to-face context i.e. class. The students consequently became delighted and said:

والله يادكتور أنت أحسن دكتور أحسن دكتور

And Allah [students are swearing] doctor you are the best doctor the best doctor

Doctor! You're really the best! (ML1)

In contrast, when a female lecturer (FL2) was asked about impolite/inappropriate/annoying emails that she had received, FL2 commented on the difference in social status and the social distance between students and lecturers that was sometimes ignored by the students. She said:

في واحدة مثلا أو اثنين ما بيسألوا بطريقة مؤدبة أنك أنت مثلا أستاذتهم مثلا ممكن تكون انه نحن زي بعض يعني ممكن مثلا بيشيلوا التكليف في التعامل في التخاطب أهه طبعا هادا بيكون يعني مزعج

One or two don't ask in a polite way that you for example are their tutor for example she could be that we are like each other [equal] I mean it could be for example they remove barriers in dealing or addressing of course this is I mean annoying.

There are one or two students who don't address their tutor politely. You're the tutor, but they talk to you as an equal, and they remove the barriers, which is really annoying.　　　　(FL2)

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[53] In classic Arabic أبناءه means *his sons* and بناته means his daughters. However, in colloquial Arabic أبناءه covers sons and daughters. Additionally, since men tend to be taught by men, this might have influenced the choice of أبناءه *his sons*.

However, if we compare this female lecturer's comment to her emails, we may note a difference between her attitude and her practices. Throughout the emails that she provided for this study, this particular lecturer made consistently high use of phatic elements which suggests that she attempted to minimise the gap between herself and her students. In the interview, however, the lecturer insisted that she preferred to keep some boundaries between her and the students, and that she did not like to eliminate the gap in social distance between them. Thus, the lecturer's use of exaggerated phatic elements and endearment terms might have sent the wrong message to her students to the effect that both of them were thought to be equal and friends, which may consequently have affected communications. This interpretation also supports what was pointed out by another lecturer (male) when he was asked in the interview about whether the lecturers' choice to end an email with a phatic element coupled with his/her name could be used as a rapport managing strategy. The male lecturer commented that, although a lecturer's use of a phatic element at the end of an email message sent to a student would be a rapport managing strategy which establishes solidarity with the student and minimises the gap between them, it may also have a negative impact, by causing the removal of social distance.

نوعا من الfriendly يكسر الحواجز يكسر الحاجز شويه Ice breaker تشجعه (الطالب) أنه ياخد علي بعد كدا

Sort of Friendly [friendliness] break the barriers break the barrier a little bit ice breaker Encourages him [the student] to get used to me [remove the barriers] after that.

When friendliness is used [by lecturers in emails], it breaks down social barriers and encourages the student to be too familiar in the future. (ML1)

Apart from the effect of the use of phatic elements in minimizing the assumed social gap between students and lecturers, cultural address forms may sometimes influence social distance negatively. This would be when cultural address forms are used in an upward direction (as discussed in Section 4.3). A male lecturer who had received an email from a student ending *your brother*, was interviewed about his student's use of *brother* when addressing his supervisor. The lecturer commented that it is

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inappropriate for a student to use the term *brother* when contacting his supervisor/lecturer.

المفروض ما يقول أخوكم

He is not supposed to say your [plural] brother

He's not supposed to say *your brother* (ML1)

The lecturer justified his answer in terms of some of the relevant factors. Firstly, for the importance of maintaining a gap between the lecturer and the student (social distance), as attested below.

لأنه الآن في حاجز معيّن أنه هادا الأستاذ و هادا الطالب لو كان his brother ما سار أستاذ و طالب

Because now there is a particular barrier that this is the lecturer and this is the student if it was his brother it won't be a lecturer and a student

Because now there is a barrier: *This is the lecturer* and *This is the student.* The use of *brother* won't be a lecturer-student relationship   (ML1)

Another factor is age, as the lecturer seemed to have tried to find an excuse for his student. He explained that the address form might be perceived as appropriate because of the age of the student, who was almost the same age as his lecturer. However, this (according to the lecturer) should not give the student the right to use the address term *your brother*.

لا بس هادا طالب postgraduate مو undergraduate not under هادا برضو يعني كبير في السن قد يكون في عمري حقيقة but he's still a student he's still بس مهذب unless يعني unless

No but this is a postgraduate student not undergraduate not under he is also old in age he might be in my age really but he is still a student he's still but polite unless [the email is polite except ending with your brother] means unless.

No, but this is a post-graduate not an under-graduate student, though he is older [than a typical student]. He might be my age, but he's still a student. The message was polite except the student's use of *your brother* with his supervisor   (ML1)

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Hence, role is also an important factor that determines the appropriateness of employing a cultural address term like *your brother*. Role may even be perceived as being more important than age in the Saudi university setting, as highlighted by the male lecturer in the previous interview extract. Additionally, both time and occasion may also influence the lecturers' perception of whether it is appropriate for a student to end an email with *your brother, the student X*. While this lecturer seemed to perceive the student's use of *your brother* in the email as impolite or inappropriate, he also identified grounds for its acceptable use. The lecturer justified his view, because of the occasion, which was the end of an Islamic Holy month and the Islamic religious festival that follows it, and because of the purpose of the message that was sent as a greeting and not academic. In contrast, he thought that this would definitely not be acceptable if the purpose of communication was different, i.e., for a studying purpose.

لكن مو أنه اجي أقول له سوي البحث الفلاني يرد علي طيب"أخوكم" أنا لا يقبل لكن في مناسبة عامة ممكن تقبل

But not if I come and tell him do the particular research he replies to me OK "Your brother" me no not acceptable but in a national occasion you can accept,

It wouldn't be acceptable for the student to use *your brother* in a formal message replying to my request for him to do research, but on a national holiday, it's OK.

(ML1)

Since Saudi Arabia is a high social distance country (Bjerke and Al-Meer, 2006), the way that the students contact their lecturers is quite important. When some of the lecturers who participated in this study were asked how they would expect students to show that they were writing to a superior (their lecturers), a number of the participants thought that students should show that they were writing to a superior/lecturer by using salutations. Other lecturers mentioned that this difference in hierarchy should be conveyed through the use of titles, as shown in the following extracts.

بالألقاب لازم اللقب

The title there have to be titles

[Students should show that they are writing to a lecturer] by using titles. There have to be titles.   (FL2)

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التحية أول شي يبدأونها صيغة المخاطبة تكون يعني مهذبة جدا و لطيفة

To start first with salutation and address form is very polite and kind   (FS2)

They have to put a title. The title – there have to be titles. Don't call me [*sic*] like a friend. They have to put salutation.   (FL1)

Thus, from a participants' perspective, students should use titles, salutation, polite address forms and a thanking formula. In the interview data, the male lecturer ML1 thought that it was true that when a student ends an email by thanking a lecturer, the student is actually aware of his/her non-dominant role and the power that lecturers have over them.

يحاول أن يستعطف الأستاذ أي حاجة polite polite words try to write it

Tries to beg his lecturer's sympathy anything polite polite words try to write it.

Students seek their lecturer's sympathy through using polite words in their emails. (ML1)

The students' greater use of thanking when writing to their lecturers is not surprising, especially in a country like Saudi Arabia, where power and social distance is more marked between levels of the hierarchy (Bjercke and Al-Meer, 2006), and the difference between students and lecturers is more apparent than in many Western countries.

Students may end their emails with closings to express respect to their lecturers through their use of a negative politeness strategy. According to a male lecturer (ML1), the students' choice of adding a closing conveys respect from a student to their lecturer, which will make the student be treated in the same way.

yes yes because if he is going to respect me I'll أيوا نعم بشكل أفضل ايوا أفضل helpful
respect him   أكيد ال respect أعلى راح يكون

Yes [when a student use more closings it is] better helpful [for them] yes in a better way yes yes because if he is going to respect me I'll respect him sure the respect is going to be more.

Yes. Its better [that a student uses more closings] to show respect. And if the student respects me I'll respect them more back.   (ML1)

As mentioned in section 4.2.2, the relative formality of the opening and closing features vary from one closing to another. One lecturer, ML1 (male) seemed to have confirmed this interpretation and commented that *Good luck!* and *Thanks* are perceived as formal.

formal formal "good luck" and "thanks"هادي

This is formal formal "good luck" and "thanks"

"Good luck" and "thanks" are formal.　　(ML1)

In contrast, *Take care*, *Best wishes* and *Have a nice day/weekend* were all, according to this male lecturer, normally used in intimate and close relationships,

على الناس اللي تعرفيهم close

With people who you know close

With people whom you know well.　(ML1)

The pragmatic effects of the opening and closing features mean different things to different people. When the interview participants were asked to rank eight email features (salutation, address form, using people's titles, deference, friendliness, being indirect, expressing thanks and closing) according to their importance (see Appendix C for the results of participants' perception regarding the most important characteristics to include in an email), most of the participants (5 out of 8, mostly women) thought that a salutation was the most important feature among all of the other given email features. In contrast, one of the participants, a male lecturer, thought that a salutation was the least important feature. Other participants (lecturers) thought that it was the form of address that was the most important feature. Titles were also perceived by a few participants (mainly women) as being the most important feature, whereas others (mainly men) thought that titles were the least important feature. The term of deference, on the other hand, was perceived as the most important feature only by all of the male participants in this study. Thus, most of the features that were perceived as important were (in Brown and Levinson's, 1978 terms) negative politeness features,

which is unsurprising in an academic context in Saudi Arabia, where social distance dominates the student-lecturer relationships. For women, titles were given the higher level of importance, whereas for men, it was the expression of deference that was thought to be the most important feature.

The interpretive nature of politeness by the participants makes it very hard to sustain the kind of polarised categorisation as suggested by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) where solidarity and deference are two distinct categories. In Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), solidarity is considered to be a positive politeness[54] strategy, and deference is considered to be a negative politeness type. From the interview responses, a linguistic term might serve both a solidarity and deference function at the same time, such as *Dear* and maybe other forms of greetings, like *Hi* for instance. Therefore, there are some terms such as *Dear* and *Hi* that are not only flexible and bound to people's perceptions, but that sometimes perform different functions that seem to be interwoven tightly in to their potential for politeness and rapport, rather than being separate.

The term of deference or endearment *Dear* was a particularly complex case and does not just convey deference, but solidarity as well. Indeed, the perceived effects of solidarity and deference were found to be interlinked in some cases. The fact that the term *Dear* could be interpreted as respect by some people (which is considered a negative politeness strategy) and solidarity by others (a positive politeness strategy according to Brown and Levinson, 1987) does not alter the fact that it shows politeness and concern for the other person's face by not going directly on to the topic, and it therefore functions as rapport management, or rapport building.

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[54] Brown and Levinson (1987: 101) defined positive politeness as the "redress directed to the addressee's positive face, his perennial desire that his wants (or actions/acquisitions/values resulting from them) should be thought of as desirable".

In the interview data, some of the participants (4 out of 8 men and women) thought that the item *Dear* conveyed friendliness and solidarity. In contrast, two other participants thought that it showed respect. It is interesting to note that the interview participants who thought that *Dear* conveyed respect were mainly students, whereas lecturers did not think this way. This suggests that, despite the fact that there seems to be no gender effect on the perception of *Dear*, there might still be a role influence, particularly by students who associated *Dear* with respect. However, another student thought that the item *Dear* showed friendliness.

None of the participants thought that closing was an important element to be included in an email (see Appendix C for the results of the participants' perception of the most important characteristics to include in an email). Many of the participants thought that a closing was either the least or a less important feature that forms an email. However, this perception did not seem to be reflected in the respondents' use of these features in their emails, as the majority of the respondents' emails (67.1% of all emails that were sent) ended with a closing (Table 9-2 earlier). This is perhaps because perception and use are two distinct things. Although people thought that including a closing in an email was not that important, they still used closings frequently as a rapport building strategy that enhanced interpersonal relations and established solidarity. This is different from what Waldvogel (2007) found in the educational sector, where, despite the preference of participants for a closing being used, more than a third of the messages (34%) sent by them had no closing. This suggests that the relationship between the respondents' perceptions and practice might be contextually or culturally dependent; Waldvogel was exploring the very different context and culture of New Zealand, which might also have shifted with time.

There seems to be a gap between the participants' practice and perceptions when comparing the interview responses with the quantitative results. When the participants were asked to rank a group of email features according to their importance (see Appendix C), many of the participants, especially woman, reported that the salutation was the most important feature in emails (as explained earlier), while in practice (see Table 5-4 earlier), they (particularly women) used the same feature slightly less when compared to men. In terms of titles, only one woman (lecturer) thought that

using titles was the most important feature in their email. The rest of the women did not think that a title was the most important feature, but they still tended to use titles more than men (except in the case when titles were combined to honorifics). Similarly, the term of deference *Dear* was thought by men to be the most important feature, whereas women used it less in practice. Thus the participants may have thought that those particular opening features were important because they were prestigious, even though they did not use them in practice.

In contrast, while closing features were perceived to be unimportant by a number of the participants in this study, in practice, they were used quite frequently at the end of participants' emails. This might be because the participants thought that an opening is a prestigious strategy and thus employed it frequently. In contrast, although most of the participants said that closings were unimportant, they preferred to use them as a rapport enhancing strategy, and maybe also to compensate for the lack of, or shortage of, an opening, which is another rapport building strategy that was used.

4.5 Conclusion

Much of the analysis in this chapter confirms the earlier research on opening and closing. First, despite the fact that openings and closings are optional (Crystal, 2001, 2006), the majority of the participants still started their emails with openings and ended them with closings as a rapport enhancing strategy, to establish and maintain solidarity in interpersonal communication. This partially confirms Crystal's (ibid.) finding that most of the author's email data (80%) ended with a closing. Second, as previously observed by Waldvogel (2007: 470), women in this study were more inclined to start their emails with an opening and to end it with a closing. However, the results were not in line with Econnomidou-Kogetsidis's (2011: 3209) finding that the absence of *Dear* at the beginning of an email leads to a pragmatic failure in asymmetrical electronic communications. In addition, this study also provides evidence based on the participants' perspectives, in that the more the response is delayed, the more it is important to start the email with a greeting, which agrees with Crystal's (2006: 106) finding. The findings were also in line with what Waldvogel (2007: 466) found, in that

thanking was the most favoured option that the participants chose to end their emails with.

However, the analysis of this data also showed something specific about the Saudi context in the use, choice and form of opening and closing. In the Saudi academic context, in this study, people tended to resort to the addressee's first name combined either with titles, greetings or salutations. Thus, *Hi + title + first name initial*, *hello + surname* and *Dear Sir* are examples of the opening patterns that were not used in the Saudi academic context. However, some of the opening and greeting forms that were used in the data did not occur in the previous studies e.g. socio-religious salutations, cultural address forms and *Hello/Hi Dr*. In terms of the closings, *Cheers*, as a closing feature for instance did not occur in any of the emails that were exchanged between Saudi students and lecturers for its connotation with alcohol, which is forbidden in their religion and culture. There were also some closing features that were found in the current email data, but that had not been covered in the previous research e.g. socio-religious prayers and cultural address terms.

Rapport potential was found to vary in this study from one email opening/closing to another. Some openings or closings seemed to be more rapport building than others. In contrast, other openings or closings conveyed more respect, projected distance and may also therefore convey rapport and solidarity. Thus, the notion of rapport seems to be expanded as there seems to be a scale of rapport potential (which was proposed in Section 4.3 in this chapter). This scale varies from a lower level of rapport building that implies a lesser level of solidarity to a higher level of rapport building strategy which seems to project greater solidarity. Hence, there are some parallels with openings where particular forms of closings as well as greetings convey more solidarity, rapport building and polite than others.

Moreover, this study pointed out that there seems to be a range of politeness, some of which is considered appropriate, less appropriate or inappropriate. The more appropriate the opening or closing that the form is, the more likely it is to be polite, and consequently, the more rapport building it conveys. In contrast, the more inappropriate

that the form of an opening or a closing is, the less polite it becomes, and consequently, the more rapport threatening it is.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of politeness remains useful in the pragmatic field, especially in relation to openings and greetings. However, in this study and by taking into account the first order of politeness perspective, there seems to be no clear cut boundary between each politeness classification as implied in Brown and Levinson (1987). Although solidarity and deference were treated in Brown and Levinson (1987) as two distinct categories, from the interview responses of the current study, a linguistic term might cover both solidarity and deference at the same time. Thus, there were some items e.g. *Dear* and *Hi* that were not just flexible and bound to people's perceptions, but were sometimes performed differently and thus seem to be interwoven tightly, rather than being distinct.

The findings indicated that there seemed to be a gap between the participants' practices and perceptions regarding some of the email opening and closing features. Thus, just because a feature is considered to be very important, does not mean that it will be used very often. In contrast, the features that are perceived as unimportant or less important (e.g. titles by men) can be used very often. This gap between the participants' practices and perceptions in terms of email closings was found to be the opposite of the gap that was found in terms of email openings. While opening features were perceived to be important, they were often not used in the participants' emails. In contrast, although the closing features were perceived to be unimportant by a number of the participants in the study, they were used quite frequently at the end of the emails. This might be because the participants thought of an opening as a prestigious strategy, and thus used it frequently. Closings, in contrast, although deemed unimportant by the participants, were often used as a rapport enhancing strategy, and possibly as a way of compensating for the lack of, or brevity of, an opening.

Chapter 5:   Thanking in Saudi Academic Emails

5.1 Introduction

Thanking is a strategy used in daily life, either verbally or in written forms of communication, such as email correspondence. This chapter focuses on exploring the thanking expressions in the emails exchanged between students and their lecturers in a Saudi Arabian academic context. Three main questions will be discussed.

1. To what extent do participants use thanking in their emails, and does the use of thanking or expressions of gratitude vary according to the sex and role of the email sender? If so, how?
2. What other factors influence the variations in thanking and expressions of gratitude?
3. How is the rapport potential of thanking and expressions of gratitude perceived by the participants in this study?

In this chapter, I will provide the background by considering the previous research on thanking (in Section 5.2), which includes the functions of thanking and the factors that influence the choice of thanking form. Section 5.3 will be devoted to the forms of thanking that were used in previous works and the thanking patterns that are specific to the Saudi context, along with a number of examples from the current data. Section 5.4 outlines the framework that was selected to code the thanking that occurred in the current study. In Section 5.5, both the quantitative (Section 5.5.1) and qualitative (Section 5.5.2) findings will be discussed. Finally, Section 5.6 provides a brief overview of the findings in this chapter.

Two aspects of the thanking data examined in this study are new. First, this study examines, for the first time, authentic email data exchanged between students and lecturers in a Saudi context. Second, this study examines thanking in emails from both a role (lecturers and students and not just students as previous studies investigated) and a biological sex perspective (not just from a gender or sex perspective as other studies have explored). This study is also believed to be distinctive for combining both a first

and second order of politeness approach. That is, it does not only rely on the researcher's judgment of what is polite about the speech act under investigation, but rather, takes into account the participants' perspective about thanking. Thus, the current study attempts to bridge a number of the gaps found in the previous literature.

Many of the findings in this chapter were consistent with previous studies. For example, the women in this study used more thanking than the men, and their expressions of gratitude were different. The findings showed that thanking moves occurred more in emails that were sent up the hierarchy compared to emails that were sent down. However, this study showed some differences in the uses, choice and forms of thanking. For example, the adjective/adverb *thankful/ly,* as well as the thanking expression *thank you deeply,* were used in the Saudi context, but had not been previously reported in studies in other contexts.

5.2 Background and Previous Research on Thanking

Thanking is conventionally thought of as verbal or written phrases used as an acknowledgment to the interlocutor for a favour that was made or is expected to be performed by him/her for the speaker/writer's sake. Thanking as an expression can include many different lexical realisations. Different verbs and forms of verbs can be used to express thanking. In the current section and in Section 5.3, I will focus on the fact that the previous literature has focused on the forms of the verb *thank* in English. The Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID[55] henceforth) suggests that *thanks* can also be a lexical item that does other different things, e.g., signalling a closure of a conversation (Leech, 2014: 197), a politeness marker (Wong, 2010: 1244) or the means of showing the decline or an acceptance of an offer (Lee & Park, 2011: 126). Coulmas (1981) differentiated between the use of expressions like *thank you* that conveys indebtedness to the hearer, and the use of expressions that do not (e.g. lexical items

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[55] An Illocutionary Force Indicating Device is a term initiated by Austin (1962), for more details see Chapter 2, section 2.9.

that show a closure of a conversation). In this study, the thanking expressions that cover both lexical and speech acts will be investigated as they occurred in the Saudi academic emails. Even though thanking as a closing signal will be considered separately in this study as a closing feature (as discussed in Chapter 4), it will also be considered as a thanking expression here, for two reasons. First, thanking as a closing signal expresses thanks to the interlocutor. Second, in the thanking framework that I followed in this chapter (Wong's, 2010, for more details see Section 5.4), there was a specified classification for thanking as a closing signal (see Section 5.7, classification H). The thanking strategy is part of a wider speech act of expressing gratitude that has been defined and classified differently by various scholars.

The collaborative nature of thanking between the thanker and the interlocutor has been described by a number of researchers. Searle (1969: 67) defined thanking as an illocutionary act done by the speaker after having received a beneficial act from the hearer. According to Searle's typology (1976: 12), thanking is defined as the speakers' performance of an act following a previous act that was performed by the hearer which has benefited the speaker. According to Eisenstein and Bodman (1993: 74), thanking is "a speech act that is mutually developed. It can involve a complex series of interactions and encodes cultural values and customs". The speech act of gratitude was categorised by Austin (1962: 121) as "behabitative", in that it focuses on people's attitudes towards others' social behaviour. Searle (1976: 12) placed the speech act of gratitude in the class of expressive, since it shows the speaker's psychological condition towards people and relationships. Brown and Levinson (1987: 210) identified thanking as an FTA, as the speaker experiences indebtedness to the hearer, which may not always be true as I have discussed in Section 1.1.2. In contrast, Leech (2014: 197) looked at it from a different angle and pointed out that from an interlocutor's perspective, thanking is a face enhancing strategy. According to Leech's categorisation (1983), the illocutionary goal of thanking is appreciation and to generate a friendly and polite environment. As I mentioned earlier (in Section 2.5), thanking is treated in the current thesis as a rapport-managing strategy for enhancing social relationships, which agrees with Leech's (2014: 197) perspective.

Most of these definitions of thanking imply that thanking is characteristically a post-event strategy. That is, that it normally takes place after an act is performed by the hearer for the benefit of the speaker (see Searle's typology above). Some of these definitions of thanking describe how thanking might enhance social relationships. This is as in Leech's (1983) classification described above, where one aim of thanking is to create a particular type of environment that is polite and friendly. However, Brown and Levinson's (1987: 210) classified thanking as an FTA, which is different from what has been argued by other scholars (e.g. Leech, 1983) for whom thanking is more likely to be a face/rapport enhancing strategy than a face/rapport threatening strategy, or taking into consideration the addressee's face needs for promoting solidarity. The aim of thanking may not necessarily be restricted to showing appreciation and establishing a friendly and polite environment as in Leech's categorisation (1983), because thanking can also serve other functions such as marking the end of a conversation (see Section 5.4). Since thanking has been observed in the previous literature to be a post-event strategy that aims to establish a friendly environment, and because the forms of thanking (as I will demonstrate in Section 5.3) may vary from one culture to another, I will provide a description of thanking. In this study, I will define thanking as an often post-event politeness strategy that plays an important social role in promoting interpersonal communication between individuals and may vary from one cultural context to another. All of the above definitions and meanings of thanking have shaped the research during the last few decades about this important strategy.

5.2.1 An Overview of Thanking in Previous Literature

Although, thanking has been less researched over the last few decades than apologies (which will be covered in Chapter 7), there are many studies that have investigated thanking as a speech act (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1976; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Al-Khateeb, 2009; Farina & Suleiman, 2009; Wong, 2010; Pishghadam & Zarei, 2012; and Liao, 2013). Other studies have investigated thanking as a lexical item (Hymes, 1971; Rubin, 1983; and Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986, 1993).

Most of the previous studies in the area of applied linguistics explored thanking in data that was elicited through Discourse Completion Tasks[56] (henceforth DCT) (Al-Khateeb, 2009; Farina & Suleiman, 2009; Pishghadam & Zarei, 2011, 2012; and Lee & Park, 2011) or role-plays (Siebold, 2012). Only a few studies looked at thanking situated in naturally occurring data, particularly in real-life spoken discourse (Wong, 2010 and Koutlaki, 2002) or in written texts found in acknowledgements at the beginning of MA or PhD theses and textbooks. Additionally, despite the few studies that looked at thanking in a pedagogical context, particularly in English as Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, to the best of my knowledge there are no studies that have focused on emails exchanged between students and lecturers in an academic context.

The majority of thanking studies adopted a second order politeness approach (see Section 2.7 for the definition), compared to the very limited number of studies that combined a first order with a second order politeness approach (e.g. Koutlaki, 2002). Some pragmatic studies examined the gender differences in expressing gratitude (Kashdan et al., 2009; Fauziah, 2010 and Pishghadam & Zarei, 2011). Many studies compared native and non-native speakers in expressing thanks (Eisenstain & Bodman, 1986; Intachakra, 2004; Cheng, 2005; Farina & Suleiman, 2009; Al-Khateeb, 2009; and Pishghadam & Zarei, 2011, 2012). Other studies made comparisons between American and British speakers (Hymes, 1971; and Creese, 1991). These studies found that British speakers tended to employ an elaborated expression of "thank you", whereas Americans used relatively shorter forms of thanking (Creese, 1991); Hymes (1971) found that the expression of gratitude functions differently in American and British English. In American English, thanking is an expression of gratitude, whereas in British English, it is employed as a discourse marker that indicates a conversation's sequence, for example, the end of a closing of a conversation (Hymes, 1971: 69).

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[56] DCT is a popular data gathering tool for interlanguage pragmatics that was introduced by Blum-Kulka (1982). It helps researchers to investigate "what speakers would say in specific contexts that are controlled for a range of factors, such as relationship to other interlocutors" (Wong, 2010: 1245).

Thanking has also been explored in other languages, such as in Persian and Arabic (Koutlaki, 2002; Al-Khateeb, 2009; and Al-Ali, 2010). Koutlaki (2002) investigated offers and expressions of gratitude in the Persian language and how face work contributes to polite communication between interlocutors. She argued (ibid.) that, in a Persian context, offers and expressions of gratitude are not perceived as an FTA, as suggested by Brown and Levinson (1987: 210), by affecting the speaker's negative face and for being indebted to the speaker, but rather were face-enhancing (Koutlaki, 2002: 1734). Coulmas (1978, 1979 and 1981b) compared the speech acts of thanks and apology in English and some European languages to those found in Japanese, and found a shared concept of indebtedness. However, in Japanese, thanking emphasised the trouble that was made by the thanker and that was caused to the benefactor, whereas in the Western context, the focus of thanking was on pleasing the beneficiary.

5.2.2 Functions of Thanking

Thanking fulfils the interlocutor's needs and promotes their negative face. Failing to thank the hearer when expected may result in the perception of the speaker as being disrespectful (Intachakra, 2004: 50). As a politeness marker, a thanking expression (Aijmer, 1996: 33 and Wong, 2010: 1244) enhances rapport in social relationships as illustrated in the following example.

> **Example (1) – in Arabic**
>
> و تقبل <u>خالص شكري</u> و تحياتي و تقديري
>
> And accept my <u>sincere thanks</u> and regards and respect
>
> Please accept my <u>sincere thanks,</u> regards and respect
>
> (Written by MS3, a postgraduate male student to his male supervisor)

Rubin (1983) considered a closing thanking (such as the thanking expression in Example 1 above) as a "bald thank-you" rather than a form that shows gratitude, conveys social friendliness and is a means of rapport building. However, the current study found that thanking at the end of a message may not necessarily be a "bald thank-you" as Rubin (ibid.) argued, but instead may play an important role in interpersonal communications by having a positive effect on the interlocutor, which consequently helps in building

rapport. Moreover, thanking as a closing signal not only functions as a closure of a conversation, but also signifies "appreciative acknowledgement" (Leech, 2014: 197).

Thanking may function as rapport building (as discussed in the previous paragraph) or rapport threatening in interpersonal relationships. Thanking may sometimes be perceived to be rapport threatening when it does not fulfil its conventional functions and has a negative intention or effect; for example, thanking can have an illocutionary force that is more in line with irritation, anger, or irony (Eisenstein and Bodman 1986: 168 and Zeyrek, 2012) based on the intonation of the thanking itself. Thanking might also be face-threatening towards the speaker's negative face needs because of the indebtedness that it shows, and which therefore requires some mitigating expression (Brown and Levinson 1987: 210). The face-threatening effect of thanking may be argued to be culturally specific as the perception of face-work can vary from one culture[57] to another, and according to various variables such as language, tradition, religion and conceptualisation. Zeyrek's (2012) study on Turkish thanking looked at a Turkish written corpus (METU) that included a range of genres, e.g., news, fiction and travel records. He concluded that instead of signifying an FTA, thanking conveyed friendliness, since it is intrinsically polite (Zeyrek, 2012: 82), although this claim of intrinsic politeness may not be true in all cultures or contexts. Some forms of thanking, e.g., "thanking in advance", may show respect and deference, but may also be rapport threatening. It may impose on the reader by assuming that she/he is going to comply with the request, which therefore might be perceived negatively (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: 3208). Based on Searle's rules (1969: 67), when expressing gratitude, the type of act that the speaker shows gratitude for has to have been performed by the hearer in the past and should have benefited the speaker in order for her or him to feel gratitude. Searle (1969: 67) identified *thank (for)* as an IFID that falls into a set of rules:

Thank (for)

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[57] The diversity of culture is not going to be covered in this study.

Propositional content rule: Past act A done by H (the hearer)

Preparatory rule: A benefits S (the speaker) and S believes A benefits S.

Sincerity rule: S feels grateful or appreciative for A

Essential rule: Counts as an expression of gratitude or appreciation'.

(Searle, 1969: 63)

These rules of thanking appear to be for canonical cases of offering thanks. Thanking in advance, however, does not fulfil Searle's (ibid.) "past act" criterion (see Sections 5.3 and 5.5.2 for more details) concerning the theory of speech acts. In this case, thanking relies on precise rules.

5.2.3 Factors that Influence the Choice of Thanking

Drawing on previous studies, a range of factors can influence the choice of the thanking expressions used. Pragmatic transfer or the speaker/writer's first language is one of the factors that influences the choice and form of thanking. Al-Khateeb (2009) found that Arabic speakers failed to express native-like responses, because of their negative pragmatic transfer. According to him, Arabic speakers tended to transfer strategies used in their L1 context to their L2 regardless of the effect of this in the second language. Al-Khateeb (ibid.) explained that Arab speakers tended to acquire the linguistic competence and neglect the pragmatic competence, and that they tended to use lengthier forms of thanking. Similarly, Liao (2013: 71) found that Chinese EFL learners tended to transfer the thanking strategies from their own language in to English, which may result in miscommunication.

Social status is also a factor that has a great influence on the choice of gratitude and thanking strategy. According to Pishgham and Zare (2012: 122), the higher the social status of a person is, the more that the form of gratitude will become elaborated. This may also be explained in terms of power. It is often the case that the higher the social

status of the individual, the more power that that person has over others. Power[58] is one of the factors that affects the degree of intensity associated with thanks (Leech, 2014: 197). In the current email data set, all of the students, regardless of their gender, were expected to thank more when contacting their lecturers who had more power over them (see further details in Section 5.8). Waldvogel (2002) found that thanking moves occurred more in emails that were sent up the hierarchy compared to emails that were sent down.

Another relevant social factor which affects the choice of thanking is the social distance between participants (Aijmer, 1996: 67; and Leech, 2014: 197). According to Aijmer (1996: 67), the type of relationship between the participants, whether thanking a friend or a stranger, is an essential factor that determines the choice and style of thanking, whether intensified or not. Depending on the type of relationship between interlocutors, thanking could either be addressed to people using their proper name in turn, or by using a term of endearment e.g. *Thanks, love*, if the interlocutors are friends or if they know each other very well (Jautz, 2013: 66).

There also tends to be a relationship between the choice of thanking and gender or biological sex (Kashdan et al, 2009; Fauziah, 2010; and Pishghadam and Zarei, 2011). Pishghadam and Zarei (2011: 140) found that gender had an important influence on the expression of gratitude. Expressing gratitude was found to be conveyed differently in an Iranian university between men and women (Pishghadam and Zarei, 2011: 140). Kashdan et al. (2009) also investigated gender differences in expressing gratitude. They found that men expressed gratitude in a less familiar, more challenging and anxiety-stimulating way compared to women, and therefore tended to avoid being in debt to help them build and enhance their relationships with other people (Kashdan et al, 2009: 33). However, women used thanking more, which gave them the opportunity to initiate,

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[58] Holmes (1995: 17) defined *power* as "the ability of participants to influence one another's circumstances"

maintain and promote relationships through expressing gratitude. Fauziah (2010) examined gender differences in expressing gratitude in the movie, *Rachel Getting Married*. The study found that the women expressed thanking in a more polite and lengthy way on almost all occasions. In contrast, the men expressed gratitude more in formal situations (ibid.). The findings by Fauziah (2010) might be influenced by the fact that the data under investigation was, to some extent, artificial and explored a particular cultural context, namely, American. However, since the focus in this study is on authentic data, the results of this study are not necessarily expected to be in line with what Fauziah (2010) has found.

The "rank of imposition", as identified by Leech (2014: 197), is a social factor that influences the thanking degree of intensity. This rank of imposition may perhaps be identified in relation to the speaker's perception of the favour, which has an effect on the selected thanking form. Rubin (1983) pointed out that it depends on the speaker. If he/she thought that the time, effort or money of the hearer were spent more for him/her, then the speaker would more likely express the gratitude lengthily. Based on Coulmas (1981: 74), Aijmer (1996: 67) considered the kind of favour or "the object of gratitude" to be the most important factor in determining the level of gratitude that is expected. According to Aijmer (1996: 67), the size of the favour, whether small or large, also influences the choice of thanking.

The level of formality of a given situation and context may also determine the choice of thanking formulation strategy. *Thank you* is employed more in formal situations and settings compared to *thanks* (Swan 2005: 409; Stevens 2003: 655, and Okamoto and Robinson 1997: 417-4224). *Cheers* and *ta* on the other hand, are used colloquially (Krung, 1998: 176). The focus of the current study is on emails exchanged in an academic context, which is to some extent, a formal written context. Thus, the colloquial thanking forms in English (e.g. *cheers* and *ta*, which do not have Arabic equivalents) are not expected to occur.

The cultural variable also affects the choice of thanking strategy. According to Scollon and Scollon (1995), in each language there is a set of strategies for expressing a given illocutionary act and the choice of which strategy is preferred over the other is

culture specific (see Section 5.6 for examples, i.e. *Cheers* and *Thank you deeply*). Speaking styles in particular are influenced by cultural values, and in order for any communication to be effective, it is important for people to know the appropriate social and cultural values (Wang, 2011; Tian, 2010; and Pishghadam & Zarei, 2012). Al-Ali (2010) suggested that the choice of language used in dissertation acknowledgements written by Arab students in English varies according to their socio-cultural and religious motivations. For example, in Arabic acknowledgements, thanking God for his favours precedes thanking the addressee. Specific forms of thanking (such as those found in religious expressions) may be argued to be culturally specific in terms of what they are meant to convey. In a Western context, *Thank God* or *Thank goodness* tend to be in relation to relief or panic phrases (Jautz, 2013: 7). This is not the same in other cultures like in Arabic and Turkish, which tend to express gratitude to God through these religious thanking expressions. It might be that in English, these particular religious thanking expressions have lost their religious connotations when used by some people, while in Arabic, *Thank God* and *Thank goodness* are still associated with their original religious connotation, at least up to now. Similarly in Turkish, it is common to express gratitude to God for allowing the speaker/writer to be in a fortuitous situation (Zeyrek, 2012: 66).

Thus, various factors influence the use and choice of thanking forms. For instance, social status and whether the message was addressed upward or downward, as will be seen in the analysis in Section 5.5. Similarly, the gender and biological sex of a person has an influence on thanking. I will demonstrate in Section 5.5 how men and women in this study differ in their use of thanking. Now that I have discussed the factors involved in thanking, I will now move on to its forms.

5.3 The Forms of Thanking

This section presents the first set of results from the current data about thanking. Namely, the identification of the forms of thanking used by the participants. Thanking expressions can occur either individually (single) or in combination, and can vary from short phrases, e.g., *Thanks* to expanded expressions that are boosted (Aijmer, 1996: 44). In this study, I will be dealing with both single thanking (which is similar to Aijmer's, 1996: 44 simple thanking) and combined thanking that covers the intensified thanking

expressions. Aijmer (1996: 44) differentiated between simple and intensified thanking which is boosted either by combining it with intensifying adverbs, e.g., "Thank you so much", or with a compound thanks, e.g., *Thank you, that's lovely*. She also found that intensified thanking occurred quite frequently (intensified thanks, 53.5% and intensified thank you 40.7% of the examples). According to Aijmer (1996: 46), intensified thanking is the most common device used in forming more polite thanking expressions and phrases. Example 2 below demonstrates the uses of intensified[59] thanking in the current data.

Example (2) – in English

What amazing doctor you are. Really you made me so happy. Thank you <u>very</u> much …

Thank you <u>so</u> much

(Written by FS1, a female student to her lecturer)

Based on previous studies (Haaverkate, 1984; Eisenstein and Bodman, 1986; Aijmer, 1996; Intachakra, 2004; Wong, 2010; Zeyrek, 2012; Jauts, 2013), there are varieties of thanking expressions that are commonly used in interpersonal communication including emails. Table 5-1 below lists the various studies that have explored each thanking expression with relevant examples from the current data.

The Thanking Feature	Studies where the feature was reviewed	Example from the Data
Thanks	Haaverkate, 1984; Eisenstein and Bodman, 1986; Aijmer, 1996; Intachakra, 2004; Wong, 2010; Zeyrek, 2012; Jauts, 2013	وفي مرة قادمة تراسلينني أرجو منك استخدام أسلوب أكثرلباقةو شكرا And next time when you contact me I wish you to

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[59] Intensifiers are underlined.

		use a more tactful style and thanks[60]
Thank you	Haaverkate, 1984; Eisenstein and Bodman, 1986; Aijmer, 1996; Intachakra, 2004; Wong, 2010; Zeyrek, 2012; Jauts, 2013	Thank you for your response
Thank you very much	Holmes (1984); Aijmer, 1996; Wong 2010	Really you made me so happy. Thank you very much
Thank you so much	Aijmer, 1996; Wong, 2010	You really deserve it again and again thank you so much
Thanks awfully	Aijmer, 1996	No examples
Thanks a lot	Aijmer, 1996	Thanking you a lot
Thanks a million	Aijmer, 1996	No examples
Many thanks	Aijmer, 1996; Intachakra, 2004	No examples
A combined thanking	Aijmer, 1996	Thanks a lot for your supportive message, I really appreciate it
Expressing gratitude to God: "thank/s God" or "thank goodness"	Jautz, 2013; Pishghadam & Zarei 2012; Zeyrek, 2012	No examples
Religious formulaic expression "May God bless you"	Pishghadam and Zarei 2012; Zeyrek, 2012	الله يكتب أجركم الله يكثر من أمثالكم May Allah reward you (plural)

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[60] *And thanks* is a thanking form that is used as a closing marker. In this incidence, the lecturer asked the student to use *a more tactful style* next time and then ended his email with a thanking. As described above in section 5.2.2, these are included in this section even if they are not used to express gratitude.

		May Allah increase other people who are like you (plural)
Thanking in advance	Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Chejnova, 2014; Zborowski, 2005	And I thank you in advance for your response
Thank you very much indeed	Aijmer, 1996	No examples
Thanks very much indeed	Aijmer, 1996	No examples
Cheers	Krung, 1998; Jautz, 2013; Intachakra, 2004	No examples
Ta	Krung, 1998; Jautz, 2013; Intachakra, 2004	No examples
That's kind of you	Jautz, 2013	No examples
I must thank you/ him	Zeyrek, 2012; Jautz, 2013	No examples
I owe gratitude to	Aijmer, 1996	No examples
I'm grateful	Intachakra, 2004	No examples
I appreciate it/ I appreciate the time you spend for me	Cheng, 2005; Pishghadam and Zarei, 2011, 2012	I really appreciate it
How can I thank all of you	Liao, 2013	No examples
I really don't know how to thank you	Liao, 2013	No examples
It's very kind of you to..	Liao, 2013	No examples

Table 5-1: Thanking features found in research literature with examples from the email data

In order to discuss the above table, I will first start by discussing the thanking expressions that were observed in the previous studies, but did not exist in my data. As shown in Table 5-1 above, some, but not all, of the thanking expressions found in the earlier studies also occurred in the email data that was considered in my research.

Cheers[61], for instance, did not occur in any of the emails exchanged between Saudi students and lecturers, even in emails that were originally written in English. This is possibly because, from a Saudi perspective, the item *Cheers* is (to some extent) associated more with drinking alcohol, which is forbidden in Islamic religion and culture. This may have influenced the Saudi participants' choice to avoid using it (see Section 5.5.2). Similarly, *Ta* did not occur in the current data in the emails that were originally written in English, perhaps because there is no Arabic equivalent for *Ta* and *Cheers* (as mentioned earlier). According to Krung (1998), both *Ta* and *Cheers* are typically used colloquially which thus may have restricted its use in the current data, since the current focus is on email data in a quite formal setting (academic).

Although Saudi culture is governed by Islamic religious rules, expressing gratitude to God was not used at all in the current email data. It is possibly because this may be more evident in verbal communication rather than in the written forms, except in theses and dissertation acknowledgements (Al-Ali, 2010). However, in the current data, there were a few instances where some religious formulaic expressions, e.g., *May God/Allah bless you* occurred, which signified the writer's religious affiliation through asking God to bless the recipient.

Most of the intensified thanking forms, such as *Thank you very much indeed; Thanks very much indeed; Thanks a million; Thanks awfully;* and *Many thanks*, were also absent in the current data. Similarly, thanking forms that are associated with the concept of showing indebtedness have no presence in the email data, e.g., *I owe gratitude to; I'm grateful; How can I thank you;* and *It's very kind of you*. This is perhaps because of their effect on the writer's negative face. All of which may suggest that in a Saudi academic context, the participants tend to employ simple forms of thanking in addition to some of the typical intensified forms, e.g., *Thank you very much;* and *Thanks*

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[61] There does not seem to be an Arabic equivalent to *cheers* or *ta* in Arabic, particularly in Saudi Arabic, although in some other Arabic dialects e.g. in Egypt one common colloquial equivalent is ميرسي *merci* which is originally Frensh. Instead, the word شكرا thanks is used either in formal or informal situations.

so much. In contrast, the participants' avoidance of using intensified thanking expressions (mentioned above), may indicate how such expressions may be perceived as both face-threatening and rapport-threatening to the writer. The Saudi participants resorted to thanking expressions that perhaps saved both the writer's and the receiver's face, and that helped in building rapport in their interactions.

I will now look at the thanking expressions that were observed previously in other studies (see Table 5-1 above) and that have been observed in the current data. I will move to discuss some of the specific forms of thanking that occurred in the email data, but that were not observed in the previous work on thanking. Table 5-1 illustrates that thanking may be expressed using a simple form of thanking, e.g., *Thanks* and *Thank you*, which sometimes might be used as a discourse marker (see Section 5.4). In contrast, thanking expressions may also occur in intensified forms through including the lexical modifiers *very much* and *so much*. The more there is the use of intensifications, the more polite the thanking expressions are (Aijmer, 1996: 46). A thanking expression might sometimes be expressed in combination with other type of thanking such as expressing appreciation of the act, e.g., *Thank you, that's kind of you*.

In the current data, there were a few instances where the writer of an email used pre-emptive/anticipatory thanking, i.e., T*hanks in advance,* for a favour that has not happened yet which the writer is expecting the reader to do later, as demonstrated in the following example.

Example (3) – in English

And thanks in advance

(Written by FS1, a female student to her lecturer)

While the *Thanks in advance* formula signals negative politeness and rapport strategy on the surface, which normally shows respect and deference, it could also be perceived negatively (as pointed out in Section 5.2.2). Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011: 3202) provided an example for the use of Thanks *in advance* in an email that was sent in a Greek university, as follows,

I would like you to send me all the lecture notes of the course up till now.

Thank you in advance

A. H.

According to Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011: 3208) *Thanks in advance* may impose on the reader and assumes that she/he is going to comply with the request, which therefore might be perceived negatively (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: 3208). This may sometimes threatens the reader's face, especially in asymmetrical relationships e.g. student-lecturer relationship, which in a Saudi context is expected to be quite formal. For a first-order politeness perspective about using *Thanks in advance,* see Section 5.5.2.

In the current data, there were a few instances of the word *thank* that performed functions that were not thanking explicitly. For example, one participant used لا شكر على واجب (*there is no thank for responsibility*) which is equivalent to the English expression *Don't mention it.* This form acts as an acknowledgement of thanking as the second part of an adjacency pair (i.e., it is used following thanking). Since this appeared in a negated form, it was not classified as "thanking as a responder to an expression of gratitude" because it expressed the absence of thanking in response. Some of the thanking expressions that were employed in the email data did not occur in the previous studies. The adjective *thankful,* for instance, was used as an expression of thanking in much of the email data especially as a closing formula, in order to establish and maintain rapport and social friendliness between the participants as illustrated in the following two examples.

Example (4) – in Arabic

شاكرا و مقدرا لكم حسن تعاونكم

Thankful and appreciated your [plural] well cooperation

I'm thankful and I appreciate your cooperation

(Written by MS3, a male postgraduate student to his male supervisor)

Example (5) – in Arabic

شاكرة للجميع حسن التعاون

I'm thankful to all the nice cooperation

I'm thankful for all the cooperation

(Written by FL5, a female lecturer to her colleagues)

On some occasions, the adjective *thankful* was used following advice or a request. However, in Examples 6 and 7 as shown here, the adverb *thankfully* functioned differently as a mitigating device, similarly to the English adverb *kindly*. Thus, I did not count these two thanking instances in my quantitative analysis, as Examples 6 and 7 attest.

Example (6) – in Arabic:

فأدخل – مشكورا – على موقع الجامعة

So access – thankfully – the university's website

So kindly access the university's website

(Written by ML2, a male lecturer to his undergraduate student)

Example (7) – in Arabic:

فنأمل منكن الحرص عليها مشكورات

We'd hope you keep to this, thankfully

We'd hope you kindly keep to this

(Written by FL5, a female lecturer who is in charge of an administrative work to her colleagues)

The email extract in Example 6 above is a reply by the lecturer to a student who requested to know his result from one of the periodical quizzes. The student mentioned that his previous bad mark was due to being feverish when he took the test. He then asked for this tutor's help in considering his case, and also asked the tutor to give him a higher mark. The tutor replied that he had not received the results from the responsible administrative unit yet and seemed to prefer not to be involved. He then referred the student to the website, as shown in Example 6. In Example 6, the thanking expression, i.e., the adverb مشكورا (thankfully), which is the elliptical form of أنا شاكر (*I'm thankful*), does not really show gratitude from the speaker. It rather functions more as a downtoner/downgrader, which softens and minimises the effect of any imposition that may result from the prior request (which will be discussed more in Chapter 6). This interpretation may also be evident if *thankfully* were removed from the original example (Example 6) and the message was sent as فأدخل على موقع الجامعة *so access the university*

website. This utterance (request) would look more direct and less polite than the original one. So, in Example 6, it seems as if the tutor was not saying *I thank you for going to access the university's website* but rather *Access the university website*, and used *thankfully* to be more polite. Through using this particular thanking expression, the lecturer not only softened the utterance, but also seemed to construct a polite identity for himself. This may suggest that there is a relationship between the linguistic choice of thanking and the type of identity that the producer attempted to construct for him/herself.

The thanking expression *Thank you deeply* was also employed in the current data, in an email that was originally written in English, but which did not occur in previous studies. Since the size of the favour, whether small or big, influences the choice of thanking (Aijmer, 1996: 67), the thanking expression in Example 8 below may suggest that the interlocutor has done the writer a great favour and seemed to have spent more effort and time (Rubin, 1983) on the matter. Thus, the size of favour seems to have influenced the writer's choice (1996: 67) of using the booster *deeply*, which possibly reflects her indebtedness.

Example (8) – in English:

I would like to thank you <u>deeply</u> for helping me

(Written by FL3, a female lecturer to a colleague who is higher in status i.e. Professor)

It is interesting to note that Example 8 above was originally written in English and not in Arabic. This particular intensifier, *deeply,* seems to be borrowed from or is a translation of an Arabic idiom شكرا من الأعماق which means *thank you from the depth*. In Arabic, this is the short expression of *thank you from the depth of my heart*. The most English equivalent of this Arabic idiom is perhaps *thank you from the bottom of my heart,* where the notion of depth is metaphorically still expressed, just as is conveyed in the Arabic equivalent شكرا من الأعماق *thank you from the depth*. This instance shows the participant's attempt to borrow a thanking expression from her first language (Arabic) into the target language (English), which supports the finding that speakers of a foreign/second language tend to transfer strategies that are originally used in their L1 to the target

language, which may end up having a negative pragmatic transfer (Al-Kateeb, 2009 and Liao, 2013).

5.4 Thanking Strategies

In order to explore the thanking strategies that were used in the current email data, Wong's (2010) framework was adopted for its influence and for its suitability in relation to the Saudi context compared to other systems (e.g. Intacharkra, 2004; and Cheng, 2005). Wong's (2010) framework was based on the previous descriptions and explanations of the functional categories used in previous works (Eisenstein and Bodman, 1993; Schauer and Adolphs, 2006). The aim of Wong's framework is to identify the different strategies that help to characterise and label thanking features. The table below outlines the linguistic thanking strategies as proposed by Wong (2010), with some examples provided from the current data set of this study. The framework has also been modified for use in the current study by adding an extra classification at the end, *other thanking,* which emerged from the current study and may be needed in future data collections. Adding the *other thanking* category allows for Wong's framework to be more applicable in the Saudi context and has been extended in a way that enables it to cover all of the Saudi Arabic thanking expressions.

Thanking Strategies	Wong's Examples	Examples from the Data
A. Thanking + alerters	Attention getter alerter: oh Title alerter: Professor Name alerter: Alice e.g. thank you professor	No examples
B. Thanking + complimenting interlocutor or positive evaluation of previous speaker's utterance	Appreciation of the act Appreciation of the addressee e.g. thank you. That's very sweet of you	I don't know what to say or how to thank you. What amazing doctor you are. really you made me so happy.
C. Thanking and confirming	No stated examples	No examples

	interlocutor's commitment		
D.	Thanking + refusing	No stated examples	No examples
E.	Thanking + stating intent to reciprocate	No stated examples	Thank you very much. And I didn't forget to pray to god [God] to give you whatever you want or ask him in your whole life inshalaa [If Allah's willing[62]]
F.	Thanking + stating interlocutor's non-existent obligation	No stated examples	No examples
G.	Thanking + stating reason	Stan, thanks very much for coming along this morning	Thanks for your supportive message.
H.	Thanking as a closing signal	Thank you	I wish that this file reaches to as many students as possible. Thanks
I.	Thanking as a responder to an expression of gratitude	Thank you	No reported examples
J.	Thanking as a single expression	Thank you very much indeed	شكرا لك أستاذة X Thank you lecturer X
K.	Thanking as an extended turn	1st turn: Stan, thanks very much for coming along this morning (category G) 2nd turn: It's great to see you (category B) 3rd turn: thank you very much indeed (category J)	No reported examples
L.	Other thanking	No reported examples (this classification was added in this study)	الحمد لله بخير بفضل من الله I'm fine thank Allah

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[62] This email was originally written in English by a medical student.

In the above table, A to G thanking expressions are compound thanks (Aijmer, 1996: 48), where the thanking expressions are coupled with other utterances to promote the thanking (Wong, 2010: 1247). The thanking expressions from H to K are single thanks since they occurred once/alone. At the beginning, when coding the current email data, a few problems arose.

First, there was a thanking form in the data that did not fit in any of the thanking classifications as proposed by Wong (2010). This is shown in Example 9 below. To account for these problematic expressions, classification L in Table 5-2 above was added.

Example (9) - in Arabic:

الحمد لله بخير بفضل الله

I'm fine thanks Allah

I'm fine, thank God

(Written by FS1, a female student to her female lecturer)

In spoken Arabic, the most common response to a common formulaic greeting question like H*ow are you?* is normally *I'm fine, thank Allah* which may be shortened as *thank Allah*. Although *thank Allah* (which is a response that normally occurs as part of an adjacency pair) only occurred once in the current email data, perhaps because *thank Allah* is a feature of spoken Arabic. This does not guarantee that it will not occur in the future. The problematic situation for coding the thanking expressions in Example 9 above highlighted the need for an additional classification which here was labelled as *other thanking* category (classification L in Table 5-2 above). This was added to Wong's (2010) framework, in order to account for the problems and to accommodate all possible variety of Arabic (and perhaps other languages) thanking expressions. This modification of the framework would particularly be useful in extending the framework to cover the other thanking expressions that often occur in spoken interactions e.g. *thank Allah/God* (see Example 9).

When attempting to code the current data according to Wong's (2010) framework, another problem occurred. On a few occasions, it was quite hard to

disentangle classifications B and G (in Table 5-2) in Wong's (2010: 1247) framework, which were: "thanking + complimenting interlocutor or positive evaluation of previous speaker's utterance" and "thanking + stating reason", as demonstrated in the following set of examples.

Example (10) – in English:

Thanks a lot for your supportive message, I really appreciate it.

(Written by FS2, a female student to her lecturer)

Example (11) – in Arabic:

شاكرة لك أسلوبك الراقي في كتابة الرسالة، وقلة هم من لا يحملون الضغينة في قلوبهم

I'm thankful for your respectful style in writing the message, and rarely are those who do not carry hatred in their heart.

I'm thankful for your respectful style in writing the message, and [for being unusually kind]. Rare are those who do not carry hatred in their heart[63].

(Written by FL5, a female lecturer to her student)

As shown in Examples 10 and 11 above, the thanking expression that was used in both of the previous extracts could either be classified under Wong's (2010) framework as a "thanking + complimenting interlocutor or positive evaluation of previous speaker's utterance" or a "thanking + stating a reason". More specifically, expressions like *your supportive message* in Example 10 and *your respectful style in writing the message* in Example 11 both convey the writer's attempt to positively evaluate the previous speaker's utterance through complimenting the interlocutor's

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[63] This extract was a reply to a student who emailed the lecturer about having her result denied. The student explained to the lecturer that she is not carrying hatred toward this lecturer because of the denial, and she sent the message as from a daughter (the student) to her mother (lecturer). The lecturer after providing an account for what has happened explained that she cannot amend the student's result, because it was too late. She then complimented this student for her tactful style in writing the message and for being unusually kind and not expressing hatred.

behaviour in his/her previous message. However, the grammatical form of the thanking expressions in both examples (10 and 11) seems to occur in the following pattern:

Thanks/Thank you/I'm thankful + preposition (for) + possessive determiner (your) + Adjective.

Thus, it may also be possible to classify the thanking expressions in the previous two examples as "thanking + stating a reason". This is the way that was chosen to classify the thanking forms in Examples 10 and 11, as well as other similar thanking expressions in the current data, based on its syntactic form. However, this difficulty in isolating both types of thanking classifications ("thanking + complimenting interlocutor or positive evaluation of previous speaker's utterance" and "thanking + stating a reason") in some situations might be avoided by adding an extra classification that combines both category B and C in Table 5-2, where it is hard to set boundaries between classifications B and C. The results of analysing the data, using an adapted version of Wong's framework, will be discussed in the following section.

5.5 Further Findings

The results so far have considered the thanking forms used by all of the participants as a single group. In this section, I will discuss first the quantitative findings of the relationship between thanking choices and gender/role, and then I will discuss the qualitative findings.

5.5.1 Quantitative Findings

In practice, there are a variety of ways of expressing thanks. Gratitude may be expressed without the use of thanking. Sometimes, there can be a thanking form that does not express gratitude or that has some other function. On some occasions, these different types may overlap. The expression of thanking (including both the speech act of thanking and thanking as a lexical item, i.e., closing signal) appeared frequently in the

current email data. Each email was analysed[64] according to whether it contained an expression of thanks or not. The number of emails that either contained or did not contain a thanking expression has been summarised in Table 5-3 below. The results have been normalised as the percentage of all of the emails that were sent by each sub-group and contrasted according to the email writer's sex.

Feature	Emails written by women		Emails written by men		Total	
	Frequency	%[65]	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
With Thanking	36	51.4	21	30	57	40.7
No Thanking	34	48.6	49	70	83	59.3
Total	70	50	70	50	140	100

Table 5-3: Number of emails with or without a thanking according to a respondent's sex with percentage

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[64] My initial intention was to include expressions of gratitude in addition to the word *thank*. However, in my email data, I did not encounter any that did not involve *thank* in English or شكرا which is the Arabic equivalent.

[65] All percentages in Table 5-3 and 5-4 were calculated out of the total number of emails that were sent by each subgroup.
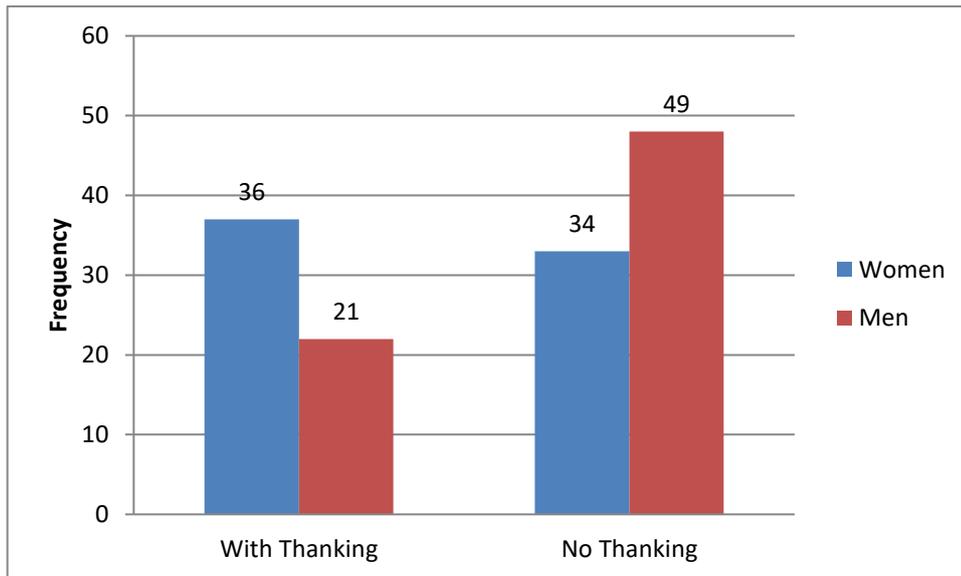
Figure 5-1: Emails with or without thanking according to participants' sex

As shown in Table 5-3 and Figure 5-1 above, out of the 140 emails, 57 emails (40.7%) contained at least one expression of thanking, whereas the majority of emails (59.3 % of all emails) did not contain a thanking expression. Table 5-3 also indicates that the female participants included thanking more (51.4% of all the emails that were sent by women) in their emails compared to men (30% of all the emails that were sent by men). If thanking is taken to be part of rapport building (see Section 2.4.), then this might highlight the female participants' greater concern for building and managing rapport with others in interpersonal communications. In contrast, emails that did not include an expression of thanking were sent more by male participants (70% of all the emails that were sent by men) than female participants (48.6% of all the emails that were sent by women), which suggests that the men were less concerned with rapport building through thanking. Thus, there appears to be a relationship between the sex of the writer and the frequency of the use of expressions of gratitude. This finding is in line with what Pishghadam and Zarei (2011: 144) found about women's greater use of thanking compared to men, in which the authors concluded that this use allowed women to build rapport, and to establish and enhance relationships (see Section 5.2.3 earlier for previous findings concerning differences between men and women). Emails that either included or did not include a speech act of thanking were then analysed according to the participants' role, as summarised in Table 5-4 below.

Feature	Emails written by female Lecturer		Emails written by female Student		Emails written by male Lecturer		Emails written by male Student	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
With Thanking	10	7.9	26	18.6	4	3.6	17	12.1
No Thanking	25	17.1	9	6.4	31	21.4	18	12.9
Total	35	25	35	25	35	25	35	25

Table 5-4: Number of emails with or without a thanking according to a respondent's role in frequencies and percentages
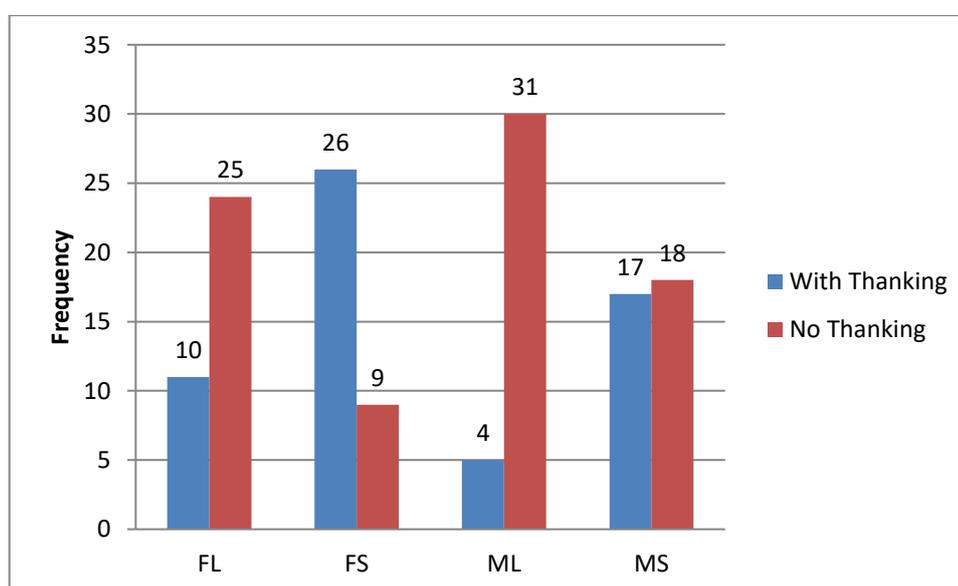
Figure 5-2: Emails with or without thanking according to participants' role

Table 5-4 and Figure 5-2 above indicates that students tended to send emails that contained thanking when contacting their lecturers more (30.7% of all emails) compared to lecturers (11.5% of all emails). The number of emails that contained thanking and were sent by students outnumbered the emails that were sent by lecturers in a ratio of almost 3:1. In contrast, lecturers more often did not include thanking (38.5% of all emails) in their emails when compared to students (19.3% of all emails). This result was not surprising at all, because students who are normally in a lower hierarchical position are expected to use a more polite language style when contacting their lecturers, in order to get what they want. In addition, students tend to ask their lecturers questions and to ask for assistance. This finding is in line with what Waldvogel (2002) found in her study that explored 275 emails exchanged in an educational workplace

(Victoria University). Waldvogel (2002: 50) found that thanking (at the end of a message) was used more when messages were directed upward than when they were directed downward. This is perhaps because, since the students' emails normally contain requests which are rapport-sensitive, they tend to use thanking expressions more to mitigate and compensate for any imposition.

The results in Table 5-4 also suggest that the difference in role has interacted with the sex of the email writer. Female students sent more (18.6% of all emails) emails that included thanking than male students (12.1% of all emails). Similarly, female lecturers sent more emails that included thanking (7.9% of all emails) than male lecturers (3.6% of all emails). Both male lecturers and students sent more emails that did not include thanking (21.4% and 12.9% respectively) than their female counterparts. Given that thanking is treated as a rapport enhancing politeness strategy (see Section 2.5) for promoting interpersonal communication, the men in this study appeared to be less concerned with building and managing rapport through thanking, perhaps because they felt that it was not important.

The expressions of thanking were then coded to see whether the expressions combined thanking, single thanking or other types of thanking. Each single and combined thanking was divided and coded according to other the sub-category strategies of thanking, based on an adapted version of Wong's (2010) system, as summarised in Table 5-5 below.

Feature[66]	Emails written by women		Emails written by men		Total	
	Frequency	%[67]	Frequency	%	Freq.	%
1. Compound Thanking						
B. Thanking + Complimenting interlocutor or + evaluation	2	2.6	1	1.3	3	3.9
E. Thanking+ stating intent to reciprocate	1	1.3	0	0	1	1.3
G. Thanking + stating reason	9	11.8	8	10.5	17	22.4
Total of Combined Thanking	12	15.8	9	11.8	21	27.6
2. Single Thanking						
H. Thanking as a closing signal	31	40.8	19	25	50	65.8
J. Thanking as a single expression	3	3.9	0	0	3	3.9
Total of single thanking	35	46.1	19	25	54	71.1
3. Other Thanking	1	1.3	0	0	1	1.3
Overall Total of thanking	48	63.2	28	36.8	76	100

Table 5-5: The thanking strategies used in the emails according to participants' sex

[66] The thanking classifications A, C, D, F, I and K in Table 5-2 were not employed at all in the current data and therefore were discarded in Tables 5-5 and 5-6.
[67] All percentages in Tables 5-5 and 5-6 were calculated out of the overall number of thanking used in the data (76).
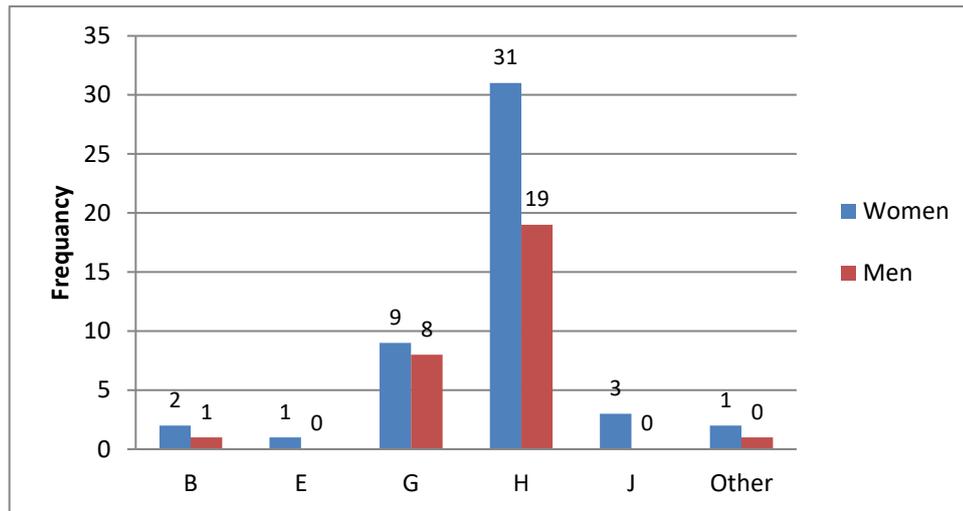
Table 5-5 and Figure 5-3 above demonstrate that the majority of thanking strategies that were used in the email data were single thanking, used in 71.1% of the overall thanking strategies found in the data. Only 27.6% of all of the thanking strategies were combined thanking. Both women (46.1% of all thanking strategies used in the data) and men (25% of all thanking strategies) employed the single thanking strategy when thanking more than the combined thanking strategy (15.8% and 11.8% respectively).

Among the various sub-categories of thanking, thanking as a closing signal (classification H) was the most common type of thanking that was employed, accounting for 65.8% of all of the thanking strategies used in the data, which is in line with Wong's (2010: 1249) finding. The female participants in particular used thanking as a closing signal (40.8% of all thanking strategies), more than the men in this study (25% of all thanking strategies). The percentage of emails by women that employed thanking as a closing signal outranked those written by men in a ratio of almost 5:3. This finding agrees with Pishghadam and Zarei's (2011: 140) results for their study, namely that expressing gratitude is conveyed differently between males and females (for further details see Section 5.5 earlier and the discussion in Chapter 4).

The next most frequent thanking sub-category that was employed in the data was "thanking with stating a reason", classification G (accounting for 22.4% of the thanking strategies used in the data). These expressions normally start with *Thanks/Thank you* followed by the preposition *for* and the verb + *ing*. Female

participants in the current data used this type of thanking (thanking with stating a reason) slightly more (11.8% of all the thanking strategies) than men (10.5% of thanking strategies). Both "thanking plus complimenting the interlocutor or plus evaluation", (classification B at 3.9% of thanking strategies) as well as "thanking plus stating intent to reciprocate" (classification E at 1.3% of thanking strategies) are combined thanking methods that were also used occasionally in the data. Only the female participants used the "other thanking" classification that was added to the framework (once only).

There were various thanking sub-categories identified by Wong (2010) (see Tables 5-2 and 5-5 earlier) that were not used at all in this data. Most of these were combined thanking strategies, for example, "thanking + alerts"; "thanking + confirming interlocutor's commitment"; "thanking + refusing"; and "thanking + stating interlocutor's non-existent obligation", which were labelled A, C, D and F in Table 5-2 as shown earlier. Similarly, there were also two single thanking sub-categories that were not used in the data; classifications I and K, i.e., "thanking as a responder to an expression of gratitude" and "thanking as an extended turn". This lack of use of classifications A, C, D, I and K suggests that, in Arabic, specifically in the Saudi academic context, the choice of thanking tends to be centred on a somewhat restricted range of thanking.

The expressions of thanking that appeared in the data were coded not just in terms of whether they were single or combined thanking, but also according to the participants' role.

Feature	Emails written by female Lecturer		Emails written by female Student		Emails written by male Lecturer		Emails written by male Student	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1. Compound Thanking								
B. Thanking + Complimenting interlocutor or + evaluation	0	0	2	2.6	0	0	1	1.3
E. Thanking+ stating intent to reciprocate	0	0	1	1.3	0	0	0	0

G. Thanking + stating reason	7	9.2	2	2.6	2	2.6	1	1.3
Total of combined thanking	7	9.2	5	6.6	2	2.6	2	2.6
2. Single Thanking								
H. Thanking as a closing signal	6	7.9	25	32.9	3	3.9	16	21.1
J. Thanking as a single expression	0	0	3	3.9	0	0	0	0
Total of single thanking	6	7.9	29	38.2	3	3.9	16	21.1
3. Other Thanking	0	0	1	1.3	0	0	0	0
Overall total of thanking	14	18.4	35	46.1	6	7.9	18	23.7

Table 5-6: The thanking strategies used in the emails according to participants' role
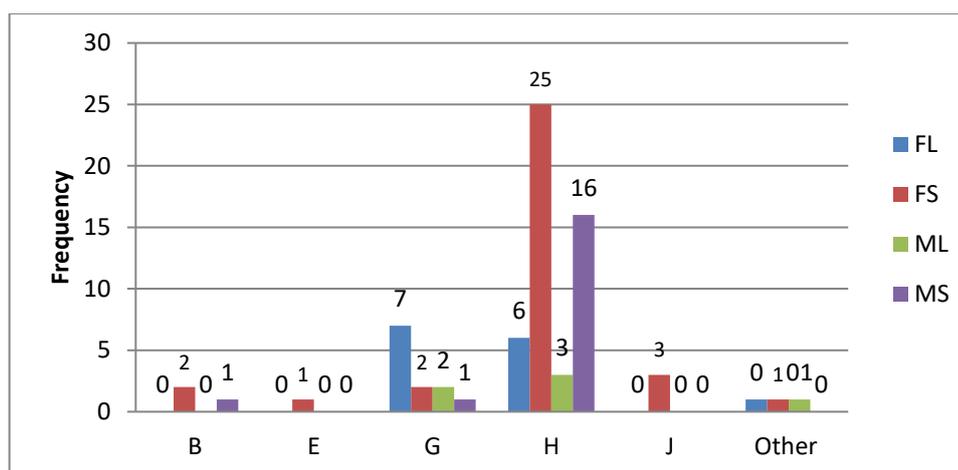
Figure 5-4: The thanking strategies used in the emails according to participants' role

As shown in Table 5-6 and Figure 5-4 above, the student participants in this study tended to employ more thanking strategies (employing 69.8% of thanking strategies) when contacting their lecturers, compared to the lecturers (who used 26.3% of thanking strategies) doing the reverse. This is in line with what Waldvogel (2002) found, in that thanking moves were employed much more in emails that were sent up the hierarchy compared to emails that were sent down. Students thus seemed to realise the social status gap between them and their lecturers, and attempted to acknowledge this by adding thanking strategies to their emails. Female students in particular used more thanking expressions (46.1% of thanking strategies) when contacting their lecturers. The

combined thanking strategies were used more by female lecturers (9.2% of thanking strategies) compared to other groups, whereas the single thanking strategies were used more by female students (38.2% of thanking strategies). Female lecturers preferred to use "thanking + stating a reason" more (9.2% of thanking strategies used) followed by "thanking as a closing signal" (7.9% of thanking strategies) as illustrated in the following set of examples that were originally written in English.

Example (12) – in English

Thank you for all the recommendation letters you send [sent] and for all your valuable advice

(Written by FL3, a female lecturer to a senior lecturer who is a colleague)

Example (13) – in English

Thanks for taking the effort to apologise for missing classes

(Written by FL3, a female lecturer to a student)

In contrast, female students favoured the use of "thanking as a closing signal" (32.05% of thanking strategies) as illustrated in the following example.

Example (14) – in English

Thank you so much

(Written by FS1, a female student to her lecturer)

Male lecturers showed no obvious preference differences, but tended to select "thanking as a closing signal" slightly more (3.85% of thanking strategies) than the other types of thanking strategies. Similarly, male students favoured using "thanking as a closing signal" much more (20.51% of thanking strategies) when compared to other the thanking expressions as shown in the following couple of examples.

Example (15) – in English

… also give results of the stimulation PDF

Thanks

(Written by ML4, a male lecturer to a male student)

Example (16) – in Arabic

شاكر و مقدر لكم حسن تعاونكم

Thanking and appreciating your [plural form[68]] good cooperation

I thank you for and appreciate your [polite form] cooperation

(Written by MS3, a male student to his supervisor)

Thus, all the sub-groups of participants in this study tended to prefer employing thanking as a closing signal in their emails, but this was more apparent in the students' emails (54% of all thanking strategies that were used) than in emails sent by lecturers (11.8% of all thanking emails). Since there was the use of "bald thanking" (Rubin, 1983) through thanking as a closing projects social friendliness and rapport rather than showing gratitude (as explained in section 5.4 earlier), the student participants in the current data were more concerned with building rapport with their lecturers compared to lecturers doing the reverse. The students also attempted to establish a more polite identity for themselves through adding thanking expressions to their emails.

Since requesting and apologising have been argued to be rapport sensitive (see Chapters 2, 6 and 7), the expression of thanking might be a suitable mitigating device that can help to reduce any possible negative effects. In order to test whether a thanking expression tended to co-occur with other relevant strategies[69] (particularly those discussed in this thesis i.e. requesting or apologising), each email was coded according to whether it contained both *a request + thanking* or *an apology + thanking*. The results have been summarised in Table 5-7[70] below.

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[68] The use of the plural form of *you* in Arabic (example 16 and elsewhere) is significant because it signals politeness, particularly negative politeness for conveying respect and functioning as an honorific device.
[69] Since openings and closings occurred so frequently in the data, I have not included them in the comparison in Tables 5-7 and 5-8.
[70] Since the numbers in Tables 5-7 and 5-8 are quite low, claims, in this study, cannot be too certain.

Feature	Emails written by women		Emails written by men		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Freq.	%
Requesting + Thanking	13	37.1	14	40	27	77.1
Apologising + Thanking	4	11.4	4	11.4	8	22.9
Total	17	48.6	18	51.4	35	100

Table 5-7: The expression of thanking and requesting/apologising co-occurrence according to sex
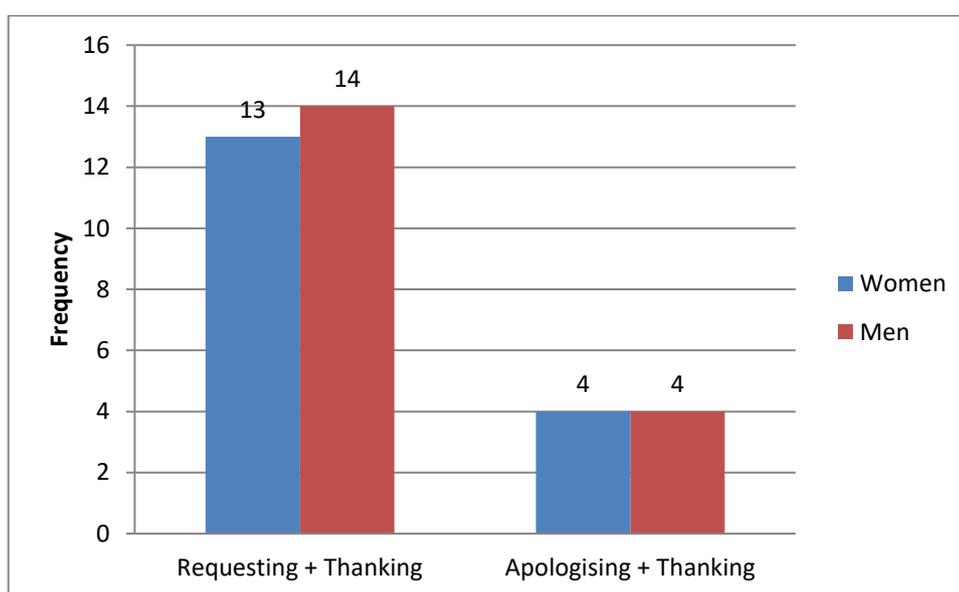
Figure 5-5: The expression of thanking and requesting/apologising co-occurrence according to sex

As shown in Table 5-7 and Figure 5-5 above, thanking tended to co-occur with requesting much more (77.1% of the number of emails that co-occurred with requesting/apologising) compared to apologising (22.9% of the emails that co-occurred with requesting/apologising) for both women and men. The percentage for emails that contained *thanking and requesting* outranked the emails that contained *thanking and apologising* to a ratio of more than 3:1. Table 5-7 above did not show any clear differences between women and men in their use of either combination. However, there is a slight difference between women and men in the amount of emails that were sent by them which co-occurred with requesting and thanking, since the male participants sent slightly more of them (40%) than the female participants (37.1%). When results were disaggregated according to role, the following table was produced.

Feature	Emails written by female Lecturer		Emails written by female Student		Emails written by male Lecturer		Emails written by male Student	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Requesting + Thanking	2	5.7	11	31.4	3	8.6	11	31.4
Asking a question + Thanking	1	2.9	3	8.6	2	5.7	2	5.7
Total	3	8.6	14	40	5	14.3	13	37.1

Table 5-8: The expression of thanking and requesting/apologising co-occurrence according to role
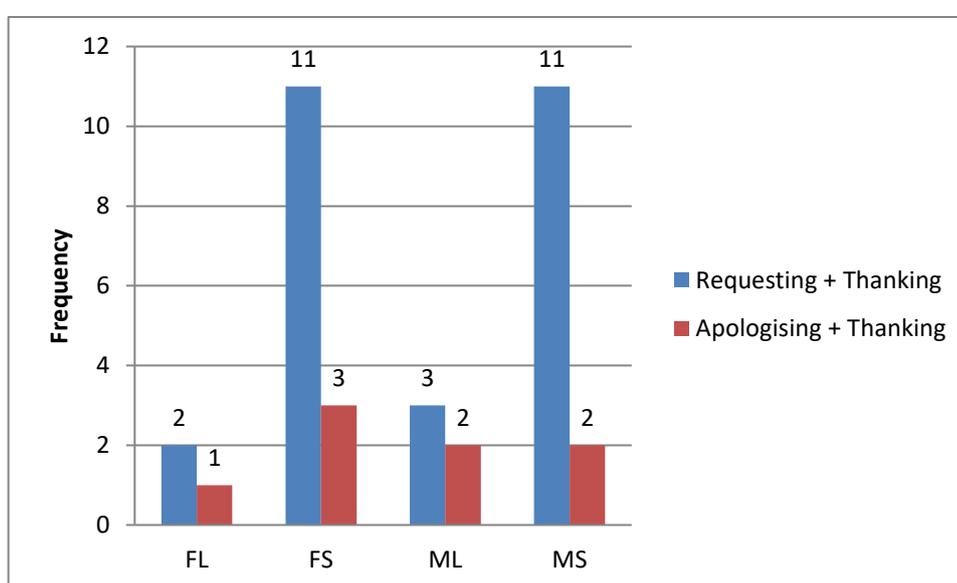
Figure 5-6: The expression of thanking and requesting/apologising co-occurrence according to role

Tables 5-8 and Figure 5-6 above also indicates that students tended to accompany their requests and apologies with thanking much more (77.1% of all the thanking that were accompanied with thanking/apologies) than the lecturers (22.9% of all the thanking that were accompanied with thanking/apologies). This may convey the students' awareness of the rapport sensitive nature of requests and apologies (particularly requests), and the lower hierarchical level that students belong to compared to lecturers. Thus, the students in this study have attempted to reduce any possible negative effects that may affect rapport and the lecturers' face by adding a thanking expression.

5.5.2 Qualitative Findings

As discussed in Section 5.3, there are various forms of thanking that were not employed in the current data set such as *Cheers.* When a male lecturer was interviewed, he was asked to justify his opinion about not using *Cheers* at the end of any of his emails. Apart from the connotation of *Cheers* with drinking alcohol, the participant commented that:

عندنا في ال culture ما نقول cheers thanks ممكن هنا different culture هي cheer يعني thanksيعني cheer in more informal نحن ما يستخدم حتى في academic issue ما بتستخدم cheer بين الدكاترة حتى بين الدكاترة هنا

In our culture we don't say cheers we say thanks could be here different culture she cheer [cheers] means thanks means cheer [cheers] between the doctors even between the doctors here.

In our culture, specifically in the academic context and in interactions between members of faculty, we don't use "Cheers", which is informal, we only use "Thanks". It may be used in different cultures but not ours. (ML1)

Thus, using *cheers* may convey informality, which might not be appropriate to use in formal situations.

Similarly, *Thanks in advance* may not be suitable to use in formal situations as well. As discussed in Section 5.3, although *Thanks in advance* projects negative politeness on the surface, it may also be face and rapport threatening for imposing on the reader/hearer, and assuming that he/she is going to comply with the request (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: 3208). A male lecturer in a Saudi university was asked about whether he thought it was appropriate to use *Thanks in advance* in an email. He commented that this depends on whether there was frequent contact between both of the interactants and the social distance between the writer of the email and the reader.

Friendliness أنه أخد شويه علي يعني أنا ما أقدر أقول thanks in advance لأي واحد إلا واحد بيني و بينه contacts many time [times] أنه أرسل لي و أرسلت له و أرسلت له أني أقول له لكن واحد أول مرة ما أستطيع أني أقول له أنه آخد شويه علي أنه في مراسلات بيننا مراسلات قد يكون

Friendliness that he became a little bit used to me [minimize boundaries and the gap] I can't say thanks in advance to anyone except someone between me and him contacts many times that he sent to me and I sent to him and I sent to him and I sent to him that I say to him but someone the first time I can't say to him

maybe he got used to me a little bit that there are contacts between us between us contacts maybe.

"Thanks in advance" conveys friendliness and familiarity. Well I can't say "thanks in advance" to anyone except someone whom I have frequent interactions with. If it is someone whom I'm contacting for the first time, I can't say it to him. (ML1)

According to this lecturer, it is inappropriate for a student to use *Thanks in advance* with a lecturer as this would affect the student-lecturer boundaries negatively. The lecturer commented that using *Thanks in advance* also means that the student considered the lecturer as a friend, which is inappropriate and in keeping with the high social distance in Saudi Arabia as has been discussed earlier.

و الله مو عادي طلاب أنا ما تعمل أي فرق fair ما تأثر علي كتير لكن هي أنه الطالب يعتبر أنه friend لي لكن أنا ما أبغى أعتبره friend لي أحيانا يقول لي والله دكتور ما أدري ايش فهو يعتبر نفسه فخاصة التعليم عن بعد فيهم هم بيعتبروا نفسهم أنهم أصحابي فأنا ماني صاحبهم يعني فهم يعتبروا نفسهم ال positive positive و ال negative negative هي ما هي appropriate صراحة هي ما هي مناسبة مرة ما أعرف يعني fair غالبا

And Allah [swearing which means well] not normal students it won't make any difference for me fair it won't affect me so much but it is that the student is considering himself a friend of mine but I don't want to consider him my friend sometimes he says to me and Allah [swearing which means well] doctor I don't know what so he is considering himself especially distance learning they are considering themselves the positive is positive and the negative is negative it is not appropriate honestly it is not very appropriate I don't know I mean fair mostly.

It is not normal, to me; it doesn't make a big difference, but it's that the student considers himself my friend but I don't want him to be my friend, especially the distance learning students. Frankly, it's not very appropriate to use "thanks in advance". (ML1)

The quantitative results (in this study) showed that emails that included thanking were sent three times more by the student participants than by the lecturers (see Table 5-4, Section 5.5.1) which is in line with Waldvogel's (2002: 50) finding. From a first order politeness perspective and when the interviews were conducted, one of the participants commented that students would show that they are writing to a superior by including thanking and gratitude at the end, as demonstrated below.

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الشكر و الامتنان في الأخير في اعتقادي هذا الإيميل يكون يعني ممتاز ...

Thanking and gratitude at the end in my opinion this email is best

Finishing an email by thanking and expressing gratitude is the best, in my opinion.   (FS2)

As shown in Section 5.5.1, a person might establish a polite identity for themselves as well as building a rapport with the addressee by ending a message with a thanking. In the interviews that were conducted, many of the participants in this study thought that an email would be perceived as polite if it was finished with a thanking expression, as demonstrated below.

إذا كان ينتهي في الآخر بشكرا ...

If it ends with thanking

(An email would be perceived as polite) if it ended with a thanking expression

(MS2)

Thus, some of the qualitative findings in this section confirm the quantitative findings in Section 5.5.1. For instance, the thanking form *cheers* is not employed in the Saudi context, *thanking in advance* may have a negative effect and can be a FTA, and that the use of thanking becomes important when a message is addressed upward.

5.6 Conclusion

Much of the analysis in this chapter confirms the earlier research that has been done on thanking. First, there is sometimes a transfer of the thanking strategies used in the L1 to the target language (Al-Khateeb, 2009 and Liao, 2013: 71), as shown in the discussion of Example 8, concerning the use of *deeply* in English (see Section 5.3). Second, as previously observed by (Rubin, 1983), thanking may be used as a mitigator that helps to reduce any possible negative effects that may be caused by using rapport sensitive strategies, e.g., apologising and requesting. In addition, this study also provides evidence that there is a relationship between the biological sex of the writer and his/her choices in thanking in some instances. Expressions of gratitude in emails from female participants occurred more often than in the emails sent by male participants

(consistent with Pishghadam and Zarei, 2011: 140-144). Moreover, expressing gratitude was conveyed differently between the men and women in this study, e.g., using thanking as a closing signal was employed much more by women (40.8% of all the thanking strategies). However, some of the thanking choices did not reveal any differences between the men and women that participated in this study. For example, in terms of the co-occurrence of thanking with requesting or apologies, this study did not reveal any difference between women and men in their use of thanking combined with requesting/apologising. The findings were also in line with what Waldvogel (2002) found related to hierarchy: thanking moves occurred (8 times) more often in emails that were sent up the hierarchy than emails that were sent down. Therefore, thanking in a Saudi context seems to resemble thanking in some other (English) contexts in many ways.

However, the analysis of this data also showed something specific about the Saudi context in the form of thanking. Some intensified thanking forms, e.g., *Thank you very much indeed* and *Thanks awfully* did not appear at all in the current data. In contrast, some of the thanking forms that occurred in the current data were not observed in any of the previous studies. The adjective *thankful* as well as the thanking expression *thank you deeply* are evidence of thanking expressions that were used in the Saudi context, but that have not been observed in other contexts.

While the previous frameworks on thanking remain useful, they may need to be extended to cover more possible thanking expressions that can occur. Wong's (2010) framework in particular was useful, though when used in coding the Saudi academic emails required an additional category ("other thanking") to reflect gratitude that was directed to God and not to the interlocutor. This formulaic use of الشكر لله /بفضل من الله /*Thank God* was observed in the Saudi context and may also be relevant to other Arabic-speaking contexts. Its addition expands the capability of Wong's model to cover all of the thanking strategies that have occurred in the data. Wong's (2010) framework might also need to be extended by adding an additional classification that combines classifications B and C, since the current study found that, on some occasions, it was hard to set the boundaries between them. This combination might help to overcome

this problem of boundaries, and more accurate coding may consequently be reflected in the accuracy of the results in a given study.

Thus, thanking is a politeness strategy that builds and promotes rapport between people. In the following chapters, I will discuss some of the rapport sensitive strategies that co-occurred with thanking. In the next chapter, I will discuss the requesting strategy and, following that, I will discuss apologising.

Chapter 6: Requesting in Saudi Academic Emails

6.1 Introduction

This chapter builds on the previous literature on requests, in order to answer the following research questions.

1. To what extent do participants use request mitigation to soften the effect of requests, and (how) does making requests vary according to both the sex and role of the participants?

2. Based on the interviews, what does the style of request mean to the participants in this study in terms of rapport strategies and face-threatening, and is indirectness in requests associated with politeness in Saudi Arabia?

In this chapter, I will provide some of the background of the previous research that has been done on requesting (Section 6.2), which includes the functions of requesting and the factors that influence the choice of request form. Section 6.3 will be devoted to the forms of requests that were used in previous works and the request patterns that are specific to the Saudi context, along with a number of examples from the current data. Section 6.4 outlines the selected framework that the requests which occurred in the current study were coded against. In Section 6.5, both the quantitative (Section 6.5.1) and qualitative (Section 6.5.2) findings will be discussed. Finally, Section 6.6 provides a brief overview of the findings in this chapter.

Many of the findings in this chapter were consistent with previous studies. For example, that people used explicit direct forms when their messages were directed downward, and mitigated less direct forms when the messages were directed upward. This study also found that there were some differences in the use, choice and form of requesting that is used in Saudi Arabia and has been present in other previous studies. For example, in a Saudi context, the participants tended not to resort to request forms that seemed to be "very direct", e.g., *I'm asking you*, but rather, they tended to use request forms that allowed for a degree of choice. However, some of the request forms

that were used in the data did not occur in the previous studies, e.g., *I hope/I wish from you/your honour to + verb*.

6.2 **Background and Previous Research on Requesting**

Requesting is a speech act that has drawn scholarly attention for many decades. Three observations from the previous research are particularly relevant for the analysis of the Saudi data that has been examined here. Firstly, requesting is a "speech act" that is extensively used in everyday life (Bella, 2012: 1917) both in written and spoken forms of communication. The second observation is the face threatening nature of requests, since it may threaten the hearer's negative face by imposing on it (Brown and Levinson 1979: 70). Thus, requests might require particular mitigating and softening devices to be added to them, and additional work spent in order to redress any negative effect on the hearer that may result from the impingement that is associated with requests. The third observation is that by exploring requests, the researcher can learn more about individual differences i.e. behaviour in requesting and the identity that a requester might create for themselves (see Section 6.3 and Section 6.5.1).

There are many definitions of requests as given in the previous studies. A request or command is described by Heider (1958: 244) as an attempt to "induce another to do something by producing conditions of action in the other person". According to Searle's (1969: 66) categorisation of illocutionary acts, requests are classified as directives and described as intended "to get the hearer to do an act which speaker wants hearer to do, and which is not obvious that the hearer will do in the normal course of events or hearer's own record". Similarly, by building on Heider and Searle's definitions of requests, but by linking it to a specific workplace context, Ho (2010: 2254) defined requests in a professional and institutional context. This can be useful in describing requests in the professional context of higher education in Saudi Arabia, as:

> an attempt by the e-mail author to get the recipient to perform an action required by the institutional, professional or personal circumstances through evoking the recipient's need for compliance on the grounds of institutional, professional and personal motivators such as necessity, duty and goodwill.

> (Ho, 2010: 2254)

Ho's (2010: 2254) definition of request above is a more specific description that narrowed the scope of requests mentioned in Heider's (1958: 244) and Searle's (1969: 66) general definitions (stated above), to make it more specific to institutional email requests. Most of the above definitions share a common meaning, which is to ask a person to do something that he/she was not going to do, which thus may (to some extent) impose on the hearer.

Despite the similarity in form between requests and orders, requests were differentiated from orders in the previous research in terms of optionality (Leech, 2014: 135) and the need for the hearer to accept doing the request prior to performing it, and without being obliged to comply with it (Craven and Potter, 2010: 426). Leech (2014: 135) described a request as a "speech event that gives H a choice as to whether to perform the desired act or not", whereas orders or commands "allow H no right to choose; S[71] tells H to do (or not to do) something without countenancing disobedience". According to Leech, "there is no clear-cut boundary between orders/commands and requests, but rather a continuous scale of optionality, leading from the 'no option given' of a pure command toward progressively greater and greater choice allowed" (ibid.). Based on Leech's (2014: 135) distinction above and in terms of optionality, requests do not necessarily imply imposition and thus may not necessarily be perceived as FTAs to the extent that Brown and Levinson (1987: 66-67) have claimed. This is because the degree of optionality that is entailed by requests often varies from one request to another. All of these definitions and descriptions of requests have shaped the research that has emerged about this important strategy.

6.2.1 An Overview of Requesting in Previous Literature

Some linguistic studies have looked at requests (speech acts) situated within naturally occurring data, including emails (speech events) (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Samar et al., 2010; Ho, 2010; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Bella and Sifianou, 2012). Other studies

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[71] S stands for the speaker and H for hearer.

investigated requests in artificial data using a DCT (for the definition see Section 4.2) or other eliciting methods (Weizman, 1993; Byon, 2006; Ogiermann, 2009 and Bella, 2012). Many studies have investigated requests in an academic context (Samar et al., 2010; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Bella, 2012; Merrison et al. 2012). A number of studies have looked at requests in foreign/second language pedagogical settings, particularly at the requests made by non-native speakers and how they compared with the native speakers' requests (Byon, 2004; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008 and 2011; Samar et al. 2010 and Bella (2012). Requests have also been explored in a few languages other than English, such as Chinese, Korean and Japanese (Byon, 2006; Ogiermann, 2009 and Chen et al. 2013). Many of these studies have focused on investigating data collected primarily from students (Byon, 2006; Samar et al. 2010; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011 and 2013; Bella, 2012; Bella and Sifianou, 2012; Merrison et al. 2012). Despite the valuable insight that these studies have added to requests, only a few studies that examined requests adopted a first order of politeness (See Section 2.6) approach and took the participants' perspectives into account (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008 and 2011; Bella, 2012). None of the studies (to the best of the researcher's knowledge) that explored requests in an academic context gathered data from lecturers.

The previous work has also examined the relationship between directness and politeness. In the many studies that have examined requests, the authors have made the point that indirectness is associated with politeness (e.g. Brown and Levinson, 1987; Leech, 1983 and 2014) and claimed that the more indirectness (see Section 2.2) was used, the more politeness was entailed to a given expression. According to Leech (1983: 108), indirect illocutions tend to be "more polite (a) because they increase the degree of optionality, and (b) because the more indirect an illocution is, the more diminished and tentative its force tends to be". However, other studies that examined indirectness (particularly in other languages) found that indirectness does not always imply politeness (Blum-Kulka, 1987; Byon, 2006). Byon (2006) examined the relationship between politeness and the indirectness of speech acts in Korean requests, and found that the claimed link between politeness and indirectness was not valid in Korean society. This was because the Korean students' tendency to employ direct strategies did not have a negative effect on others. The study highlighted that, while in English it is

polite to employ conventional indirect request forms using auxiliary verbs (e.g., *could, would*), in Korean there is no need for them since "direct speech act form can carry high honorific meaning through the use of the deferential speech level" (Byon, 2006: 268). Likewise, Blum-Kulka's (1987) study that explored the indirectness and politeness concepts employed in requests, also reached a similar conclusion. She found that indirectness does not always convey politeness (1987: 131). Having examined the perception of indirectness and politeness in English and Hebrew, Blum-Kulka (1987: 136-137) found that both concepts were perceived differently and the more indirect requests were not perceived as the more polite amongst the native speakers of Hebrew and English who participated in her experiment (ibid).

6.2.2 Functions of Requesting

As with other strategies, e.g., thanking and apologising (see Chapters 5 and 7), requesting may function as rapport building or, in some instances, rapport threatening, in interpersonal relationships. Both interpretations have been explored in the research literature. Beginning with the interpretations of requests as rapport threatening, requests can threaten the addressee's positive face through showing that the speaker is not concerned with the hearer's needs and feelings (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 66-67), thus lead to threatening of rapport. Brown and Levinson (1987, 1978) identified requests as inherently FTAs that can damage the addressee's negative face by imposing on it. Based on Heider (1958: 244), Searle (1969: 66) and Ho's (2010, 2254) definitions of requests (see Section 6.2), a request may be perceived as an FTA for imposing on the hearer and for asking the hearer to do something for the benefit of the speaker. Aijmer (1996: 139) argued that although a request does not carry an inherent aggressiveness like a threat, it can still "be potentially offensive or threatening because it impinges on the privacy of the individual who is requested to do something". Similarly, Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011: 3206) pointed out that though requests are permitted institutionally, they are still considered as face-threatening, because they "attempt to get the hearer do something that he/she would not otherwise do". Threatening the hearer's negative face by imposing on the hearer requires finding a socially and culturally suitable way of constructing the request. Thus, the selection of request form and style has to be made carefully to avoid any breakdown in communication and to fulfil its functions.

Based on Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2008: 114) review of previous Greek research (Sifanou, 1992a, 1992b; Pavlidou, 1994 and Antonopoulou, 2001), in Greek culture, some types of requests were not found to be face-threatening especially in shops and phone calls. Thus, a request may serve as rapport building when it facilitates the exchange of information and promotes the development of interaction between people. In Coates's (1996: 176) study that investigated women interacting with other women, a specific form of request, which is "to ask for information" was described as follows: "Questions can be used to seek information, to encourage another speaker to participate in talk, to hedge, to introduce a new topic, to avoid the role of expert, to check the views of other participants, to invite someone to tell a story". Coates (1996: 176) pointed out that "information-exchange" is not the main goal of asking for information. Instead, "the maintenance and development of friendship" is the main purpose. Requests can also play a role in establishing a desirable identity for the requester. Ho (2010: 2253) pointed out that "apart from getting the recipients to comply with the request, the e-mail authors also constructed for themselves some desirable personal identities by drawing the e-mail recipients' attention to some of their particular self-aspects through the e-mail discourse". A person, for instance, who chooses to incorporate an imposition minimiser in their request shows concern for the hearer's face and constructs a caring and considerate identity for themselves.

Imposition minimisers often have positive effect on the addressee. Some requests are rapport building, especially when they are accompanied with types of imposition minimisers e.g. grounders (giving explanations) and justifications, which are used as a face saving strategy (Bella & Sifanou, 2012: 93) to help the hearer to sympathise with the requester. According to Faerch and Kasper (1989: 239), "giving reasons, justifications and explanations for an action opens up an empathetic attitude on the part of the interlocutor in giving his or her insight into the actor's underlying motive(s)".

The medium of interaction might also have an impact on attributing a request as being rapport building. The asynchronous nature of email requests allows the writer to modify and revise their request before sending it, and this helps the sender to create an

ideal type of request to get the recipient's compliance (Merrison et al. 2012: 1080). Thus, requesting may serve as rapport building or in some instances, rapport threatening.

6.2.3 Factors that Influence the Choice of Requests

According to the previous studies, a range of factors can influence the choice of request that is used. The form of request can vary from one culture to another. Cultural differences in society and higher education proved to determine the requesting style and the student's identity in Britain and Australia (Merrison et al., 2012: 1078). L1 pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic transfer also influences the choice of request (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008). Byon (2004: 1696) found that both English native speakers learning Korean as a foreign language and American English native speakers speaking English used fewer mood-derivable and polite direct request forms. Byon (ibid.) explained that the American English native speakers' extensive use of indirect Request Head Act formulae in Korean might be affected by their "Western language usage" in relation to speech act theory (Byon, 2004: 1696). Byon (ibid.) argued that this is because, in many Western cultures, politeness is associated with the use of indirectness and a negative politeness kind of language, whereas in Eastern cultures, the use of direct forms is more common. The study then concluded that there was an L1 transfer influence, as the behaviour of the learners with Korean as a foreign language was similar to the American English native speakers in their limited use of mood derivable and direct requests (Byon, 2004: 1696).

The speaker's choice of request style is influenced by various factors that were pointed out by Brown and Levinson (1987, 1978). These factors are the social variables of social distance, social power and imposition on the interlocutor. The more the social distance, power and imposition on the hearer, the more there is the need to employ an indirect style, which was also extended by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2008: 112) to the amount of mitigation expected. Thus, indirect request forms function as mitigators that minimise any possible face-threatening and negative effects that may accompany the use of requests, especially if the requests were addressed hierarchically upward. Since in the current study the focus is on interactions between students and lecturers, and given that Saudi Arabia is a high distance culture (Bjerke and Al-Meer, 2006), students

are expected to employ indirect and mitigated forms (I will return to this point in Section 6.5).

Holmes and Stubbe (2003: 34) argued that social status has an influence on the choice of request as "people typically use explicit and direct forms when they hold a higher position in the institutional hierarchy than their addressee(s), and the addressee's obligations are clear". When requests are directed hierarchically upward, more mitigation and less directness is needed (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008: 113), as "politeness considerations typically weigh more heavily" (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003: 44). Byon (2004: 1689) claimed that, because of the imposition that requests may have on the hearer, if the requests were directed upward, Korean native speakers tended to combine their requests with apologies in order to minimise the face-threatening effect and to mitigate the request. Thus, an apology was perceived differently between American and Korean native speakers. While, for Korean native speakers, an apology was a type of "protocol in making requests", from an American speaker's point of view an apology was rather "as serious plea for redemption of one's faults" (Byon, 2004: 1689). This social status effect was also evident in the Korean native speakers' tendency to use indirect ways of requesting e.g. using "Preparatory[72] when speaking to someone in authority (S<H), and direct formulae such as Mood-derivable, when speaking to someone of lower status" (Byon, 2004: 1691). By preparatory, I mean the expression that is used to introduce a request which adds an indirect effect to said request.

The social distance between both interlocutors also affects the choice of request form. For example, *will* is quite direct and assertive, whereas *would* is "tentative and suggests social distance and formality" (Aijmer, 1996: 160). Byon (2004: 1692) found that both American and Korean native speakers employed more deferential and polite levels with people in "[+distance] situations, but used the intimate level for the [-

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[72] Byon (2004: 1678) described *preparatory* as a "reference to preparatory conditions for feasibility of the request (Could I borrow…?)".

distance] situations". If a requester is of a higher social status than the addressee, no mitigation can be a choice. Ho (2010: 2259) found that because of the higher social status that leaders enjoy, they could have performed their requests with no mitigation and that the lack of rapport management work in leader's request would not "turn the interaction into impolite or rude behaviour" (Locher and Watts, 2005: 26). Through employing rapport management work, i.e., mitigation, leaders established the identity of a polite leader for themselves. This may also be explained in terms of the power (see Section 5.2.3 for the definition) that people in higher hierarchical levels hold over people in lower hierarchical levels. However, Thornborrow's (2013: 8) approach to power is that power is a resource, and the successful implementation of that resource depends on who the speakers are and the type of situation that they are in.

Other factors that might affect the choice of request form are the level of entitlement that a requester assigns for him/herself, and the requester's awareness and understanding of the effect of their request on the interlocutor. By employing a modal auxiliary, or the phrase *I wonder if,* the requester acknowledges his/her lack of entitlement and is aware of the "contingencies under which the recipient might have to perform that action" (Antaki & Kent, 2012: 878).

According to Aijmer (1996: 138), the way that a speaker performs a request is influenced by the speaker's desire to be polite. Aijmer (ibid.) suggested a number of polite strategies in making a request:

- The use of a question instead of a declarative sentence
- The choice of a suggestion rather than a request
- The choice of modal auxiliary
- The choice of subject
- Giving reasons for doing something rather than stating one's wishes
- Softening the force of an impositive speech act

(Aijmer, 1996: 138)

The size of favour that a requester is asking for also determines the choice and style of request. In common "routinised" situations where "no extra personal favour is involved", a simple unmodified request, for example, a *can you* strategy, is normally

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used (Aijmer, 1996: 149). However, in practice, other alternative forms of requests may also be used for normal favours, e.g., *Is it OK* to open the window?, and *I wanted to ask you*… According to Aijmer (1996: 149), *may I (can I)* is used in quite "trivial" requests. In contrast, if the favour that has been asked for is major, lengthier request patterns are used (ibid.). In a Saudi academic context, a student may ask a lecturer for something that is quite routinised, for example, asking a question, using ممكن أسأل سؤال *Can I ask a question?* Nevertheless, in favours that weigh more, alternative forms of requests that starts with, for example, *If you don't mind* followed by the request may be employed, all of which are intended to reduce any face and rapport threats (see Section 6.3). In a Saudi context, all of the factors discussed above have shaped and influenced the linguistic form of requesting that was used.

6.3 The Forms of Requests

Based on previous studies (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Leech, 2014; Bella, 2012; Aijmer, 1996; Chen et al., 2013 and Lee, 2004), there is variety in the requestive forms that are commonly used in interpersonal communication e.g. in email messages. Table 6-1 below demonstrates the various studies that explored each form of request with the relevant examples from the current data.

The Requesting Feature	Studies where the feature was reviewed	Examples from the Data
Imperative bald form	Blum-Kulka et al., 1989	Read the report carefully
I am asking you …	Blum-Kulka et al., 1989	No examples
You must + verb	Blum-Kulka et al., 1989	No examples
You should + verb	Leech, 2014	No examples
I need …	Blum-Kulka et al., 1989	X account محتاحة ضروري لمشروعي ، ID ممكن تبعتي لي هو عالايميل ؟ I really need X account ID for my project. Can you send it to my email?
I wanted to ask you …	Bella, 2012	فضلاً لا أمراً أردت سؤالك عن غداً Kindly.. not an order I wanted to ask you about tomorrow

I want ..	Blum-Kulka, 1982	I just want to check if you would have time to do the surgical one
I would like …	Leech, 2014; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989	حابة أسألك إذا ما عليك أمر I'd like to ask you if there is no command on you
Could you/ I …	Aijmer, 1996; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Chen et al., 2013; Lee, 2004; Byon, 2006; Leech, 2014	No examples
Will you just + verb	Aijmer, 1996; Leech, 2014	No examples
Can you/ I/ we + verb	Aijmer, 1996; Bella, 2012; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Leech,2014	Can you please send me details about how you'd like me to help you write up the report?
Would.. and would you mind + verb	Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Byon, 2006; Leech, 2014	No examples
May I …	Aijmer, 1996	No examples
Why don't you + verb	Blum-Kulka et al., 1989	<u>why don't I</u> start as a female or male student and personally to learn programming language (see example 6 below)
I wonder if you could…	Aijmer, 1996	<u>I'm wondering</u> about how should we solve Q4
Is it possible if …	Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Chen et al., 2013; Lee, 2004	No examples
Can't you …	Bella, 2012; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989	No examples
Hints/off-record	Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987	ولا حاجة للارسال مرة اخرى فالوقت قصير There is no need to send it again[73] as the time is short

Table 6-1: Requesting features found in research literature with examples from the data

As shown in Table 6-1 above, some but not all of the request forms found in the earlier studies also occurred in the email data considered in my research. However, three of the direct (see Section 6.4) forms of requests, namely *I am asking you…*, *you must + verb* and *you should + verb*, did not occur in any of the emails exchanged between

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[73] *There is no need to send it again* was categorised as a hint request, since it means *don't send this to me again*.

Saudi students and lecturers, even in the emails that were originally written in English. This may suggest that in a Saudi academic context, the participants (in the current sample) tended not to resort to request forms that seemed to be very direct, which means, based on Leech's (2014:135) scale of optionality, that the Saudi participants avoided the request forms that seemed to lead to "no option given". Rather, they selected the forms that allowed the addressee to have more option and choice. Thus, in a Saudi context, this may indicate that the participants seem to take into account face work and rapport management in their interpersonal interactions particularly in the professional academic context.

Table 6-2 above also demonstrates the various request forms that were considered to be conventionally indirect (Blum-Kulka et al., 1987) (see Section 6.4) that were not employed at all in the current data. Examples of these are the request patterns *could you; will you just + verb; would ... and would you mind + verb; may I ...; is it possible if...:* and *can't you.* In Arabic, it seems that the equivalent for the request form *could you،*قدرت/استطعت which is considered to be grammatically the past tense of *can you* تقدر/تستطيع is not a common way to request. Instead it is used to describe or enquire about something that has happened in the past. This would explain why *could you* did not occur in the current Arabic email data. The emails that were originally written in English also tended to avoid using *could you* when requesting, possibly because of the L1 pragmalinguistic transfer (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008: 131). The absence of the other request forms in the data (i.e. *will you; would/would you mind + verb; may I; and is it possible if...*) may be because of the nature of the current data, which is in a written form that may have restricted their use to spoken forms of communication, or because most of the email data was written in Arabic and not in English.

In contrast, the three direct request forms *I need; I wanted;* and *I want* that were used in the previous studies were occasionally employed in the current data, as the following set of examples attests.

Example (1) – in English:

I need to see you in the office

(Written by FL4, a female lecturer to her student)

Example (2) – in Arabic:

اردت سؤالك عن غدا

<u>I wanted</u> asking you about tomorrow

<u>I wanted to</u> ask you about tomorrow

(Written by FS1, a female student to her female lecturer)

Example (3) – in Arabic:

أبغاك تسوين تحليل فقط لمتغير المعالجة و تكتبيت ملاحظاتك بشكل علمي

<u>I want you</u> to do an analysis only for the processing variable and write your comments in a scientific way.

<u>I want you</u> to do an analysis only for the processing variable and to write down your observation in a scientific way

(Written by ML5, a male supervisor to his female student)

Furthermore, various conventional indirect forms of request were used in the previous studies as well as in the current English email data as shown in the following couple of examples.

Example (4) – in English:

<u>Can you</u> please send me details about how you'd like me to help you write up the report?

(Written by FS2, a female medical student to her male lecturer)

In Example 4 above, the conventional indirect form of request *can you* was followed by the mitigating device *please* to soften and minimise any possible negative effect that might result from the imposition associated with the request. This confirms Aijmer's (1996: 166) finding that *please* normally occurs following *could you*[74] which is the past of *can you*. In other instances in the Arabic data, *can* was not followed by *please* as in ممكن تبعتي لي هو عالايميل *can you send it to my email*.

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[74] As explained earlier, in Arabic there is not the same *can* and *could* distinction that exist in English.

As shown in Table 6-1 above, the conventional indirect form of request *Why don't you + verb,* occurred in a slightly different form and only in the Arabic data as follows.

Example (5) in Arabic:

لماذا لا أبدأ أنا كطالب أو طالبة و بشكل شخصي تعلم لغة برمجية مثلا

<u>Why don't I</u> as a male student or a female student and in a personal way learning programing language for example

<u>Why don't I</u> start as a female or male student personally learning a programming language, for example?

(Written by ML5, a male lecturer)

In English, the expression *Why don't I do …* seems not to be an attempt to make a request or ask the addressee to do something, but instead it seems to be more like making a statement about what the speaker is going to do. However, in Arabic, the case is different. The email extract in Example 5 above was a reply by a Head of the department to a group of female students who asked him to help them to sign up and take some advance modules during the summer. The Head of the department apologised, saying that it was not possible to provide the modules during the summer, due to departmental policy as well as other reasons that he mentioned. He then asked them to invest their time by taking alternative classes e.g. learning programming by saying *Why don't I ….*. In Arabic, this request form *Why don't I* is a request since (in Example 5) the Head of the department asked the students to sign-up for particular short training that he suggested, in a way that gives voice to their thoughts, as if the words were coming from them.

In the current data, the mild hint of request form was observed in the previous studies as well as in the current Arabic data as shown in the following set of examples.

Example (6) – in Arabic:

منذ البارحة و أنا انتظر درجات مادة # حتى اتمكن من حذف المادة ما إذا كانت سيئة العلامة

علما بأن اليوم هو اخر يوم لحذف المواد

اتمنى افادتك دكتورتي الفاضلة

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Since yesterday I've been waiting for # module scores so I can delete the module if the score was bad, knowing that today is the last day to cancel the modules.

I hope to get your advice my respectful doctor.

I've been waiting for my results of # module since yesterday so I can withdraw from the module if the result was bad, as today is the last day for dropping the modules

I hope to get your response, doctor.

(Written by FS1, a female medical student to her female lecturer)

Example (7) – in Arabic:

تجد في المرفق الرسالة كاملة و اعتذر عن التأخير في ارساله

You find in the attachment the whole thesis and I apologise about the delay in sending it.

(Written by MS3, a male post-graduate student to his supervisor)

In Example 6 above, the student seems to have been promised that she would receive her result the day before, but she did not receive it as promised. She then sent a message to her lecturer, but rather than asking the lecturer why she had not sent the results yet and requesting her to send it, she requested it indirectly (using a hint) *I've been waiting for my results of # module since yesterday so I can drop the module if the result was bad knowing that today is the last day for dropping the modules*. The student followed her hint (underlined) with an indirect request, *I hope to get your response doctor,* perhaps to emphasize and clarify her request as well as to mitigate any rapport threatening effect that may result from the request. In contrast, Example 7 showed an indirect way of requesting feedback that was employed occasionally using a hint, but without following it with any type of explicit requests (as in Example 6). The students' choice to use hints in requests conveys their concern for saving the lecturer's face and represents an attempt to manage rapport with them.

Example (8):

تجد في المرفق مجموعة من اوراق البحث من Science Direct ارجو من سعادتكم قراءتها و مدى الاستفادة منها في البحث

You find in the attachment a group of research papers from Science Direct.

I wish from your [plural form[75]] honour reading them and the extent of benefiting from them in my research.

You'll find in the attachment a group of research papers from Science Direct

I hoped you might read it and advise to what extent could it be beneficial in the research.

(Written by MS3, a male post-graduate student to his supervisor)

In Example 7 earlier, the writer formed his request as a hint without following it with an explicit request. In contrast, the case was different in Example 8. As shown in Example 8 above, the post-graduate student's request consists of two parts; a mild hint (underlined) and a conventionally indirect request form in أرجو من سعادتكم (I wish/*I hope)*. Although as a whole the request seems to be indirect and polite on the surface (especially as an honorific (سعادتكم honour) was added to the request in Arabic), it was perceived as inappropriate and offending from the supervisor's perspective (see Section 6.5.2 for the supervisor's point of view about this email that he received from his student). This is because it is supposed to be part of a post-graduate student's role and responsibility to work hard and to be responsible for searching for the relevant research articles, and then reading, summarising and using them. The post-graduate student, rather than working on the research articles himself, requested his supervisor to read them for him and to inform the student about how beneficial and relevant they are, which is unacceptable. Thus, despite the construction of the request (in Example 8) seeming to be polite, indirect and rapport building on the surface, by exploring it more closely, we find that what was really conveyed was the opposite. The inappropriate nature of the request that the post-graduate student made had the effect of sending a message to the lecturer that the student was at a higher hierarchical level than the supervisor, which perhaps suggests that the student attempted to construct a superior

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[75] In Arabic, addressing a person with a plural form of pronoun conveys respect and deference and can be used when a message is directed upward.

identity for himself compared to the lecturer. This was an inappropriate request, especially in a context like Saudi Arabia, where the student-lecturer/supervisor relationship is supposed to be high in social distance.

Some of the requesting forms that were employed in the email data did not occur in the previous studies[76],

I hope from you/your honour to + verb

I wish from you/your honour to + verb

Both of the previous request patterns in the form of *I hope* and *I wish* are, in the Saudi context, conventionally indirect request forms which have been labelled as "Hedged performative[77]" and are used frequently in the Arabic data, as the following examples attest.

Example (9) – in Arabic:

آمل من سعادتكم إرسال (إجازة الرسالة)

I hope from your [plural] honor to send (thesis approval).

I hope you can send (thesis approval)

(Written by MS1, a male post-graduate student to his supervisor)

Example (10) – in Arabic:

آمل من الله ثم من سعادتكم الموافقة لي على هذا الموضوع حتى أبدأ في كتابة خطة البحث

I hope from Allah then from your [plural form] honour to approve this topic for me so I can start writing the research plan.

I hope you can approve this topic for me so I can start writing the research plan.

(Written by MS3, a male post-graduate student to his supervisor)

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[76] These are forms that are specific to my data that would be marked for first-language English speakers. However, I will use more idiomatic translations in my examples

[77] Hedged performative is a term that was originally used by Fraser (1975: 18) and was defined by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) as "utterances in which the naming of the illocutionary force is modified by hedging expressions ('I would like to ask you to give your presentation a week earlier than schedules').

Example (11) – in Arabic:

ارجو من سعادتكم تكرم الاطلاع

I wish from your honor to kindly have a look

I hope you can have a look

(Written by MS3, a male postgraduate student to his supervisor)

As shown in Examples 9, 10 and 11 above, the patterns starting with *I wish* and *I hope* are request forms that are polite and indirect ways of requesting in the Saudi context. These two patterns function as mitigators that minimise the force of a request which may result from using a direct form of request, such as *Have a look at the attachment* or *Review my work*. They are normally used in written forms of communication and perhaps in formal interactions face-to-face as well. A similar request form/style that also occurred in the data but not in earlier studies has been formed in the following pattern:

I'd like to inform you about the necessity of …

This request pattern (as with the hints above) may be followed by an explicit request form, as Example 13 attests, or without, as in Example 14.

Example (12) – in Arabic:

يطيب لي ابلاغكم بأهمية استلام الوثيقة لتحسين المستوى الوظيفي (المستوى السادس للحاصلين على الماجستير في وزارة التربية و التعليم)، آخر موعد لتسليم الوثيقة هو x/x/xxxx

لذا اطلب من سعادتكم الموافقة على تحديد يوم المناقشة

I'd like to inform you about the necessity of receiving the certificate to improve the job's level (level six for master holder in the Ministry of Education). The deadline for submitting the certificate is x/x/xxxx. So I'd ask your honor to specify a date for the viva

I'd like to advise you of the necessity of receiving the certificate to increase the pay grade of the job (to level six, Master's holder, in the Ministry of Education). The deadline for submitting the certificate is X/X/XXX. So I'd ask you to specify a date for the viva.

(Written by MS1, a male post-graduate student to his supervisor)

Example (13) – in Arabic:

أحيطك علما بضرورة الاستعداد للدوري الثاني، بحيث تكون الأسئلة جاهزة للتصوير في منتصف الشهر القادم

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I'd inform you about the necessity of preparing for the second periodical test, so that the questions will be ready for photocopying by the mid of next month

I'm informing you of the necessity of preparing for the second periodic test, so that the questions [you are creating] will be ready for photocopying by the middle of next month.

(Written by FL5, a female lecturer to her colleagues)

In the current data, there were frequent instances in both the English and Arabic emails where some formulaic closing expressions were constructed as requests, as demonstrated in Examples 14, 15 and 16 below.

Example (14) – in English:

Enjoy the rest of the weekend

(Written by FL2, a female lecturer to her students)

Example (15) – in Arabic:

وتقبل خالص تحياتي وشكري وتقدير

And accept my sincere regards, thanking and respect

(Written by MS3, a male post-graduate student to his supervisor)

Example (16) – in English:

Take care

(Written by FL4, a female lecturer to her student)

As shown in the above Examples 14, 15 and 16, there are expressions that seem to be requests on the surface because they suggest that the hearer do particular acts and thus fulfil the form of requests (see Section 6.2 earlier). However, these acts were actually not for the speaker's benefit, but instead for the hearer's sake. That is, although the formulaic closings ask the addressee to do an act, e.g., enjoy, take care, or accept regards (as illustrated in the previous set of examples), these acts are mainly in the hearer's best interest and convey the speakers' concern for the hearer/reader. Furthermore, since these expressions also signal the end of a conversation (because they often occur at the end of a conversation), they help in building a rapport with the interlocutor. Thus, in the current study, these sorts of expressions were not coded as requests but rather, as closing expressions, which were discussed in Chapter 4.

Apart from the various forms of requests that a speaker can select from, a speaker also has the choice to mitigate the requests' illocutionary force using request modification (Bella, 2012: 1918). Table 6-2 below outlines the different types of request mitigations, based on Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) with some examples:

Type of Mitigation	Examples given by previous studies (Bella 2012 and Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2013 based on Blum-Kulka et al., 1989)	Examples from the current data
1. Internal modification that is part of the head act itself		
Syntactic:		
Interrogative or conditional forms	I would like a small extension for the assignment, if this is possible	و تعطيني كويز اضافي لو سمحت اذا ما عليك كلافة and that you give me an additional quiz please <u>if there is no pressure on you</u>
Negation	Can't you clean up the kitchen	No examples
Non-obligatory use of past tense	I wanted to ask you to clean up the kitchen	أردت سؤالك عن غداً I wanted to ask you about tomorrow
Conditional clause	… if it would be possible to book a flight to …	فا لو تقدري لو سمحتي تختبريني اختبار اضافي لعل وعسى يرفع شوية من المعدل بليز if you can please test me an additional test this might and possibly increase my score a little bit please
Conditional structure	I would like to book a flight please	حابة أسألك إذا ما عليك أمر I'd like to ask you if you don't mind
Lexical/ phrasal:		
Politeness markers "please"	please	please do Unit 1 as homework to speed your reading
Understaters[78]	Could you tidy up a bit?	No examples

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[78] Since *understaters* and hedges are to some extent similar, some previous studies treated them the same (e.g. Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2013). However whether they are treated the same or differently does not affect the current study, since neither type of modifiers were observed.

Cajolers	You know, it would be nice if you cleaned the kitchen today	No examples
Appealers	Clean the table dear, will you/OK/right?	Ask me again some time later to check what happens ok
Hedges	A bit, sort of	No examples
Subjectivisers[79]	I was wondering if you could help me.	أرجو تبليغي إذا عدلت I wish to be informed if amended.
Consultative devises	Would it be all right if …	No examples
Downtoners	I'm just wondering! Do you have any information on Malaga flights?	All you need to do is just to go through it for your final approval.
2. External modification - near to the linguistic context of the head act		
Grounders: reasons, justifications or explanations for the head act	-	أريد منك بعد الله بحكم الظروف التي المساعدة مررة بها من الإنشغال في الوظيفة والإنشغال مع الأهل … I want from you after Allah to help Because of the circumstances that I've been through from being busy with my job and family……
Preparators	I'd like to ask you something …	حابة أسألك إذا ما عليك أمر I'd like to ask you if there is no command on you
Disarmers	I know you hate housework, but could you clean up a bit today?	No reported examples
Apology	I'm sorry to bother you but could I request a few days off	ارجو منك يا دكتور ان تقبل اعتذاري واعطائي فرصة I wish from you doctor to accept my apology and to give me a chance

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[79] *Subjectivisers* are defined as "elements in which the speaker explicitly expresses his or her subjective opinion vis-à-vis the state of affairs referred to in the proposition, thus lowering the assertive force of the request" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989: 284) such as *I'm afraid, I wonder, I think/suppose.*

Imposition minimiser	Would you give me a lift, but only if you're going my way	اذا ما عليك أمر if there is no pressure on you
Getting a pre-commitment	Could you do me a favour?	No reported examples
Promise of reward	Could you give me a lift home? We'll use my car tomorrow.	No reported examples

Table 6-2: Requests modifications with examples

As illustrated in Table 6-2 above, there are two kinds of modifications: internal, that normally occur as part of the head act itself) and external, which takes place near to the linguistic context of the head act, and are normally a supportive move that could go before (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989: 17-18). Based on Blum-Kulka et al. 1989), internal modification is divided into syntactic and lexical/phrasal. Mitigating devices can signal politeness "regardless of levels of directness" (Blum-Kulka, 2005, 1992). As shown in Table 6-2, there were few sub-categories of the internal modifications that were not used in the current data set. The negation particularly is a syntactic type of internal modification that was not used at all in the email data. Similarly, understaters, cajolers, hedges and consultative devisers are also types of lexical/phrasal internal modifications that were not employed in the email data. In terms of the external modifications, disarmers, getting a pre-commitment and a promise of reward were all not used in the current data. The absence of these particular modification types was may be due to the nature of emails as a written form of communication, since these modifications perhaps are more used in spoken communication.

Table 6-2 above also shows the use of the interrogative form in requesting as an internal syntactic modification type that was used in the current data as "hyper-polite[80]" (Mills, 1992: 68), as shown below.

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[80] When I coded and interpreted the data, my initial evaluation of whether an utterance was polite or not was based on the content of the email. After that, I took participants' perspective concerning politeness into account when interpreting the data.

Example (17) – in Arabic:

ممكن أداوم بكرا

Is it possible that I attend tomorrow?

Can[81] I attend tomorrow?

(Written by FS1, a female student to her female lecturer)

The non-obligatory use of past tense is also an internal syntactic modification that was employed occasionally in the data.

Example (18) – in English:

I just wanted to ask you about my out of 60 [asking about her results]

(Written by FS1, a female student to her female lecturer)

Both conditional clause and conditional structure are internal syntactic modification types that were used occasionally in the Arabic email data.

Example (19) – in Arabic:

بس اذا تكرمت ابغى كشف درجات السكند اسسمنت

Just if you kindly I want the grades' record of the second assessment

If you could kindly send me the grade records.

(Written by FS1, a female student to her female lecturer)

The request form in Example19 above, conveys the writer's attempt to make the request indirect, through combining and mitigating it with an internal modification type *if you would be so kind* that softens the face-threatening effect of the request. Thus, by choosing to request in this way, the writer seems to show concern for the hearer's face and perhaps attempts to build rapport and solidarity with the hearer. The writer has well-established an identity for herself that is nice, deferential and polite.

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[81] In this case ممكن can is asking about possibility and not ability, because the request means is it possible that I attend the lecture/lab tomorrow?

The politeness marker *please* is a lexical/phrasal type of internal modification sub-category (Table 6-2) that was used frequently especially in the English data, as demonstrated in the following examples.

Example (20) – in English:

Please let me know if there are any corrections

(Written by FS2, a female medical student to her male lecturer)

Example (21) – in English:

Please bring the reading book

(Written by FL2, a female lecturer to her students)

Examples 20 and 21 above shows how the lexical modifier *please* is used with imperatives e.g. *Let me know* and *Bring the book,* which according to Aijmer (1996: 168), occur where formal politeness takes place and occurs more in written forms. In contrast, the appealer was used rarely in the data, as illustrated in example 22 below.

Example (22) – in English:

Ask me again some time later to check what happens <u>OK</u>

(Written by FL3, a female lecturer to her student)

Subjectivisers are a type of internal lexical/phrasal modification that was used on different occasions. A common type of subjectiviser that was used in the Saudi context was the use of *I hope* and *I wish* in a request, which adds an indirect touch to the request.

Example (23) – in English:

I hope that you kindly acknowledge receiving it

(Written by FL1, a female lecturer to her colleague)

Example (24) – in Arabic:

أرجو إحضار تقرير من المستشفى لأجل الغياب

I wish you can get a report from the hospital, for this absence

I hope you can get a medical report from hospital for this absence

(Written by FL5, a female lecturer to her student)

Downtoners were identified as "modifiers which are used by a speaker in order to modulate the impact his or her request is likely to have on the hearer" (Blum-Kulka et al., (1989:284) such as *a bit; a little; sort of; kind of.* They were a type of internal lexical/phrasal modifications that were also used in the current data as the following example attests.

Example (25) – in English:

I wish that this file reaches to as many students <u>as possible</u>

(Written by a female lecturer to her student)

However, there is a type of lexical/phrasal modification downtoner that was used frequently in the current data both in English (Examples 26 and 27 below) and in Arabic (Example 19 earlier), that seems to have not been covered in the previous work, namely, *kindly/kind*.

Example (26) – in English:

<u>Kindly</u> review and approve

(Written by FL1, a female lecturer to a colleague)

Example (27) in English:

For your <u>kind</u> review

(Written by FL1, a female lecturer to a colleague)

As shown in Examples 26 and 27, the lexical/phrasal modification *kindly* or *kind* may occur with an imperative form of request (as in Example 26), e.g., *Review and approve,* or within a hint form of request *for your kind review*. In either case, *kind/kindly* makes a request more deferential-oriented by indicating the "lack of entitlement" (Merrison et al., 2012: 1094). It also functions as a mitigator that minimises the face-threatening effect associated with a request, showing more concern for the hearer's face and helping in building a rapport with the hearer.

Grounders or explanations for the head act are external modifications that were used frequently in the data as "a face-saving" strategy (Bella and Sifanou, 2012: 93).

Example (28[82]) – in English:

Ask me later <u>to check what happens</u> OK

(Written by FL3, a female lecturer to her student)

Example (29) – in English:

When you have some free time please try sending an email through it <u>so that we can check if it works or not</u>

(Written by FS2, a female medical student to her male lecturer)

The requests in Examples 28 and 29 above were followed by grounders which conveyed the writer's attempt to mitigate any negative effect caused by the request and to take into consideration the hearer's face wants. The writer (in both examples) attempted to create a caring and diligent identity for herself rather than a directive, assertive or coercing identity, especially since what the writer asked the receiver to do is in the receiver's best interest. Additionally, when requests are accompanied with grounders, they help the hearer to sympathise with the requester (Faerch and Kasper, 1989: 239). However, although combining a request with a grounder mitigates the effect of the request, the fact that the grounders in Examples 29 and 30 were stated after the request rather than prior to it can make the request more direct than if it had occurred before (Byon, 2004: 1887-1688).

Table 6-2 also demonstrates the use of preparators as external modifications in the current data.

Example (30) – in Arabic:

طلب منك الله يجزاك خير <u>إن امكن</u> لك مساعدتي في تصحيح الإختبار

A request for you may Allah reward you with what is good <u>Is it possible </u>for you to help me in marking the exam

---

[I have a] request for you. May Allah reward you with what is good. <u>Is it possible for you</u> to help me in marking the exam

(Written by MS5, a male student to his lecturer)

Example (31) – in Arabic:

بس في ملاحظة ابغاك تنتبهين لها و هي أنه في حالة توليد المتغيرات التي تأخذ (0 و 1)

<u>But there is a note</u> that I want you to pay attention to and that is in the case of the generation of variables that takes (0 and 1)

<u>But there is a note</u> that I want you to pay attention to - the case of generating variables that take (0 and 1)

(Written by ML5, a male supervisor to his female post-graduate student)

The student's use of the preparatory طلب منك الله يجزاك خير *A request from you may Allah reward you with what is good* in Example 30 seems to be an attempt by the student to beg his lecturer to comply with his (the student's) request, which is stated next, and to help the lecturer to sympathise with the requester. The preparatory بس في ملاحظة *but there is a note* in Example 31 seems to have a different function, especially given that the request was made by a supervisor to a student. The supervisor did not beg the student, since the supervisor belonged to a higher hierarchical level than his student. The supervisor attempted to draw his student's attention to an important point concerning the student's research, through the use of the preparatory *there is a note* and followed it with a direct type of request *I want you to pay attention to*. The supervisor's choice to start his request with a preparatory device, instead of starting directly with the request, mitigated the request and made it more acceptable and appropriate from the part of the student, which helps to establish a rapport and takes face needs into consideration. Since what the lecturer asked the student to do is in the student's best interest, the lecturer used the request in a way that made him seem more diligent and caring.

An apology (see Chapter 7 for more detail) is an external modification type that was used occasionally in the current data to soften the face-threatening effect associated with the request, and was also used to manage the rapport between interlocutors, as demonstrated in example 33 below.

Example (32) – in Arabic:

تجد في المرفق الرسالة كاملة <u>واعتذر عن التأخر</u> في ارسالها

You find in the attachment the whole thesis and <u>I apologise for the delay</u> in sending it.

You'll find attached the whole thesis and <u>I apologise for the delay</u> in sending it.

(Written by MS3, a male post-graduate student to his supervisor)

There were also instances where an imposition minimiser was used to show the writer's concern for the hearer's face and to manage rapport, as illustrated in Example 33 below.

Example (33) – in Arabic:

فضلا لا أمرا

Kindly not an order

Kindly [could you do this, it is] not an order

(Written by FS1, a female student to her female lecturer)

In Example 33 above, there were two mitigations that were used فضلا *kindly* and لا أمرا *not an order* that, in Arabic, tend to occur together to soften the effect of the request.

Although the bald imperative type of request was used frequently, a number of other request forms that also seem very direct were not employed in the current data. For example *I'm asking you; you must + verb;* and *you should + verb*. The current data also shows that there are some expressions of request that were quite specific to the Saudi context which occurred with the literal forms:

- *I hope/wish from you/your honour + verb*
- *I'd (like to) inform you about the necessity of …*

In the current data, there were frequent instances where request modifications were used to mitigate the requests' illocutionary force.

6.4 Requesting Strategies

Based on previous assessments of requests in terms of the level of directness (Searle, 1975; Ervin-Tripp, 1976; House and Kasper, 1981; Blum-Kulka, 1982; Blum-Kulka et al., 1985) (see section 7.6 above), Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) developed eight strategy types that varied in terms of their degree of directness. In order to explore the requesting strategies that were used in the Saudi academic email data, Blum-Kulka's et al's types were chosen for their suitability in relation to the Saudi context. Table 6.4 below outlines the linguistic requesting strategies as proposed by Blum-Kulka et al. 1982 with some examples from the current data.

Strategy	Examples given by Blum-Kulka, 1982	Examples from the current data
A. Mood Derivable (imperative)	Clean up the kitchen Move your car	Be ready
B. Performative	I'm asking you to move your car	No reported examples
C. Hedged Performative[83]	I would like to ask you to move your car	I wish that this file reaches to as many students as possible.
D. Obligation Statement	You'll have to move your car	No reported examples
E. Want Statement	I would like you to clean the kitchen I want you to move your car	ارغب في الحصول على توصية منك حيث درست مادة خدمات المعلومات وحصلت على تقدير ممتاز I want a recommendation letter from you as I studied the XX module and I got an excellent grad
F. Suggestory Formula	How about cleaning up? Why don't you come and clean up the mess you made last night?	لماذا لا أبدأ أنا كطالب أو طالبة و بشكل شخصي تعلم لغة و أطبق ++C أو Rبرمجية مثلا عليها بعض المفاهيم الإحصائية، why don't I start as a female or male student and

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[83] The requesting patterns starting with *I wish, I hope* and *I'd (like to) inform you about the necessity of* that occurred in the current data were all coded as "hedged performative". Even if the pattern *I'd (like) to inform you about the necessity of* was a reminder of an obligation, it was not coded as an "obligation statement" since it is less direct and more polite in Arabic to be coded as an "obligation statement".

		personally to learn programming language for example R or C++ and apply some statistical concepts on them,
G. Query Preparatory	Could you clean up the mess in kitchen? Would you mind moving your car?	ممكن ترسلي لي الايدي بروجيكت Can you send me the ID project
H. Strong hints (A)	You've left the kitchen in a right mess	No reported examples
I. Mild hints (B)	We don't want any crowding (as a request to move the car).	منذ البارحة وانا انتظر درجات مادة ****** حتى اتمكن من حذف المادة ما اذا كانت سيئة العلامة علما بان اليوم هو اخر يوم لحذف المواد I've been waiting for my results of ## module since yesterday So I can drop the module if the result was bad Knowing that today is the last day for dropping the modules

Table 6-3: Types of Request Strategies with examples in terms of the level of directness as stated in Blum-Kulka (1987: 133)

In the above table and according to Blum-Kulka (1987: 1330), the classifications A to E are direct request strategies, whereas classifications F and G are conventionally indirect. The request strategies H and I are non-conventionally indirect. When coding the current data, Blum-Kulka's (1987) framework seems to account well for the requests in the Saudi context. The only problem that was faced during this process concerned Blum-Kulka's classification of directness. While in Blum-Kulka's (1987) classification hedged performative requests are considered to be direct, in the Saudi context, hedged performative expressions, e.g., the expressions starting with *I hope* and *I wish,* are conventionally indirect. This may suggest that the degree of directness is subjective and culturally dependent. The results of analysing the data using Blum-Kulka's (1987) framework will be discussed in the following section.

6.5 **Further Findings**

Since this study adopted a mixed methods approach that combined first and second orders of politeness, I will discuss my quantitative findings (Section 1.5.1) as well as the qualitative findings (Section 1.5.2).

6.5.1 Quantitative Findings

In the student-lecturer interactions, the students normally use requests for academic purposes. For example, to ask for an extension or help, or to ask for a letter of recommendation. In contrast, lecturers or supervisors (in the Saudi context) may request that their students to bring a particular task book, do homework, prepare for an exam and on some occasions, request misbehaving students to behave properly. However, a student or lecturer may not necessarily need to employ requests in their interactions.

In the current data, each email was analysed according to whether it contained a request or not. The number of emails that either contained or did not contain a request has been summarised in Table 6-4 below. The results have been normalised as the percentage of the total number of each sub-group and contrasted according to the email writer's sex.

Feature	Women		Men		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
With request	47	67.1	38	54.3	85	60.7
Without request	23	32.9	32	45.7	55	39.3
Total	70	100	70	100	140	100

Table 6-4: Emails with or without requests according to the sender's sex
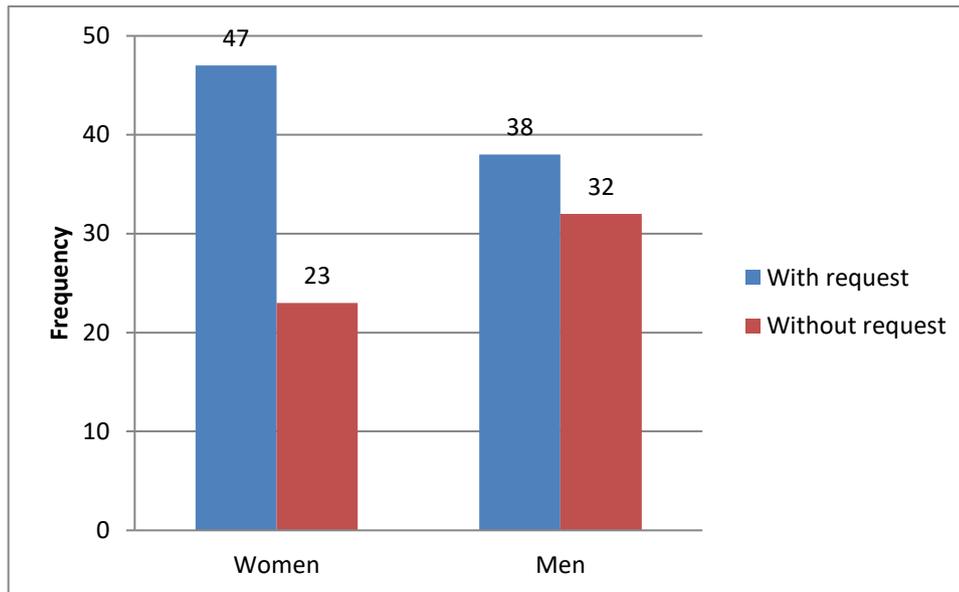
Figure 6-1: Emails with or without requests according to the sender's sex

As shown in Table 6-4 and Figure 6-1 above, out of the 140 emails sent, 85 emails (60.7%) contained at least one request. The percentage of emails with requests outranked the emails without requests in a ratio of almost 3:2. Table 6-4 also indicates that women, in this study, sent emails that contained requests slightly more (67.1% of the emails that were sent by women) than men (54.3% of the emails that were sent by men). In contrast, emails that did not include requests were sent slightly more by the men in this study (45.7% of the emails that were sent by men compared to 32.9% of the emails sent by women).

Emails that either included or did not include a requesting strategy were then analysed according to the participants' role as summarised in Table 6-6 below.

Feature	Emails sent by female lecturers		Emails sent by female students		Emails sent by male lecturers		Emails sent by male students	
	Freq.	%[84]	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
With request	22	15.7	25	17.9	18	12.9	20	14.3
Without request	13	9.3	10	7.1	17	12.1	15	10.7
Total	35	100	35	100	35	100	35	100

Table 6-5: Emails with or without requests according to the sender's role
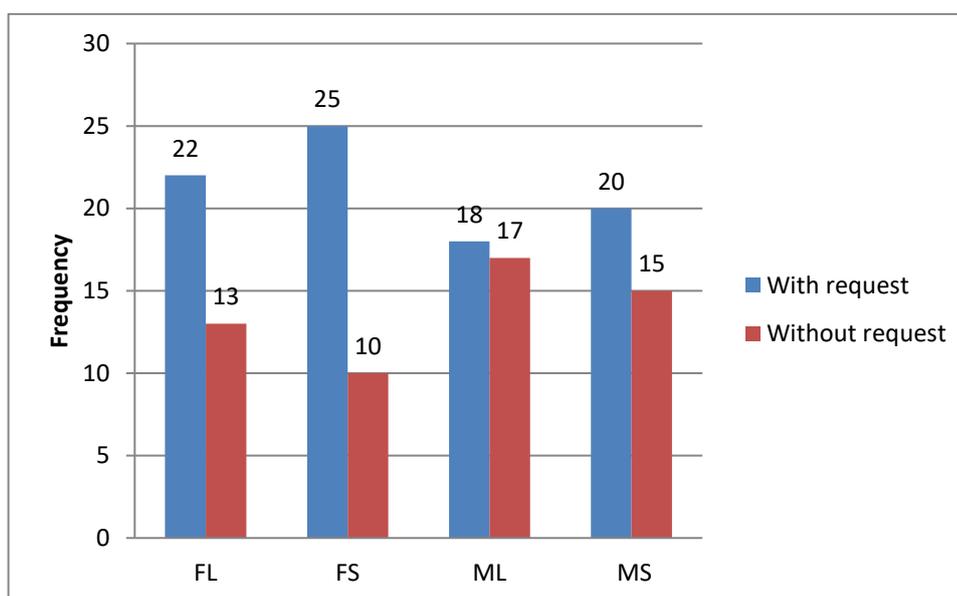
Figure 6-2: Emails with or without requests according to the sender's role

Table 6-5 and Figure 6-2 above indicates that the students in this study tended to send emails that contained requests when contacting their lecturers slightly more (32.15% of all emails) than lecturers (28.57% of all emails) doing the reverse. In contrast, the lecturers sent emails that did not include a request slightly more (21.43% of all emails) than students (17.85% of all emails).

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[84] The percentage in this table and the following tables were calculated out of the total number of frequency in each table.

The requesting feature was then coded according to the type of strategy employed in each request and against the framework that was proposed by Blum-Kulka et al. (1982), omitting any strategies that were not used in the data.

Request Strategy[85]	Emails sent by women		Emails sent by men		Total	
	Freq.	%[86]	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Hedged performative	18	15.5	21	18.1	39	33.7
Mood derivable	33	28.5	10	8.62	43	37.1
Want statement	7	6	4	3.45	11	9.5
Query preparatory	7	6	1	0.9	8	6.9
Suggestory formulae	1	0.9	1	0.9	2	1.7
Mild hints B	3	2.6	10	8.6	13	11.2
Total	69	59.5	47	40.5	116	100

Table 6-6: Request Strategies employed in terms of the sender's sex

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[85] There were three request strategies that were not used at all in the current data i.e. "obligation statement", "performative" and "strong hints" and thus were discarded from tables 6-6 and 6-7.
[86] All percentages in tables 6-6 and 6-7 were calculated out of the total number of requests used by each subgroup.
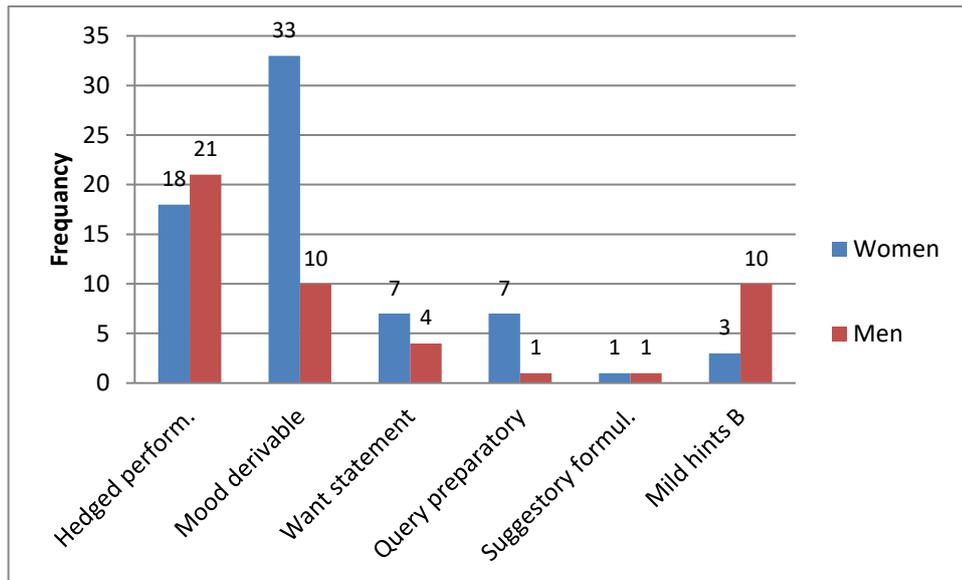
Figure 6-3: Request strategies employed in terms of the sender's sex

Table 6-6 and Figure 6-3 above demonstrates that among the various requesting strategies, "Mood derivable" was the most common type of requesting form that was employed, accounting for 37.1% of all the requesting strategies used in the data. Thus, the participants in this study tended to choose what Blum-Kulka et al. (1989, 1987: 133) described was the most direct request strategy. The "Mood derivable" request strategy, apart from being perceived as direct, may also convey impoliteness in emails. In contrast, the absence of this particular strategy in an email may characterise the email as being polite (see Section 6.5.2 for participants' perspective).

The second most frequently used request strategy was the "Hedged performative" strategy (33.7% of all the request strategies used in the data). Other request strategies were also used in the data, such as "Mild hints" B (11.2% of all request strategies), "Want statement" (9.5% of the request strategies), "Query preparatory" (6.9% of all the request strategies) and "Suggestory formulae" (1.7% of the request strategies). There were several request strategies that were not employed in the email data (see Table 6-6 above), e.g., "Obligation statement", "Performative" and "Strong hints".

Table 6-6 also illustrates that the most preferred request strategy used by the male participants in this study was "Hedged performative" (18.1% of all request strategies), whereas for the female participants, "Mood derivable" was the type of

request strategy that was used most (28.5% of all request strategies). Women also used "want statements" slightly more (6% of all request strategies) than men (3.5% of all requests). Since women tended to use more direct strategies, i.e., "Mood derivable" and want statements, than men, they consequently needed to employ more mitigating devices in order to "index politeness regardless of levels of directness" (Blum-Kulka, 2005, 1992: 266). The "Query preparatory" request strategy was used much more by women (6% of all request strategies) than men (0.9% of all request strategies). The percentage of women employing a "Query preparatory" request strategy outranked men in a ratio of 7:1. Thus, although the female participants in this study tended to use much more direct request strategies, they also tended to use more query preparatory forms in which some types of it (e.g., *could*) may "signal an indirectness characteristic of a polite request" (Leech, 2014: 155).

"Mild hints" were employed much more by the male participants (8.62% of all request strategies) than by women (2.59% of all request strategies). The percentage of men employing "Mild hints" outranked women in a ratio of almost 3:1. Thus, the male participants' more limited use of indirect request forms such as "query preparatory" compared to women was compensated through their more frequent use of a less direct form, i.e. "Mild hints", which consequently made their requests more polite and less direct. This suggests that, in this study, the men's interactive style in managing rapport with people seems to be through employing a less direct request strategy, i.e. "mild hints", which takes into consideration the interlocutor's face needs and conveys politeness. However, this does not mean that men in this study are more polite than women. I do not have enough data to generalise, and the female participants might have their own interactive style in managing rapport with people (as will be seen in their use of modifications).

When the results were disaggregated according to role, the following table was given.

Request strategies	Emails sent by female lecturers		Emails sent by female students		Emails sent by male lecturers		Emails sent by male students	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Hedged performative (HP)	10	8.6	8	6.9	4	3.5	17	14.7
Mood derivable (MD)	31	26.7	2	1.7	7	6	3	2.6
Want statement (WS)	3	2.6	4	3.5	3	2.6	1	0.9
Query preparatory (QP)	0	0	7	6.03	1	0.9	0	0
Suggestory formulae (SF)	1	0.9	0	0	1	0.9	0	0
Mild hints b (MH)	1	0.9	2	1.7	1	0.9	9	7.8
Total	46	39.7	23	19.8	17	14.7	30	25.9

Table 6-7: Request strategies in terms of the sender's role
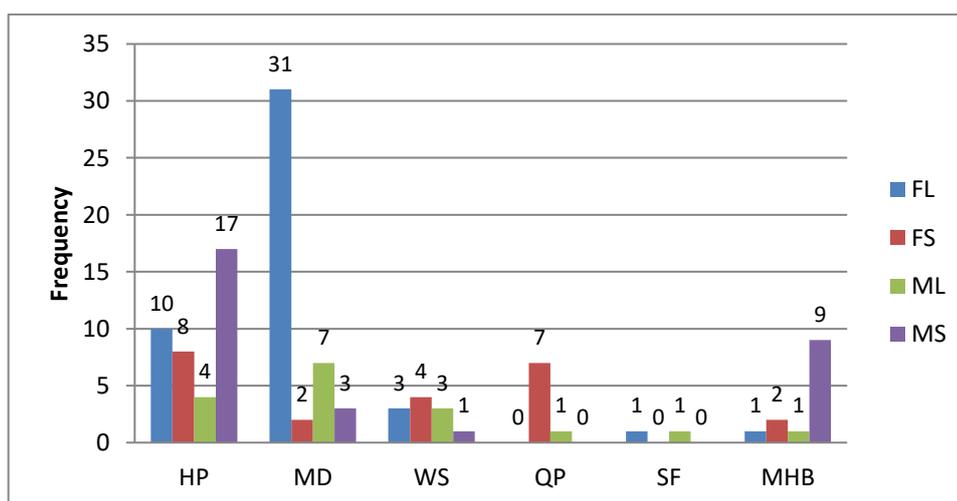
Figure 6-4: Request strategies in terms of the sender's role

As shown in Table 6-7 and Figure 6-4 above, "Hedged performative" was used by male students in this study almost three times more (14.7% of all request strategies) than by male lecturers (3.5% of all request strategies). It is not surprising for students to

use an indirect[87] form of request, although this is not the case for female students. In contrast, the female lecturers in this study used Hedged performative strategies slightly more (8.6% of all request strategies) than their students (6.9% of all request strategies). Mood derivable strategies were used much more by lecturers (32.8% of all request strategies) than students (4.3% of all request strategies). The finding agrees with Holmes and Stubbe's (2003: 34) claim that "people typically use explicit direct forms when they hold a higher position in the institutional hierarchy than their addressee(s), and the addressee's obligations are clear". Thornborrow (2002, 2013: 56) argues that this occurs because the institutional roles that the speakers take leads to asymmetrical rights and obligations. Female lecturers in the current study particularly employed mood derivable strategies much more (26.7% of all request strategies) than female students (1.7% of all request strategies), and more than their male counterparts (6% of all request strategies). The lecturer participants' greater use of mood derivable request strategies that were mitigated does not necessarily mean that the lecturers (in this study) created a directive, assertive or coercing identity for themselves that displayed a hierarchy. Instead, requesting that the students do something (even if directly) that is in their best interest is perhaps a sign that the lecturer is doing their job well. Lecturers in this study, particularly the female lecturers, rather seemed to try to establish an identity that is perhaps caring, nurturing and diligent for themselves, sometimes through mitigating more direct forms of requests (as in Examples 34 and 35 below that were originally written in English). This finding is in line with Ho's (2010: 2253) finding that requesting plays a role in establishing the desirable identity of the requester.

Example (34) – in English

Study well

(Written by FL3, a female lecturer to her student)

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[87] As mentioned in Section 7.7, a "hedged performative" was considered a direct strategy by Blum-Kulka (1987), but indirect in the Saudi context.

Example (35) – in English

Read the report carefully

(Written by FL1, a female lecturer to her student)

"Want statements" were used equally (2.6% of all requests) by the male and female lecturers in this study. Female students used want statements more (3.5% of all request strategies) than male students (0.9% of all request strategies). This highlights the female students' tendency to use more direct request strategies than indirect ones, which suggests that they were sometimes less concerned with the hearer's face needs. Despite the female participants' higher use of direct "want statements", they also tended occasionally to employ indirect query preparatory strategies more, which thus signalled indirectness and polite requests. In terms of "Query preparatory", female students in this study used it more (6% of all request strategies) than the only other group that used it (male lecturers), which made up 2.6% of all request strategies. The "suggestory formulae" was only used once in the current study by each group of the lecturers (0.9% of all request strategies of each sex) and was not employed at all by either group of students. This was perhaps because lecturers normally offer advice and suggestions to their students, who are in a lower hierarchical level. "Mild hints" were used more by the student participants (9.5% of all request strategies) than lecturers (1.7% of all request strategies) especially by male students (7.8% of all request strategies). This supports Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2008:113) finding that when requests are directed hierarchically upward, more mitigation and less directness is needed, as "politeness considerations typically weigh more heavily" (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003: 44).

The requesting feature was then coded according to the degree of directness, i.e., whether the request was direct, conventionally indirect or non-conventionally indirect, through following the classification as proposed by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) (see Section 6.6.).

Type of Directness in Requests	Emails sent by women		Emails sent by men		Total	
	Frequency	%[88]	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Direct	58	46	45	35.7	103	81.7
Conventionally indirect	8	6.3	2	1.6	10	7.9
Non-conventionally indirect	3	2.4	10	7.9	13	10.3
Total	69	54.8	57	45.2	126	100

Table 6-8: Request directness in terms of the email sender's sex
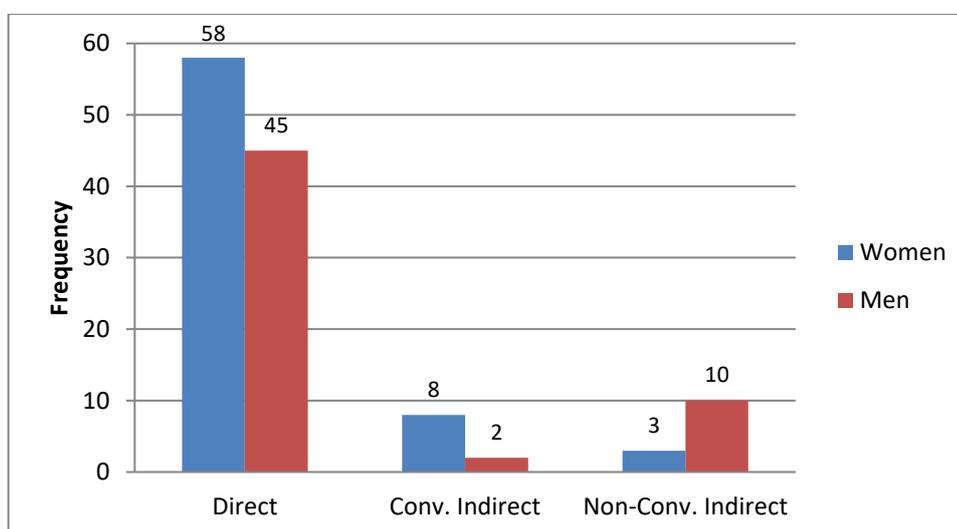
Figure 6-5: Request directness in terms of the email sender's sex

As demonstrated in Table 6-8 and Figure 6-5 above, the majority of requests that were used in the data were, according to Blum-Kulka's (1987) scale of directness, *direct* (81.75% of all types of requests). Thus, in order for these requests to be attributed as polite and to reduce any negative lack of politeness associated with the directness of requests, a sufficient amount of mitigation is needed to "index politeness regardless of levels of directness" (Blum-Kulka, 2005 [1992]: 266). The female participants used direct

[88] The percentage in Tables 6-8 and 6-9 was calculated according to the total number in the table.

requests more (46% of all request types) than men (35.7% of all request types). Non-conventionally indirect types of request were also used in the data (10.3 % of all types of requests). Men in this study tended to use more non-conventionally indirect request forms (7.9% of all types of requests) than women (2.4% of all types). Conventionally indirect requests were also used occasionally in the data, but less than both of the other types (7.9% of all request types). Conventionally indirect request types were employed more by the female participants (6.4% of all requests) than by men (1.6% of all requests). The percentage of the conventionally indirect request types used by women outranked those used by men in a ratio of almost 4:1.

The requesting features that appeared in the data were also classified according to the degree of directness, but additionally, according to the participants' role.

Type of Directness in Requests	Emails sent by female lecturers		Emails sent by female students		Emails sent by male lecturers		Emails sent by male students	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Direct	44	34.9	14	11.1	24	19	21	16.7
Conventionally indirect	1	0.8	7	5.6	2	1.6	0	0
Non-conventionally indirect	1	0.8	2	1.6	1	0.8	9	7.1
Total	46	36.5	23	18.3	27	21.4	30	23.8

Table 6-9: Request directness in terms of the email sender's role
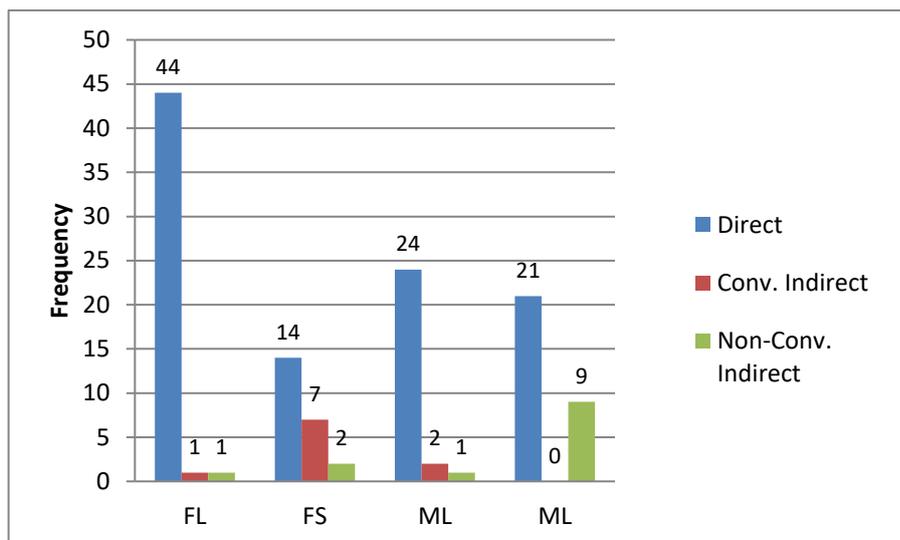
Figure 6-6: Request directness in terms of the email sender's role

Table 6-9 and Figure 6-6 demonstrates that the lecturers in this study used more direct request strategies (53.9% of all request types) than students (27.8% of all request types) in a ratio of almost 2:1. This finding is in line with what Holmes and Stubbe (2003: 34) have claimed, in that "people typically use explicit and direct forms when they hold a higher position in the institutional hierarchy than their addressee(s) and the addressee's obligations are clear". Female lecturers in the current study used direct requests much more (34.9% of all request types) than all of the other groups. Conventionally indirect requests were used by all of the groups of participants (especially female students) except for male students. The student participants showed more use of non-conventionally indirect requests (8.7% of all request types) than lecturers (1.6% of all request types), especially male student participants (7.1% of all request types). Thus, the students attempted to form their requests in a less direct and more polite way when contacting their lecturers, perhaps because they were aware of their non-dominant role compared to their lecturers.

In this section, I will consider some of the requesting features according to what language the email used. Since the email data sample that was collected for this study contained emails that were written in both English and Arabic (though rarely both languages in the same email), further investigations were necessary. I divided the results by the language of the email to examine whether the use/choice of particular requesting features differed according to the language of the emails. In some cases, this division by

language did not help to explain the data, because it resulted in a small number of instances (as mentioned in Section 4.4.1.2). However, in other cases, there were some differences in the use/choice of features based on the language of the email. In this section, I will only focus on the instances where obvious differences seemed to have occurred, particularly in relation to those concerning the features that were found in the current study, but were not reported in any of the previous studies.

Feature	Emails written by women		Emails written by men		Total	
	Ar[89].	E.	Ar.	E.	Ar.	E.
I'd (like to) inform you about the necessity of …	1 1.4%	0 0%	1 1.4%	0 0%	2 1.4%	2 1.4%
I hope …	2 2.9%	1 1.4%	8 11.4%	0 0%	10 7.1%	1 0.7%
I wish …	3 4.3%	1 1.4%	8 11.4%	1 1.4%	11 7.9%	2 1.4%
Total	6 8.6%	2 2.9%	17 24.3%	1 1.4%	23 16.4%	5 3.6%

Table 6-10: Email opening strategies according to the sender's sex and language of email in frequencies

As shown in Figure 6-10 above, the majority of requesting forms that are only specific to the Saudi context were employed in the emails that were originally written in Arabic (16.4% of all the emails that were sent compared to only 3.6% of all the emails that were sent in English). This was possibly because the majority of emails that were collected for this study were written in Arabic (see Chapter 3). The request pattern *I'd (like to) inform you about the necessity of …* was used equally in emails that were written in Arabic (1.4% of all the emails that were sent) and English (1.4% of all the emails that were sent). The pattern *I hope/wish …* was used more in the emails that were originally written in Arabic (15% of all the emails that were sent) compared to the emails that were written in English (2.1% of all the emails that were sent).

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[89] *Ar*. Refers to the emails that were originally written in Arabic in this study, while *E.* refers to the emails that were originally written in English. The figure in the first line in each cell is the frequency and the second line is the percentage.

The requests have been classified according to the type of modification used with a request in terms of sex.

Type of Modification	Emails sent by women		Emails sent by men		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Internal	47	35.1	24	17.9	71	53
External	35	26.1	28	20.9	63	47
Total	82	61.2	52	38.8	134	100

Table 6-10: Type of request modifications used in emails according to the sender's sex
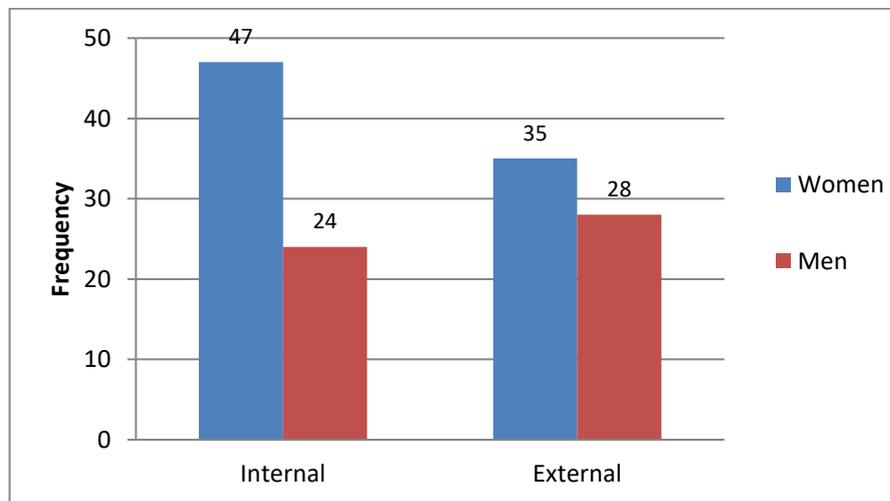
Figure 6-7: Request modifications used in the emails according to the sender's sex

As shown in Table 6-10 and Figure 6-7 above, the overall number of request modifications used in the current data was 134. Internal modifications accounted for 52.9% of these modifications, and 47.1% were external. Thus, internal modifications were employed slightly more than external modifications in the emails. The majority of modifications were employed by the female participants (61.2% of all modifications), whereas the male participants accounted for 38.8% of all of the modifications. This may suggest that the female participants in this study were more concerned with building rapport with the hearer and taking into consideration the interlocutor's face wants more than men, through the use of more modification devices, especially as these can "index politeness regardless of level of directness" (Blum-Kulka, 2005, 1992: 266). Hence, based on Blum-Kulka's (2005, 1992: 266) claim, women in this study were perhaps more polite

than men in terms of their extensive use of mitigating devices. However, since women were using more direct request forms (see Table 6-8 earlier), it would be expected that they use more mitigating devices to balance them out. So, it is unclear exactly as to whether women were balancing out their directness or paying more attention to rapport.

The results were then disaggregated according to role as indicated in Table 6-12 below:

Type of Modificat ion	Emails sent by female lecturers		Emails sent by female students		Emails sent by male lecturers		Emails sent by male students	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Internal	25	18.7	22	16.4	5	3.7	19	14.2
External	13	9.7	22	16.4	8	6	20	14.9
Total	38	28.4	44	32.8	13	9.7	39	29.1

Table 6-11: Type of request modifications used in emails according to the sender's role
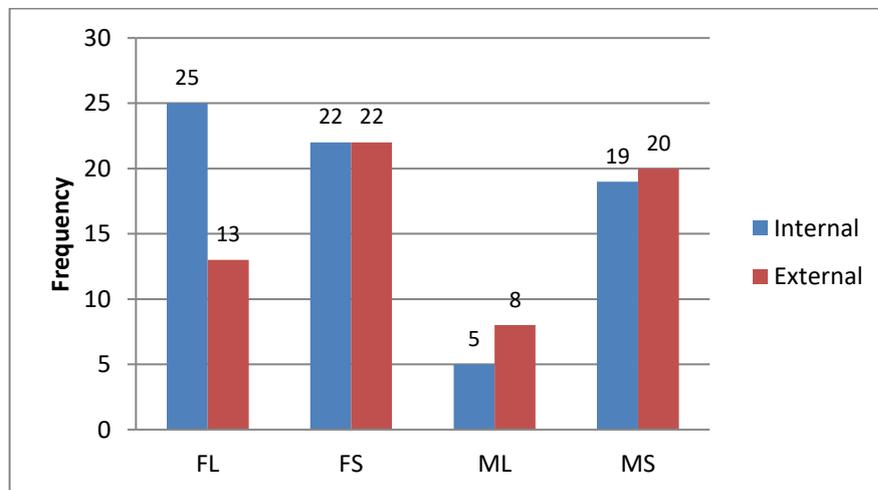
Figure 6-8: Request modifications used in emails according to the sender's role

Table 6-11 and Figure 6-8 indicates that students tended to use modifications more (61.9% of all modifications) than lecturers (38.1% of all modifications). This finding is in line with Holmes and Stubbe's (2003:34) finding that "people typically use explicit and direct forms when they hold a higher position in the institutional hierarchy than their addressee(s), and the addressee's obligations are clear". Since most of the lecturers'

emails were addressed to students who hold a lower position in the relative hierarchy, it appears to be an acceptable practice for the lecturers in this study not to accompany their requests with modifications. Based on Ho's (2010: 2259) discussion about social status, lecturers can make their requests without any mitigating devices because this would not "turn the interaction into impolite or rude behaviour" (Locher and Watts, 2005: 26) thanks to the higher social status that they enjoy.

Example (36) – in English

Tomorrow there is a quiz on hand simulation,,,

Be ready

(Written by ML4, a male lecturer to his students)

Internal modifications were used slightly more by female lecturers (18.66% of all modifications) than by female students (16.42% of all modifications), male students (14.18% of all modifications), or male lecturers (3.73% of all modifications).

Each request in the data was coded according to the external modifications employed in the data in terms of sex.

Request External[90] Modifications	Emails sent by women		Emails sent by men		Total	
	Frequency	**%**	**Frequency**	**%**	**Frequency**	**%**
Apology	1	1.6	4	6.4	5	7.9
Grounders	21	33.3	12	19.1	33	52.4
Imposition minimiser	5	7.9	1	1.6	6	9.5
Preparator	8	12.7	11	17.5	19	30.2
Total	35	55.6	28	44.4	63	100

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[90] There were some types of external modifications that were not used in tables 6-12 and 6-13 i.e. disarmers, getting a precommitment and promise of reward, and thus were discarded.

Table 6-13: Request External modifications employed in terms of the sender's sex
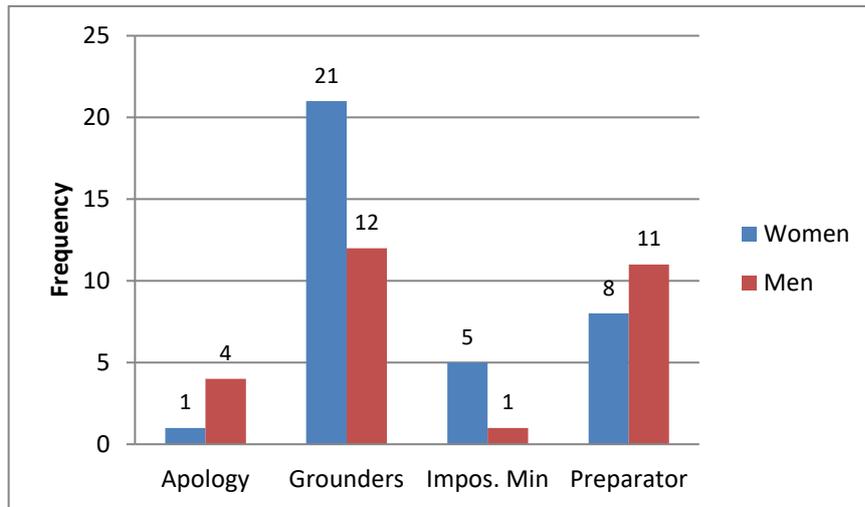
Figure 6-9: Request external modifications employed in emails terms of the sender's sex

As shown in Table 6-13 above, the most favoured request external modification employed in the data included a grounder, which accounted for 52.4% of all request external modifications, and can be seen perhaps as a "face-saving" strategy (Bella and Sifanou, 2012: 93). This finding is in line with Schegloff's (2007: 83) finding, in that requests are frequently combined with explanations. It also confirms Bella's (2012: 1931) finding that the most frequently used external modifiers were grounders and preparators (as will be discussed next in this section). The female participants used more grounders (33.3% of all external modifications) than men (19.1% of all external modifications). A "preparatory" was also used frequently in the data (30.2% of all the external modifications), which is in line with Bella's (2012: 1931) finding that both grounders and preparators were the external modifiers that were used the most. Men in this study used slightly more preparators (17.5% of all external modifications) than women (12.7% of all external modifications). This suggests how the male participants' style in requesting is to some extent different to women's, as they tend to introduce their requests first using a relevant preparatory before asking. This is in order to minimise any negative effect associated with the request, and to help the hearer to sympathise with them, and to therefore encourage them to accede to the request. "Imposition minimiser" devices were also used occasionally in the data (9.5% of all external modifications). Female participants used imposition minimisers more (7.94% of all external modifications) than men (1.6% of all external modifications). The percentage

of women using imposition minimisers outranked men in a ratio of almost 5:1. Thus, in this study, women conveyed more concern for the hearer's negative face and attempted to manage rapport through employing more imposition minimiser devices. An apology was the external modification type that was used the least in the data (7.9% of all external modifications). Male participants particularly used apologies more (6.6% of all external modifications) than women (1.6% of all modifications), with a ratio of almost 4:1 (for further discussion on apology see Chapter 8).

Requests in the data were coded according to the external modifications employed in the data, based on the participants' role.

Request External Modifications	Emails sent by female lecturers		Emails sent by female students		Emails sent by male lecturers		Emails sent by male students	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Apology	0	0	1	1.59	0	0	4	6.35
Grounders	11	17.5	10	15.9	6	9.5	6	9.5
Imposition minimiser	1	1.6	4	6.4	1	1.6	0	0
Preparator	1	1.6	7	11.1	1	1.6	10	15.9
Total	13	20.6	22	34.9	8	12.7	20	31.8

Table 6-14: Request external modifications employed in terms of the sender's role
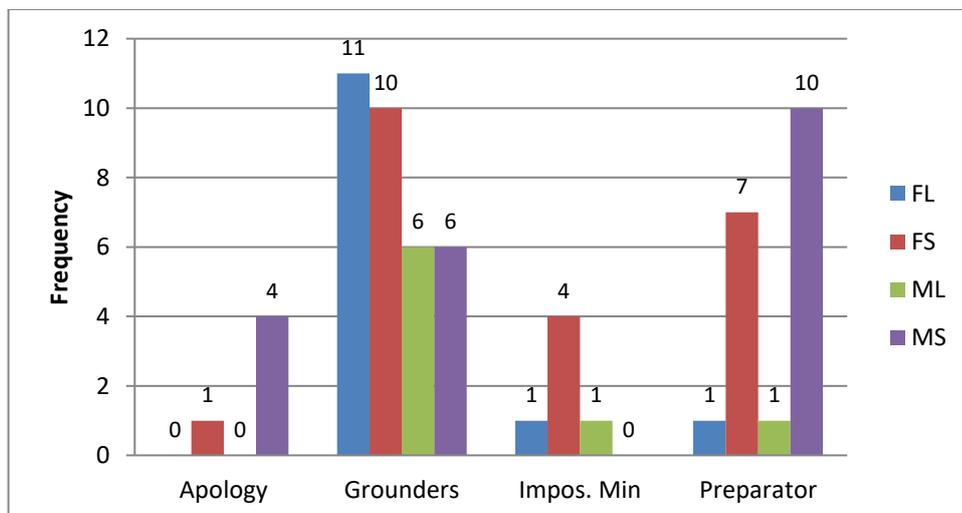

Figure 6-10: Request external modifications employed in emails in terms of the sender's role

As shown in Table 6-14 above, female (17.46% of all external modifications) and male (9.52% of all external modifications) lecturers, in this study, preferred using grounders more than any other type of external modifications. Similarly, the female students, in this study, also tended to favour grounders more (15.9% of all external modifications) than other external request modifications, possibly to "open up an empathetic attitude on the part of the interlocutor in giving her insight into the actor's underlying motive(s)" (Faerch and Kasper, 1989: 239). In contrast, male students tended to employ preparators more (15.9% of all external modifications). An apology request external modification was only used by students (7.9% of all external modifications), whereas lecturers did not use it at all in the data that was collected. This may indicate the students' awareness of their inferior position in the institutional hierarchy compared to their lecturers. The students sometimes had to apologise, especially when their requests were directed upward, to save their lecturer's face, to minimise any imposition associated with the request and help to manage their rapport with their lecturers. The "imposition minimiser" external modification was used more in the data by female students (6.4% of all external modifications) than female lecturers (1.6% of all external modifications) and their male counterparts (0%). The "preparators" were employed, in the current study much more by students (27% of all external modifications) than by lecturers (3.18% of all external modifications). The percentage of preparators employed by students outranked the percentage employed by lecturers in a ratio of almost 8:1. Thus, the student participants tended to precede their requests with a preparatory rather than starting directly with a request in order to mitigate any face-threatening affects associated with the request, showing concern for the hearer's negative face by minimising any imposition on him/her.

Aside from determining the request external modifications, the internal modifications were also coded in the current data according to sex.

Request Internal[91] Modifications	Emails sent by women		Emails sent by men		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Syntactic downgraders:						
Interrogative	2	2.8	0	0	2	2.8
Past tense marker	2	2.8	0	0	2	2.8
Conditional clause	2	2.8	1	1.4	3	4.2
Conditional structure	4	5.6	0	0	4	5.6
Total	10	14.1	1	1.4	9	12.7
Lexical/ Phrasal downgraders						
Appealers	1	1.4	0	0	1	1.4
Please marker	22	31	6	8.25	28	39.4
Subjectivisers	6	8.5	15	21.1	21	29.6
Downtoners	8	11.27	2	2.8	10	14.1
Total	37	52.1	23	32.4	69.39	97.7
Overall total	47	66.2	24	33.8	71	100

Table 6-15: Request Internal modifications employed in terms of the sender's sex

[91] The syntactic negation of preparatory condition downgrader and the lexical hedges, cajolers, consultative devices and understate downgraders were all request internal modifications that were not used in the data and thus were discarded from Tables 7-15 and 7-16.
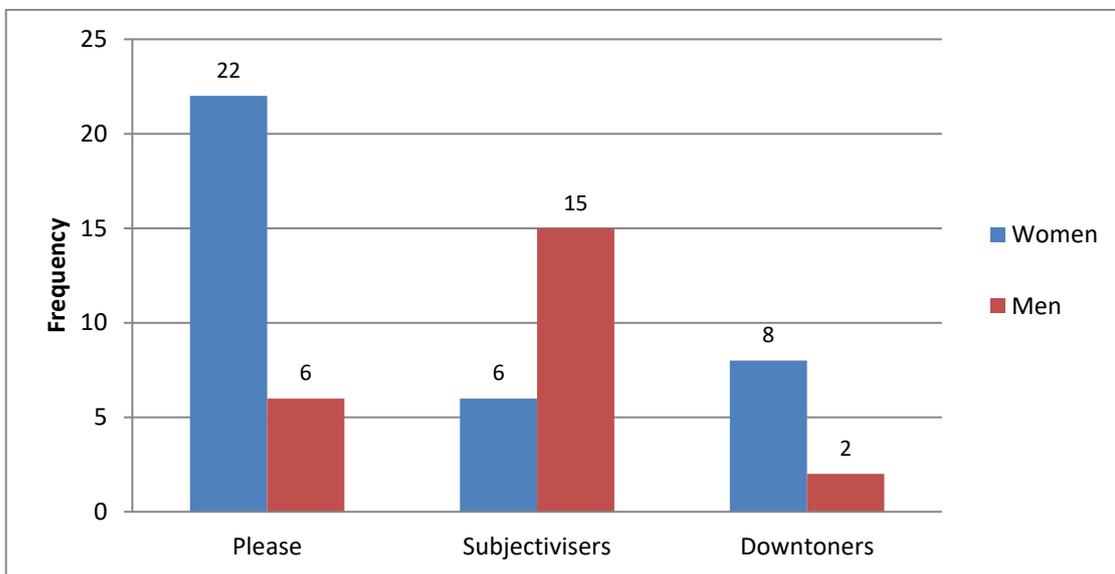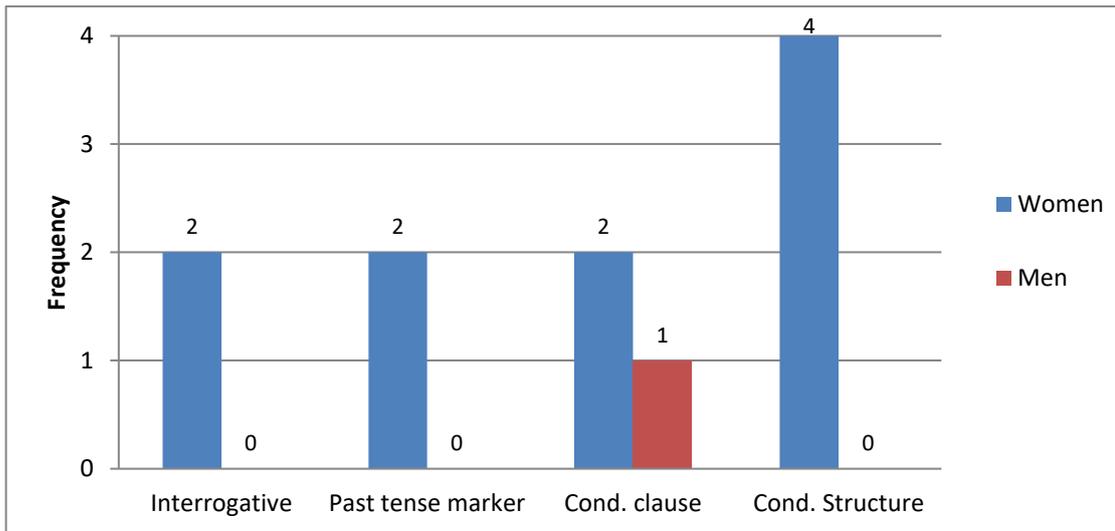
Figure 6-11: Request internal modifications (syntactic/lexical) employed in terms of the email sender's sex

As shown in Table 6-15 and Figure 6-11 above, the majority of the internal modifications that were used in the data were lexical/phrasal downgrades, accounting for 97.73% of all request internal modifications in the data, used in order to soften the requests. In contrast, syntactic downgraders were only used in 12.7% of all request internal modifications. The percentage of the participants employing lexical/phrasal downgraders outranked syntactic downgraders in a ratio of almost 8:1. Table 6-15 also demonstrates that the female participants used more syntactic downgraders (14.1% of all internal modifications) and lexical/phrasal downgraders (52.1% of all internal modifications) than men (9% and 32.4% of all internal modifications respectively).

In terms of syntactic downgraders[92], women (in this sample) used "interrogative forms" (2.8% of all internal downgraders), "past tense marker" (2.8% of all internal downgraders and "conditional structure" (5.6% of all internal modifications) whereas the men did not show any use of them at all. Thus, based on what Mills (1992: 68) found, women's requests in the current data were in some situations more likely "hyper-polite[93]" when they used the interrogative forms, while the male participants did not show any use of hyper-polite requests. The internal syntactic modification "Negation of preparatory condition" was not used at all in the data by any of the participants. Table 7-14 illustrates that the conditional clause was used more by women (2.8% of all internal modifications) than men (1.4% of all of the internal modifications), with a ratio of 2:1. Based on the second part of Table 7-15, appealers were only employed by women (1.4% of all internal downgraders). There were also other types of lexical/phrasal downgraders that were not used in the data, i.e., Hedges, Cajolers, consultative devices and understaters. Table 7-15 also shows that the please marker was the most common lexical/phrasal downgrader that was used in the data (39.4% of all internal modifications). This finding supports Aijmer's (1996: 168) finding that *please* tends to be used in written forms of communication where formal politeness takes place. Women in particular used more of the please marker (31% of all internal modifications) than men (8.5% of all internal modifications). This is perhaps because the women were more aware of the face and rapport threatening effect that could result from their extensive use of direct request forms i.e. "Mood derivable" imperative form (see Table 6-6 earlier in this Chapter) compared to men. Therefore they have attempted to mitigate any negative effect through the use of *please*, which according to Aijmer (1996: 168), is commonly used with imperatives.

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[92] As revealed in Table 6-15 and 6-16, the frequency for many of the items in both tables were quite low so I do not have enough data about these features.
[93] "hyper-polite" refers to a high degree of politeness which is in other words very/extra polite.

"Subjectivisers" are another type of lexical downgrader that was used frequently in the data (29.6 of all internal modifications). The male participants particularly tended to use more "subjectivisers" (21.1% of all internal modifications) compared to women (8.5% of all internal modifications), with a ratio of almost 3:1. Since "subjectivisers" are described as "elements in which the speaker explicitly expresses his or her subjective opinion" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989: 284), men tended to resort to "subjectivisers" more than women perhaps to build rapport as well as to create the identity of an important person for themselves which is in line with Ho's (2010: 2253) finding. Downtoners were also used occasionally in the data (14.1% of all internal modifications). Female participants used these more (11.3% of all internal modifications) than men (2.8% of all internal modifications), which also conveys women's attempts (in this study) to mitigate any possible negative effect that may result from their tendency to use more imperative request forms.

The request internal modifications were then coded according to role in the data as shown in the following table.

Request Internal Modifications	Emails sent by female lecturers		Emails sent by female students		Emails sent by male lecturers		Emails sent by male students	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Syntactic downgraders:								
Interrogative	0	0	2	2.8	0	0	0	0
Past tense marker	0	0	2	2.8	0	0	0	0
Conditional clause	0	0	2	2.8	0	0	1	1.4
Conditional structure	1	1.4	3	4.2	0	0	0	0
Total	1	1.4	9	12.7	0	0	1	1.4
Lexical/ Phrasal downgraders:								
Appealers	1	1.4	0	0	0	0	0	0

Please marker	13	18.3	9	12.7	3	4.2	3	4.2
Subjectivisors	5	7	1	1.4	2	2.8	13	18.3
Downtoners	5	7	3	4.2	0	0	2	2.8
Total	24	33.8	13	18.3	5	7	18	25.4
Overall total	25	35.2	22	31	5	7	19	26.8

Table 6-16: Request Internal modifications employed in terms of the sender's role
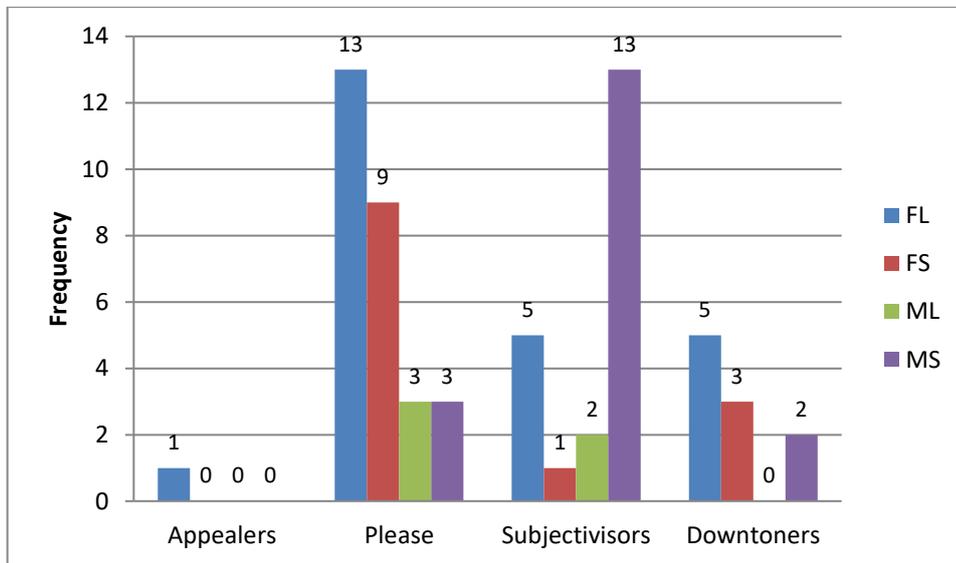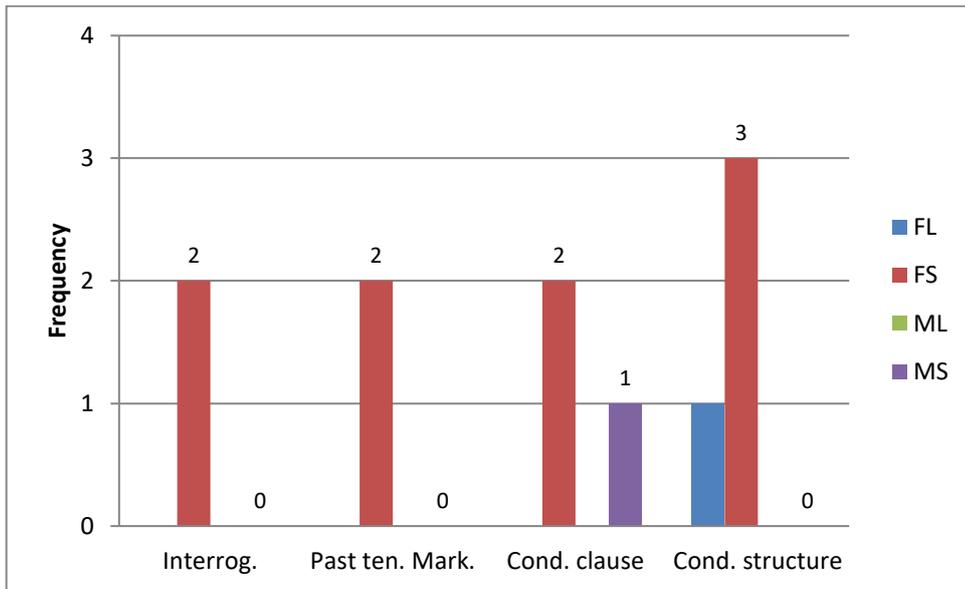
Figure 6-12: Request internal modifications (syntactic/lexical) employed in terms of the email sender's role

As shown in Table 6-16 above, syntactic downgraders were used in this study more by female students (12.7% of all internal downgraders) than by any other group

of participants (female lecturers, 1.4%: male students. 1.4%; and male lecturers, 0%). Both interrogative and past tense marker are the types of request internal modifications that were only used by female students (2.8% each, of all internal modifications). Accordingly, the female students in the current data were the only group of participants who employed "hyper-polite" request forms (Mills, 1992: 68). The conditional clause was only used by students in this study (2.8% by females and 1.4% by males, of all internal modifications) in order to mitigate their requests, to show concern for their lecturers' face and to help in managing rapport when contacting their lecturers. In contrast, the conditional structure was only used by the female participants, particularly by female students who used it more (4.2% of all internal modifications).

Table 6-16 also demonstrates that, in general, female lecturers employed more lexical/phrasal downgraders (33.8% of all internal modifications) than any other group of participants. This might also be influenced by the female lecturer's extensive use of direct mood derivable forms (see Table 6-16, stated earlier in this chapter) in an attempt to mitigate and compensate for choosing to use more lexical downgraders. This they felt might work better than employing more syntactic downgraders. This choice seems to work well; better especially than lexical downgraders including the *please* marker, which is commonly used with imperatives and in formal written forms (Aijmer, 1996: 168), and also "grounders", which are employed as a face-saving strategy (Bella and Sifanou, 2012: 93). "Appealers" were only used once by female lecturers (1.4% of all internal modifications) and were not used at all by any other group. However, there were many lexical/phrasal downgraders that were not used at all in the data, i.e., hedges, cajolers, consultative devices and understaters (which were thus excluded from the table). As shown in Table 7-15 above, the *please* marker internal modification was the most favoured lexical/phrasal downgrader used by female lecturers (18.3 of all internal modifications). The *please* marker was used more by female lecturers in the current study (18.3% of all internal modifications) than by female students (12.7% of all modifications), or by their male counterparts (4.2% of all internal modifications). It was thus used more by women (31% of all internal modifications) than by men (8.5% of all internal modifications). The most favoured lexical modification used by male students was subjectivisers (18.3% of all internal modifications). Subjectivisers were used more

by male students (18.31% of all internal modifications) than by male lecturers (2.8% of all modifications), female lecturers (7% of all internal modifications) or their female counterparts (1.4% of all internal modifications). In contrast, "*downtoners*" were used the most by female lecturers (7% of all internal modifications, compared to 4.2% of all internal modifications for female students, 2.8% of all internal modifications for male students, and 0% for male lecturers, who did not use downtoners at all in the data). Thus, the male participants in this study seem to have acted more according to hierarchical and status positions, unlike the women. Having done the quantitative analysis, in the next section I will discuss the qualitative findings.

6.5.2 Qualitative Findings

As discussed in Section 6.3, "hints" are the type of least direct requests that were observed in the previous literature. They were used occasionally in the current data mostly by the male participants (see Table 6-6, Section 6.5.1), particularly students. In Section 6.3 when I discussed Example 8, I argued that sometimes it is not correct to interpret a request as polite simply because a hint was used. My point is that politeness sometimes relies on the nature of the request itself, and the context within which the request is made. In Example 8, the post-graduate student's request that his supervisor read the group of articles for him was impolite by virtue of the nature of the request and the context in which it took place.

To check how true this interpretation holds, the supervisor of this postgraduate student was interviewed about his student's email (containing Example 8). The supervisor perceived his student's inappropriate request to be *impolite* because it is the supervisor who is supposed to ask his student to do such work, not the student. Since the student's request did not take into consideration the rights appropriate to the student and the supervisor, this finding violates the meaning of politeness and more specifically, its requirement as demonstrated by Holmes (1995: 12) that "politeness requires consideration of the rights appropriate to one's role".

لا لا غير مهذب ... المفروض هو ما يقول لي قراءتها المفروض أنا اللي اقول له اقرأها و قول لي ايش رأيك إذا غير مهذب

No no impolite … he is supposed not to say that I read them [the articles] I am supposed to tell him [the student] to read them and tell me what do you think so impolite

The request is impolite, because the student is not supposed to ask me to read the articles for him. I'm the one who can ask him to read the articles and provide me with a report about it, so the request is impolite (ML1)

Moreover, direct requests may convey impoliteness in emails (as mentioned in Section 6.5.1 in the discussion on Table 6-6). In order to have a second order politeness perspective, a number of the participants were interviewed about when an email would be considered as being impolite, inappropriate, annoying and/or unfriendly. One participant named imperatives as falling into this category:

إذا كان بصيغة الأمر مباشر

If it was in an imperative direct form

If it [a request] was in an imperative and direct form   (ML2)

Sometimes a lack of the politeness marker *please*, downtoners and the conditional clause also signalled an impolite, inappropriate and unfriendly email.

ايميل مثلا بيكون الطلب فيه مباشر بدون أي يعني زي مثلا أبدأ عبارات اللي هي مثلا please أو لو سمحت إذا ممكن أو يعني باعتبره ايميل يعني مزعج

An email with a direct request without any I mean like for example I start with expressions which are, for example please or if you please, if possible or I mean I consider it an email I mean an annoying email

I consider annoying an email that includes a direct request and doesn't start with expressions like *please*, *if you please* and *if possible* (FL2)

In contrast, the participants reported that by avoiding direct requests such as imperatives, the requests are more likely to be polite:

إذا كان الطلب بصيغة تلطف و ما هي بصيغة أمر

If the request was in a polite and not in an imperative form

If the request was in a polite form and not in an imperative form   (MS2)

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Thus, a number of the participants in this study think that it is better to avoid imperatives in emails in order to have for it to be polite. Similarly, the lack of some types of modifications may make an email annoying. As shown in both the quantitative and qualitative analysis, apart from minimising the number of imperatives and direct requests, sometimes balancing them with appropriate modifications or mitigations may help in reducing any possible face and rapport threats.

6.6 **Conclusion**

Much of the analysis in this chapter confirms the earlier research on requesting. First, "people typically use explicit direct forms when they hold a higher position in the institutional hierarch than their addressee(s), and the addressee(s) obligations are clear" (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003: 34). Second, as has been previously observed by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2008: 113), when the requests are directed hierarchically upwards, the greater the mitigation required and the less directness needed, as "politeness considerations typically weigh more heavily" (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003: 44). The findings in this study were also in line with what Blum-Kulka (2005, 1992: 266) found about the role that mitigating devices played in softening the degree of directness, and that "mitigation can index politeness regardless of levels of directness". In addition, this study also provides evidence that requests were frequently found to be combined with explanations, which supports Schegloff's (2007: 83) finding. The lexical modification *please* was also found to be commonly used with imperatives, which is also what Aijmer (1996: 168) found. Therefore, requesting in a Saudi context seems to resemble requesting in other (English) contexts.

However, the analysis of the data also showed something specific about the Saudi context, in the use, choice and form of requesting. In the Saudi context, the participants tended not to resort to request forms that seem to be "very direct". For example, *I am asking you* and *you must + verb,* but rather, they tended to use the request forms that on Leech's (2014: 135) scale of optionality, lead to "progressively greater and greater choice allowed". For example, *I would like* and *Can you*. Some forms of requests that were classified by Blum-Kulka et al. (1987) as being conventionally indirect, e.g., *could you* and *will you* were not employed at all in the current data. In

contrast, some of the requesting forms that occurred in the current data were not observed in any of the previous studies. The request patterns *I hope/I wish from you/your honour to + verb* and *I'd (like to) inform you about the necessity of …*are evidence of the requesting expressions that were used in the Saudi context, but that were not observed in other contexts. In the data, there were frequent expressions that seem to be request forms on the surface, but actually functioned as formulaic closing expressions, as they did not ask a person to do something, e.g., *accept my regards* and *enjoy the rest of the weekend*.

Drawing on the current data, its interpretation and the participants' perspective, this chapter gives more evidence of the fact that both content and context need to be taken into account when interpreting the social meaning of the linguistic forms of requesting (e.g., Example 8, given earlier, when a post-graduate student asked his supervisor indirectly using a hint, to read the research paper for him). It seems that the perception of whether a request is polite or not rests on what the nature of the request is. It is not possible to rely only on interpreting rapport and politeness from a single linguistic form.

The analysis of the current data also suggested a link between requests and identity, which is in line with what Ho (2010: 2253) found. Requests play a role in establishing the desirable identity of the requester. In the Saudi context, the requester's identity that was constructed on multiple occasions (particularly by lecturers who made more frequent use of direct requests that were mitigated) was not necessarily directive, assertive or coercive, since what the lecturers mostly asked their students to do was in the students' best interest. The type of identity that seemed to be constructed was closer to being nurturing, caring or diligent.

Blum-Kulka's (1989) framework in particular proved to be helpful in exploring the current data. It was applied successfully in the Saudi context, as it was able to cover all of the request strategies that occurred in the current data. However, when exploring the framework, I found that interpreting a particular item as direct or indirect was quite subjective and culturally specific. For example, in terms of Blum-Kulka's (1987: 133) scale of directness, "hedged performative" requests were classified as direct, whereas

drawing on the participants' perspectives, this request strategy was perceived to be indirect, particularly "conventionally indirect" in the Saudi context. It signals rapport and politeness, and does not, as Blum-Kulka's (1987) suggests, indicate directness.

Thus, requesting is a feature that may project politeness depending on the choice of form and the amount of mitigation used in a request, whether it is internal or external. In the next chapter, I will discuss the apologising politeness feature, which is one type of external modification that can mitigate and soften the effect of a request.

Chapter 7: Apologising in the Saudi Academic Emails

7.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the use of apology in the Saudi academic emails exchanged between students and lecturers in a number of Saudi universities. It also aims to answer several questions:

1. To what extent do participants use apologies in their emails, and (how) does apologising vary according to the sex and role of the email sender?

2. What other factors influence the variations in apologising? Third, how is the rapport potential of apologising perceived by the participants in the interviews conducted in this study?

In this chapter, I will provide a background of the previous research on apologising (Section 7.2), which includes the functions of apologising and the factors that influence the choice of apology form. Section 7.3 will be devoted to the forms of apology that were used in the previous works and the apology patterns that are specific to the Saudi context along with a number of examples from the current data. Section 7.4 outlines the selected framework that the apologies occurring in the current study were coded against. In Section 7.5, both the quantitative (Section 7.5.1) and qualitative (Section 7.5.2) findings will be discussed. Finally, Section 7.6 provides a brief overview of the findings in this chapter. Many of the findings in this chapter were consistent with the previous studies (e.g. that apologies function as a remedial device and that an apology is a "post-event speech act" (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984: 206 and Spencer-Oatey, 2008: 19)). Likewise, apologies, in general, were also perceived to be a face-saving and rapport building device. This study also found that there are some differences in the use, choice and form of apology that were used in the examined context in Saudi Arabia compared to other studies. In a Saudi context, the participants tended not to use "excuse me" and "I'm afraid", for instance, that are common apology forms in English. However, some of the apology forms that were used in the data did not occur in the previous studies e.g. the pattern I wish/hope from you + an explicit apology.

7.2 Background and Previous Research on Apologising

An apology is described as a remedial device that functions to transform "what can be seen as offensive into what can be seen as acceptable" (Goffman, 1971: 109). Apologies are considered to be a stage within the "corrective process" that helps to correct a mistake or an offence involving "challenge, offering, acceptance and thanks" (Goffman, 1967: 22). An apology is part of a remedial exchange: "complain-apology-forgive" (Edmondson, 1981: 280). According to Olshtain and Cohen (1983: 22), an apology is a social event which takes place when social norms are violated. Similarly, Holmes (1993: 104) described an apology as "any utterance which aims at remedying the effect of an offence or face-threatening act restoring social harmony and equilibrium". Goffman (1971: 113) defines an apology as follows:

> An apology is a gesture through which an individual splits himself into two parts, the part that is guilty of an offence and the part that dissociates itself from the delict[94] and affirms a belief in the offended rule (Goffman, 1971: 113).

Thus, apologies are relevant to understanding politeness. In his definition above, Goffman (ibid.) claimed that apologies can be used to look at what the social norms are, because they are an overt orientation to the breaking of those norms. Therefore, apologies are a useful method for understanding what behavioural norms there are in a given society. According to Goffman's (1971: 113) definition above, the apologiser has a guilty feeling which thus conveys that the apologiser is less likely to commit the offence again. While this definition is quite dated now, it has worked as a launching pad for further understanding the notion of apologies from a social dimension perspective.

In Goffman's (1971) categorisation of apologies, two kinds of compensation were differentiated: ritual and substantive. Fraser (1981: 265) explained the aims for employing both ritual and substantive types of apologies. For a substantive apology, the speaker intends to remedy the negative consequences caused by the offence,

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[94] Delict means the violation of the law.

particularly referring to harm and damage (ibid.). In contrast, a ritual apology is just made as a habit and is part of a routine that the speaker is not responsible for (ibid.). Thus, according to Lazare (2004: 25) the formulae, "I'm sorry" does not always mean apologising, or function as an expression of regret and apology. Indeed, based on earlier studies (Knowles, 1987: 193f), Aijmer (1996: 97) pointed out that an apology is often a "polite gesture" which does not always represent the speaker's true feeling. Ritual apologies are normally expressed in stereotypical conditions when the apologiser is apologising for something trivial, compared to more serious apologies which are used for stronger remorse (ibid. 97). A ritual apology may also be used as a "disarmer or softener, as an attention-getter, and as a phatic act establishing a harmonious relationship with the hearer" (Aijmer, 1996: 97). An apology does not always convey regret, as it may serve other functions and sometimes is used out of habit (for more details see Section 7.2.2).

Apart from Goffman's (1971: 113) definition (stated earlier), there are other definitions that link the linguistic act of apologising to the social outcomes of the apology (Fraser, 1981; Olshtain, 1989; Holmes, 1990; Lazare, 2004 and Bataineh and Bataineh, 2008). Most of these definitions perceive an apology as a speech act (Olshtain, 1989: 156; Holmes, 1990: 159 and Bataineh and Bataineh, 2008: 783) as well as covering both the linguistic and social dimensions of an apology. As Olshtain (1989: 156) pointed out, apologies "provide support for the H (Hearer)". Both the linguistic and social dimension that an apology conveys are also evident in Lazare's (2004: 23) characterisation that through apologising, the "responsibility for an offence" is acknowledged and thus the apologiser admits it. They also tend to focus on the benefit that an apology brings to the addressee which costs the speaker, enhances the rapport between individuals and primarily aims to save face. Bataineh and Bataineh (2008: 783), for instance, mentioned that through apologising, the apologiser "acknowledges responsibility and seeks forgiveness". Similarly, Lazare's (22004: 23) description of an apology took into consideration the addressee's face through linking the apology with expressing "regret or remorse to a second party, the aggrieved". The perspective of apologising costing the speaker, found in Lazare's (2004: 23) definition (stated above), is also echoed in Brown

and Levinson's (1987) view of apologies as being a face threat to the speaker's positive face.

From a second order perspective on politeness, an apology may be classified as a negative politeness device. Based on Brown and Levinson's (1987: 70) politeness strategies, an apology conveys negative politeness for restoring face after an FTA (see Section 2.2 for the definition) or after an offence that affected the addressee's face negatively by causing damage to it (Brown and Levinson, 1978: 65/192). According to Brown and Levinson (1978: 187), an apology may show the apologiser's reluctance to "impinge on H's negative face and thereby partially redress that impingement". Similarly, Holmes (1995: 154) described apologies as negative politeness devices which show respect instead of friendliness. Brown and Levinson (1978: 187) suggested some of the ways to express regret or reluctance to do the offence/FTA, as summarised in Table 7-1.

Suggested way to Apologise	Brown & Levinson's examples	Examples from the current data(where present)
Admit the impingement	I'm sure you must be busy, but…	Sorry to bother you
Indicate reluctance by the use of hedges or other expressions	I normally wouldn't ask you this, but…	No reported examples
Give overwhelming reasons	I'm absolutely lost …, I simply can't manage to …	I'd only like to apologise about what is done by me from idleness around the research because of personal circumstances
Beg forgiveness	I'm sorry to bother you, I hope you'll forgive me if…	I signed the form, but I did not remove the asterisk by mistake, I apologise for that. I promise I will correct it then send a copy of corrected report to you and to the Chairman.

Table 7-1: Ways of showing regret or reluctance to do an offence, adapted from Brown and Levinson (1978: 187)

Apologising is an inherent face-saving act for the hearer for maintaining the hearer's face (Edmondson et al., 1984: 121) and thus perceived as beneficial to the hearer (Holmes, 1995: 155). As shown in Table 7-1, Brown and Levinson's (1978: 187)

ways of expressing regret at causing offence suggest that the apologiser should make an effort to save the addressee's face and thus help the addressee to forgive the apologiser. Apologising is face threatening for the apologiser and face saving for the hearer, unlike requesting (which was covered in Chapter 6) that is face threatening for both parties (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984: 206).

Apologies are not always, as viewed by Brown and Levinson (1987), costly for the speaker and beneficial to the addressee, because they can also be beneficial to the speaker. One relevant benefit to the speaker is that apologies acknowledge that "a social convention has been violated" and thus "your right to proper membership of society" (Davies et al. 2007: 40). Brown and Levinson (1987) were partially correct about viewing an apology as a face threat to the speaker, with it only being beneficial to the hearer. While apologising, the apologiser is aware that a social norm has been violated and that he/she is responsible for the violation (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984: 206).

An apology is described as a "post-event speech act" (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984: 206 and Spencer-Oatey, 2008: 19), as when an offence occurs, it normally requires a remedial response. The speech act of apologising is thus distinguished from requesting in that apologies are "post-event acts", whereas requests are normally "pre-event acts" (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984: 206). However, Davies et al. (2007: 40) illustrated that apologies do not necessarily have to occur after an offence and do not need to be the main purpose of an email, as they might "co-occur with other head acts and/or minor acts". These definitions and meanings of apologies have shaped the research that has emerged in the last four decades about this important speech act.

7.2.1 An Overview of Apologising in Previous Literature

Attention has been paid to apology research over the last forty years, but this has been from a second-order politeness approach, starting with Goffman (1971) and leading to subsequent discussions by Leech (1983), Owen (1983), Brown and Levinson (1987), Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), Olshtain (1989), and Holmes (1989, 1990). Many of the previous applied linguistics studies explored apologies using artificial data elicited through DCT (see Section 5.2.1 for the definition) (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984; Bataineh and Bataineh, 2008; Nureddeen, 2008 and Guan et al. 2009). Only a few studies

have investigated apologies in naturally occurring data, for example, on Twitter (Page, 2014) and through video-taped conversations of a Greek reality game show (Koutsantoni, 2007). There has been a lack of studies on email apologies that have explored authentic speech act performance, except Davies et al. 2007, who only investigated apologies in students' emails that were sent to two authors, which might have affected the writing style and choice of linguistic forms.

Many pragmatic studies examined apologies in an academic context (Holmes, 1989 and 1990; Davies et al., 2007; Bataineh and Bataineh, 2008; Nureddeen, 2008 and Guan et al. 2009), but with a somewhat limited focus on apologies made only by the students and without comparing them with apologies made by any other faculty members. Two of the above studies (Holmes, 1989 and Bataineh and Bataineh 2008) examined apologies while taking gender/sex into account. Some of these studies explored apologies from a cross-cultural perspective (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984; Bataineh and Bataineh, 2008 and Guan et al. 2009). While many of the previous studies focused on apologies performed in English (Holmes, 1989 and 1990; Davies et al. 2007; Guan et al. 2009 and Page, 2014), other studies have examined apologies in other languages (Koutsantoni, 2007; Bataineh and Bataineh, 2008; Nureddeen, 2008 and Guan et al. 2007), particularly Greek, Arabic and a number of other Eastern languages (e.g. China and Korea). Despite its focus on the Arabic language, this study was only limited to the Jordanian and Sudanese contexts, and is the first (to the best of the researcher's knowledge) study to focus on the Saudi context.

In this study, situated apologies will be examined in authentic email data exchanged by both students and lecturers (not only by students as is the case in most of the previous studies, e.g., Davies et al. 2007) in a context that has not been investigated previously (Saudi context). There is a special interest in the possible influence of the participants' role (student or faculty) and their gender. Thus, the current work builds on the previous studies, especially responding to the potential effect of gender on the use of some of the types of strategies. Likewise, it also considers the rapport potential of apologies, a factor that has also been discussed extensively in other socio-pragmatic analysis of apologies in the past.

7.2.2 Functions of Apologies

As shown in the previous definitions of apology (see Section 7.2), there are several key functions that apologies serve which were either stated explicitly or implicitly in the given definitions. Some of the functions are either rapport building or rapport threatening between the people involved.

In terms of the rapport building function of an apology, the apology definitions (see Section 7.2) highlighted one of the key factors for apologising, which is to save face and particularly, to save the addressee's face. In Olshtain's (1989: 156) definition, apologies "provide support for the H (hearer) who was actually or potentially malaffected by violation X". Holmes (1990: 159) pointed out in her definition of apology that an apology is oriented to the addressee's "face-needs". Similarly, this aspect was also outlined in Coates and Cameron's (1988: 30) description of an apology as a "politeness strategy that pays attention to addressee's negative face". Gu (1990: 241) described apologies as "face-caring". Edmondson and House (1981: 47) explained that apologies work in accordance with the hearer supportive maxim of "support your hearer's costs and benefits and suppress your own". An apology is designed to have a positive impact on the addressee and in some cases, the apologiser's face and may therefore be described as a "face-supportive act" (Holmes, 1995: 155). In a study that investigated corporate apologies on Twitter as a response to customer complaints, Page (2014: 32) found that some types of apology, i.e. explanations and offer of repair, function as face-saving strategies (Page, 2014: 38). Including an explanation in the remedial exchange in particular means that the speaker's positive face needs were taken into consideration (Holmes, 1990: 162). Therefore, apologies convey concern and care for the hearer's face which thus promotes interpersonal relationships and help in building a rapport in interactions.

Some of the definitions of apologies illustrate that the outcome of an apology is ideally to remedy an offence. In Holmes' (1989: 196) definition, an apology is "intended to remedy an offence for which A takes responsibility, and thus to restore equilibrium between A and V (where A is the apologist, and V is the victim or person offended)". Goffman (1971, 2010: 109) pointed out in his description of apologies that remedial

work serves to "change the meaning that otherwise might be given to an act, transforming what could be seen as offensive into what can be seen as acceptable". An apology thus has (Lazare 2004: 1) "the power to heal humiliations and grudges, remove the desire for vengeance, and generate forgiveness on the part of the offended parties". Apologies aim to restore face after committing an FTA that affected the addressee's face negatively by causing damage to it (Brown and Levinson, 1978: 65, 192). The remedial work of the apologist during apologising tries to restore both the speaker and the addressee's positive face needs (Holmes, 1990: 162).

Another relevant characteristic of an apology which is implied in Holmes' (1989: 196) description of apology is that the apologiser is normally aware of the violation, he/she takes responsibility for it, and admits to it. Hence, apologies may convey "admission, with the addressee learning of the offence through the utterance which serves as an apology" (ibid.). In other words, apologies might function as more than just regret and show more than one illocutionary force, by expressing the apologiser's admission of having committed an offence in the first place (Holmes, 1990: 163).

Apologies play a significant role in terms of broader society in promoting interrelationships and establishing solidarity between people. It leads to "smooth working of society" (Norrick, 1978: 284). Holmes (1990: 156) described an apology as a social act which seeks to retain good interpersonal relationships. Apologies have been described by Aijmer (1996: 81) semantically as "strategies (also called semantic formulas) which people use as a means to obtain their communicative goals". An apology serves to restore rapport and social relation harmony following an offence. It is capable of positively changing interpersonal relationships (Lazare, 2004: 251). An apology also re-establishes social equilibrium and harmony (cf. Edmondson, 1981: 280; Leech, 1983: 125). Page (2014: 32) found that in two different workplaces, apologies served to rebuild rapport between the company and the client (ibid. 36).

There are a number of functions that other researchers have identified which are related to the functions stated in the definitions themselves. An apology can be a gesture (Goffman, 1971: 113) of social distance, which is sometimes sensitive to variation according to the speakers e.g. speakers' gender/sex. An apology is claimed by

Holmes (1989: 199) to be appropriate to use with strangers whom the speaker does not know well and only in situations with a "relatively serious offence" involved.

In order to mitigate the severity of the offence, some specific forms of apologies include accounts, and but-justifications are used to establish equity and to enhance the addressee's perspective about the speaker (Davies et al., 2007: 57). Davies et al. (2007: 58) distinguished between accounts and but-justifications. Accounts show the reason for which the offence was unavoidable and mitigates the damage by conveying that "the blame should not be attributed" (ibid.: 58). In contrast, a but-justification is not linked to the offence as accounts are, and does not put blame on the speaker. But-justification function to promote "the apologisee's opinion of some aspect of the apologiser's identity" (ibid.: 58). An apology is also considered to be "an important resource for identity construction" (Davies et al., 2007: 61). The choice of apology e.g. whether implicit, explicit or combined, reflects on the type of identity that the apologiser wants to create for themselves e.g. considerate when *but-justification* is used.

In terms of the rapport threatening functions of an apology, apart from expressing regret, an apology may convey bad news indirectly (cf. Brown and Levinson, 1978: 73; Coulmas, 1981b) by informing the addressee about the offence through the apology utterance (Holmes, 1990: 163). Apologies sometimes are made for face attack acts when the attack was deliberately done to an addressee e.g. insults (ibid.). Thus, in some cases, apologies are made by someone else (other than the attacker) who may take responsibility for the offence (Holmes, 1990: 163).

Although it is a specific form of an apology, explanations might function as rapport building. They may also sometimes be used as rapport threatening, for showing impoliteness. Explanations might therefore be perceived as "self-excusing purpose, making the offence seem smaller" (Leech, 2014: 119) and may "deny the offence or evade responsibility" (Page, 2014: 32). In contrast, the lack of an explanation in an apology may lead to an unacceptable apology, or even to an insult from an offended person's perspective (Leech, 2014: 119). This is because an offended party can perceive an explanation as "part of the debt owed to them" (Leech, 2014: 119). It is also that an explanation may minimise the seriousness of an offence through describing the context

in which it took place (ibid. 120). Lazare (2004: 125) argued that it is better for a victim not to have any explanation rather than having "a dishonest, manipulative, or insulting" one.

Apologising in advance might also be perceived as a threat to rapport. Since apologies do not necessarily have to be used for past events and may be employed for ongoing or future events (Davies et al., 2007: 60), this might affect the regret and sincere feelings associated with an apology. Davies et al. (2007: 47) pointed out that, while a sincere apology involves a feeling of regret and a promise for self-control next time, apologising in advance for offences that have not happened yet will not convey the same sort of feeling as those entailed with conventional apologies. So, if an offence is likely to happen again, the entailed feeling of sincerity has not been fulfilled. This is unlike what is expected in sincere apologies, where offences are expected to be avoided in the future (Davies et al. 2007: 48). Based on Deutschmann (2003: 46), Leech (2014: 118) argued that apologising in advance has little or probably no remedial effect as it may be perceived as a FTA. However, apologising prior to an offence can also be argued to convey the speaker's attempt to "maintain the social harmony between the participants" as taking an unwelcome action needs mitigation. Softening an apology to avoid any negative effect on the hearer that might be entailed by the FTA (Aijmer, 1996: 100). Nevertheless, apologising in advance (as thanking in advance, see Section 5.3) seems to have implications on the theories of speech acts. As a result of breaking the rules and not completing the act of apologising, an apology in advance does not fulfil the characteristic of an apology as a "post-event speech act" (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984: 206 and Spencer-Oatey, 2008: 19). Apologies serve different linguistic and social functions in social communications, and both the use and choice of an apology utterance might be affected by various factors, which will be discussed in the next section.

7.2.3 Factors that Influence the Choice of Apology Style

The use, choice and style of apology is influenced and determined by a number of factors. In the Saudi Arabian context, the relationship between social status and

respect/deference[95] is particularly strong and hierarchical in different ways and across different gender groups (see Section 1.2.). Holmes (1995: 173) categorised apologies into three types according to the relative status of the people involved, which was also used in coding the current email data:

1. Upwards: i.e. apology to a superior or person of greater power
2. Equal: i.e. apology to an equal or person of an equal power
3. Downwards: i.e. apology to a subordinate or person of lesser power

Holmes (1995: 173) found that a student may find it much easier to apologise than another person who is at a higher hierarchical level because "as the producer is already in a relatively powerless position, losing face via apologising is much less of an issue than it would be for someone in a position of power" (ibid.: 61). Holmes (1989: 204) also found that, while the majority of apologies were between equals, apologies were addressed upwards more by both genders than downwards. In Holmes' (1989: 204) study, men apologised less to their equals than women, maybe because men perceived it as unnecessary to apologise between equals, unlike women (ibid. 204). The more the power that the addressee has over the speaker, the more elaborate that the apology strategy is expected to be (Holmes, 1990: 187). As an elaborated and extended apology can mitigate the offence and is perceived by Holmes (1990: 177) as more polite compared to "minimal strategies", an elaborate strategy is thus worth using especially when apologies are directed upward. Similarly, this is because the institutional roles that speakers take can lead to asymmetrical rights and obligations (Thornborrow, 2002: 8) which is reflected in the way that the speakers handle these occasions in their conversations, e.g. when apologising. In the current study, for instance, lecturers - who have power over students because Saudi Arabia "scores very high on 'power distance'" (Bjerke and Al-Meer, 2006) - expect to be addressed by their students in a more polite way and to be apologised to (when an apology is needed) using elaborated forms.

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[95] Formality, which is out of the scope of this study, may also play a role and may be a research topic that is worth exploring in the future.

However, this expectation might not necessarily be true (see section 7.5.1 for the number of apologies).

Social distance is also a factor that determines the use and selection of an apology. Bergman and Kasper (1993: 99) found that the respondents tended to express responsibility for the offence more if the relationship between the offender and the offended party was closer. Holmes (1995: 177) classified her data in terms of the social distance between interactants, as follows:

1. Intimate or very close friends
2. Friends or colleagues
3. Strangers or distant acquaintances

Guan et al. (2009: 38) found that all of the participants, regardless of their culture, had a greater propensity to apologise to a stranger than to a friend. Fraser (1981: 269) reported that in his American data that "as the degree of familiarity increases between the interactants, the need (or at least the perceived need) to provide elaborate apologies decreases". This lesser need for an extended apology among intimate people and friends is because using elaborate apologies may convey social distance, reducing rapport between both of the interactants and making the interlocutor feel like a stranger.

The degree of violation or the seriousness of the offence is also an important factor that determines the extent of the apology made by an individual. Holmes (1995: 167) categorised offences into six kinds, illustrated below with some examples given by her.

1. Space offences: e.g. bumping into someone, queue jumping
2. Talk offences: e.g. interrupting, talking too much
3. Time offence: e.g. keeping people waiting, talking too long
4. Possession offences: e.g. damaging or losing someone's property
5. Social gaffes: e.g. burping, coughing, laughing inappropriately
6. Inconvenience offences/inadequate service: e.g. giving someone wrong item

Holmes (1995: 171) also identified three levels of seriousness in the offences, stated below along with some examples given by her.

1. Light offences: e.g. bumped into someone accidently, forgot to return a library book on time
2. Medium offences: e.g. broke someone's stapler or kept someone waiting so they were late for a film
3. Heavy offences: e.g. knocked someone over so they were hurt

Despite Holmes' (1995: 167/171) efforts to explore and categorise the types of offence as well as the levels of seriousness of the offences, separating the categories can be quite problematic. There seems to be an overlap between some of Holmes' offences and seriousness in the offences categorisation. For instance, in terms of the kinds of offence, it is not always clear whether a particular offence is a time or an inconvenient offence, as in the following set of examples from the data that were originally written in Arabic.

Example (1) – in Arabic:

نعتذر لتأخر وصول التذاكر من الوزارة

We apologise for the delay of the ticket arrival from the ministry

We apologise for the delay in sending the tickets.

(Written by ML1, a male lecturer to his colleagues)

Example (2) – in Arabic:

اعتذر عن التأخير في الرد عليكن، و ذلك لأن رسالتكن هذه لم تصلني إلا اليوم،

I apologise for the delay in replying to you, and that is because your message did not arrive until today.

Sorry for the delay in replying to you, but I only received your message today.

(Written by ML5, a male lecturer to a group of female students)

While the offence type in both examples above seems to be a time offence because they are about delays, the offence can also be classified as an inconvenience offence. Similarly, the distinction between Holmes' (1995: 171) light and medium offences is not entirely straightforward and clear. Thus, I chose not to use Holmes' (1995: 167/171) classification when coding my data.

Bergman and Kasper (1993: 99) found that the more obligation and face-loss that is associated with the offence, the more there is the need to employ an upgrading strategy in the apology (e.g. *terribly/very/so sorry*). Ogiermann (2010: 38) argued that the frequent use of intensifications by the English speakers highlights the speaker's evaluation of the offence as "very regrettable rather than intensifying the apology". Holmes found that with serious offences, speakers infrequently used only a simple apology (1990: 184). In situations where serious offences were made, the remedial exchange tended to include an explicit apology which was then expected to be more elaborated on using an explanation, the acknowledgement of responsibility, or an offer of repair (Holmes, ibid.). If the offence was less serious, there was a greater tendency to employ a "single, simple and explicit apology" (Holmes, 1990: 188). Holmes (1989: 201) also found that men and women differed mainly in terms of space and time offences. This is (according to Holmes) because women were "more sensitive to such impositions and, as a result, readily apologise for "space" intrusions, because an apology would make it crystal clear that the contact had been unintentional" (Holmes, 1989: 201-202). So it is possible that women might perceive space intrusions as more face and rapport threatening than men, or that women committed more space intrusions than men, and thus attempted to remedy them through apologising.

Cultural differences and norms affects the customers' obliged feelings to apologise, especially since "social pressure for, or social approval of, apologising may be stronger in some cultures than in others" (Guan et al., 2009: 34). The extent to which apologising is perceived as normal and common (Guan et al., 2009: 34) is culture-specific. Guan et al. (2009: 38) found that the American participants in the study were more willing to apologise, and had a greater expectation to be apologised to, than the Chinese and Korean participants. As a result of this, in American, Chinese and Korean cultures, apology functions to a different extent as a face-saving strategy (Guan et al., 2009: 41).

Being late for an appointment is considered a more serious offence in America than in Israel (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984: 209). Al-Zumor (2003: 29) noticed that in the Arab culture, "admitting one's deficiency in order to set things right is not as

embarrassing as in the Anglo-Saxon culture". Bataineh and Bataineh (2008: 797) made a distinction between Eastern and Western people in how they view the reason and responsibility of an apology. They explained that "Westerners concentrate more on culpability and Easterners on consequences" (ibid.). However, this sort of Eastern/Western distinction is not always straightforward, since in some contexts and occasions, the focus might be on culpability and the person who is at fault as well as exploring the results together.

Gender/sex also plays a significant role in the use and choice of the apology strategy. Holmes (1989: 204) found that both women and men were aware of the importance of apologising to women, who were seen of as equal. The perceptions of apologies also varied according to gender. Apologies were perceived to be face-threatening to the apologiser's face (Brown and Levinson, 1978: 73), and may justify why the perception of apologies differs according to gender (Holmes, 1989: 206). While men considered apologies to be damaging to the apologiser's face, in contrast, women perceived them as a way of establishing and maintaining solidarity and social harmony (Holmes, 1989: 208). Similarly, Bataineh and Bataineh (2008: 814) found a sex influence on the choice and use of apology strategies, noting that, when apologising, women assigned responsibility to themselves less than men did. Holmes (1995: 180) distinguished between men and women in terms of their perception of apologies. She argued that "women appear to treat apologies as tokens of concern and friendship, while men may regard them as debt-incurring hostages to fortune" (ibid. 180). Holmes (1995: 184) explained that men avoided apologising because apologies may cause damage to the apologiser's face (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 68), whereas women view apologies as an "other oriented" speech act which promotes social harmony and solidarity (Holmes, 1995: 184). Hence, the use and choice of an apology is influenced by many factors, which in turn may influence the types and various possible apology forms that will be discussed in the following section. Holmes (1995) seemed to have contrasted men and women as if they were different species. However, the differences between them might be influenced by the context in which the men and women live in. Recent studies on language and gender were more interested in exploring the differences

between women and men, rather than the differences external to them (Swann, 2002: 44).

7.3 **The Forms of Apologies**

The previous literature has identified explicit and implicit apologies (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984: 206; Aijmer, 1996: 82 and Holmes, 1995: 161). Explicit apologies and offering/presenting one's apologies are the most direct type of apology (Aijmer, 1996: 82). Implicit apologies, on the other hand, include "softeners, accounts, excuses, minimisations of responsibility" (ibid. 84). An explicit apology may sometimes project politeness and be perceived as a "politer apologies" if it is combined with another apology strategy (Holmes, 1990: 168). In my work, I will be dealing with both types (see 7.7. and 7.9.).

Holmes (1990) explored apology forms and strategies as used in practice in a New Zealand context. By analysing her authentic data, Holmes (1990: 169) found that the most common apology strategy that was used was the explicit type, specifically, expressing regret without explanation. Explicit apologies were also frequently used in combination with other apology strategies and might also be repeated (ibid.). Holmes (1990: 177) suggested that on way to express an apology in a more polite way is to employ a "more extended rather than minimal strategies, for example, and longer rather than shorter linguistic formulae". Another polite way that Holmes (ibid.) suggested is by using intensification devices, as "boosters" of the illocutionary force instead of hedges or downgraders (for an example, see the last row in Table 7-2 below). Based on previous studies (e.g. Blum-Kulka, 1993; Holmes, 1995; Davies et al., 2007; Bataineh and Bataineh, 2008 and Olshtain and Cohen, 1983), there are varieties in the apology forms that are commonly used in practice. Table 7-2 below demonstrates the various studies that have explored each apology strategy with relevant examples from the current study.

The apologizing form	Studies Where the feature was reviewed	Examples from the data
Sorry/I'm sorry	Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1993: 59; Ferguson, 1981; Aijmer, 1996; Holmes, 1995; Davies et al., 2007; Bataineh & Bataineh, 2008; Nureddeen, 2008; Leech, 2014	<u>Sorry</u> to bother you
Forgive me[96]	Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984 and Bataineh & Bataineh, 2008	I wish from you to <u>forgive me</u> and we start a new page
I apologize	Holmes, 1995; Davies et al. 2007	اعتذر على التأخير <u>I apologize</u> for the delay
Excuse me	Blum-Kulka & Olshtain and Holmes, 1995	No reported examples
Explanation	Olshtain & Cohen, 1983; Holmes, 1989 and Nureddeen, 2008	The deadline is specified by the faculty And I haven't got the right for that Submission is officially through the supervisor and I receive it from her officially[97].
I'm afraid	Holmes, 1990; Aijmer, 1996 and Davies et al. 2007	No reported examples
Unfortunately	Davies et al., 2007	<u>Unfortunately</u> only one of us will be able to meet you. I'm sorry about that.
Intensification + apology	Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Holmes, 1990 and Bataineh & Bataineh, 2008	I'm <u>so sorry</u> for forgetting to hand the required document

Table 7-2: Apologising forms found in research literature with examples from the data

As shown in Table 7-2 above, many but not all of the apologising forms found in the earlier studies also occurred in the email data considered in my research. Neither *excuse me* nor *I'm afraid,* for instance, occurred in any of the emails exchanged between the Saudi students and lecturers. This might be because of the cultural differences in the

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[96] There is an Arabic equivalent of *excuse me* which is أرجو المعذرة that did not occur in my data, but may occur later.

[97] This is an extract from a lecturer's email to his student to reply to the student's request of help in giving more marks.

use of some apologising forms, as both *excuse me* and *I'm afraid* are perhaps implicit indirect apologies that are typically used in countries where English is a first language.

Another difference that was found in the current data regarding apologising was the use of the apology form *forgive me* (see Table 7-2 above), which occurred in the following pattern: *I wish from you + explicit form of apology*,

Example (3) – in Arabic:

و أرجو منك أن تعذرني

I wish from you to forgive me

I hope you can forgive me

(Written by MS4, a post-graduate male student to his supervisor)

The phrase *I wish from you* is normally used in the Saudi context to start a request (see Chapter 6). The clause *I wish* in particular functions as a downgrader that softens the effect of FTA which results from a request. Thus, it can be argued that the student in the particular example above combined the speech act of requesting with apologising in order to seek his supervisor's forgiveness. Additionally, an interesting example that was used in a different way in the current data is to apologise using *accept my apology* along with a closing apology formulae that has occurred in the same pattern *I wish from you*[98] as the following example attests.

Example (4) – in Arabic:

أرجو منك يا دكتور ان تقبل اعتذاري و اعطائي فرصة
I wish from you doctor to accept my apology and to give me a chance.
I hope you will accept my apology and give me another chance.
(Written by MS4, a post-graduate student to his supervisor)

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[98] The hybrid form of request with apology that seemed to be specific to the Saudi culture have only occurred twice in the data and only in Arabic emails. Since this number of occurrence was quite low and only appeared in the Arabic data, I did not analyse this according to the language of the email.

In the example above, the post-graduate student found himself in trouble with his supervisor for not handing in any work for his dissertation. Consequently, the supervisor decided to end the supervision and advised his student to find another supervisor. The student not only attempted to apologise for everything that he had done, but begged his supervisor to accept his apologies and to give him an opportunity to take corrective action. He therefore used an apologising form that seems to be a hybrid of both a request and an apology. The gravity of the offence (which seemed to be more serious) in this case (Example 4) contributed to the construction of the apology.

Thus, an initial overview of the previous literature on apologies suggests that the existing work, particularly the frameworks for apologies, seems to account quite well for my current data and I will therefore use Olshtain and Cohen's (1983) framework. However, there were two exceptions (as discussed in Examples 3 and 4 above). In the next section, the apology model that will be adopted in this study will be introduced with some examples.

7.4 Apology Strategies

The linguistic strategies of an apology have drawn scholars' attention over the last three decades (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984; Owen, 1983 and Fraser, 1981). Researchers have proposed and developed a number of systems for categorising apology strategies (Olshtain and Cohen, 1983; Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984; Owen, 1983 and Fraser, 1981). To categorise the apologies that exist in the Saudi academic email data, Olshtain and Cohen's (1983) framework was adopted, because of its influence and it has formed the basis for the work of many other researchers (Holmes, 1995; Blum and Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984). The table below outlines the linguistic apology strategies as proposed by Olshtain and Cohen (1983) with some examples from the current email data.

Apology Strategies (Olshtain and Cohen, 1983: 22-23)	Olshtain & Cohen's Examples	Examples from the Data
1. An expression of an apology		
An expression of regret	I'm sorry	<u>Sorry</u> for the inconvenience.
An offer of apology	I apologise	<u>I apologise</u> for sending the plan a bit late,
A request for forgiveness	Excuse me, please forgive me	I wish from you to <u>forgive me</u> and we start a new page
2. An explanation or account of the situation	If a person was late for a meeting, he may explain this by saying "the bus was delayed"	it is not in my hand to make you pass or May Allah don't allow not to pass
3. An acknowledgement of responsibility		
Accepting the blame	It is my fault	No reported examples
Expressing self-deficiency	I was confused, I wasn't thinking or I didn't see you	No reported examples
Recognising the other person as deserving apology	You are right	You are right.
Expressing lack of intent	I didn't mean to	No reported examples
4. An offer of repair	I'll pay for the broken vase or I'll help you get up	I apologise for that. <u>I promise I will correct it then send a copy of corrected report to you and to the # chairman.</u>
5. A promise of forbearance	When someone has forgotten a meeting with a friend more than once, the person might want to say something like "It won't happen again"	I promise you that <u>I'm going to let you be proud in the research and I'll do my best in my studies during the next weeks without any idleness in Allah's willing</u>

Table 7-3: Apology Strategies with Examples

The first type of apology strategy in the table is identified to be "the most direct realisation of an apology" and an "explicit expression of apology" which is performed through the use of an "explicit IFID[99]" (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984: 206). The apology

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[99] For more information, see Sections 5.2 and 2.9.

strategies that occurred in the current data were coded and analysed according to Olshtain and Cohen's (1983) model which will be discussed in the next section.

7.5 Further Findings

In this section, I will start by discussing my quantitative findings in section 7.5.1 and then I will discuss the qualitative findings in 7.5.2.

7.5.1 Quantitative Findings

In the current data, some of the emails contained at least one apology strategy. The number of emails that either contained or did not contain an apology has been summarised in Table 7-4 below. The results have been normalised as the percentage of the emails sent by each sub-group and contrasted according to the email writer's sex.

Feature	Emails sent by women		Emails sent by men		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Freq[100].	%
Emails with apologies	9	12.9	10	14.3	19	13.6
Emails without apologies	61	87.1	60	85.7	121	86.4
Total	70	100	70	100	140	100

Table 7-4: Number of emails with or without apology according to the email sender's sex with percentage

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[100] The number of apology items that I am looking at is relatively small compared to requests for instance, but they are still worth looking at. This also suggests that in terms of the figures that follows in the quantitative comparison I cannot generalize too far.
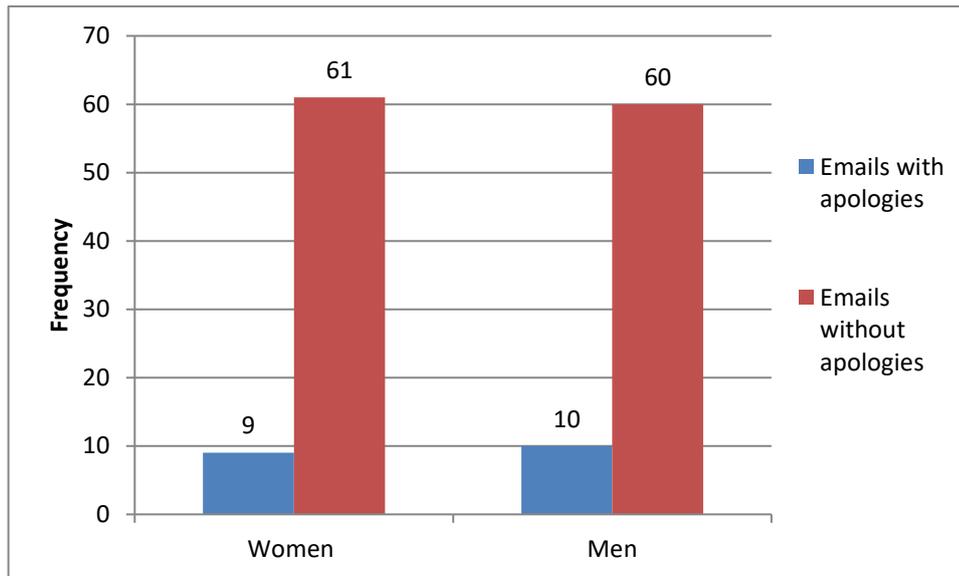
Figure 7-1: Emails with or without apology according to the email sender's sex

As shown in Table 7-4 above, out of the 140 emails that were exchanged in the current data set, only 19 emails (13.6% of all the emails) contained at least one apology. The percentage of emails that did not contain apologies outranked the emails containing apologies in a ratio of nearly 6:1. The vast majority of the emails in the dataset (86.4% of all the emails) did not contain an apology, which suggests that the participants in this study tended not to apologise. Men in this study apologised slightly more (14.3% of all the emails that were sent by men) compared to women (12.9% of all the emails that were sent by women). The emails' inclusion of apologies was then further analysed according to the participants' role as summarised in Table 7-5 below.

Features	Emails sent by female lecturers		Emails sent by female students		Emails sent by male lecturers		Emails sent by male students	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Emails with apologies	6	4.3	3	2.1	6	4.3	4	2.9
Emails without apologies	29	20.7	32	22.9	29	20.7	31	22.1
Total	35	25	35	25	35	25	35	25

Table 7-5: Number of emails with or without apology according to the email sender's role with percentage
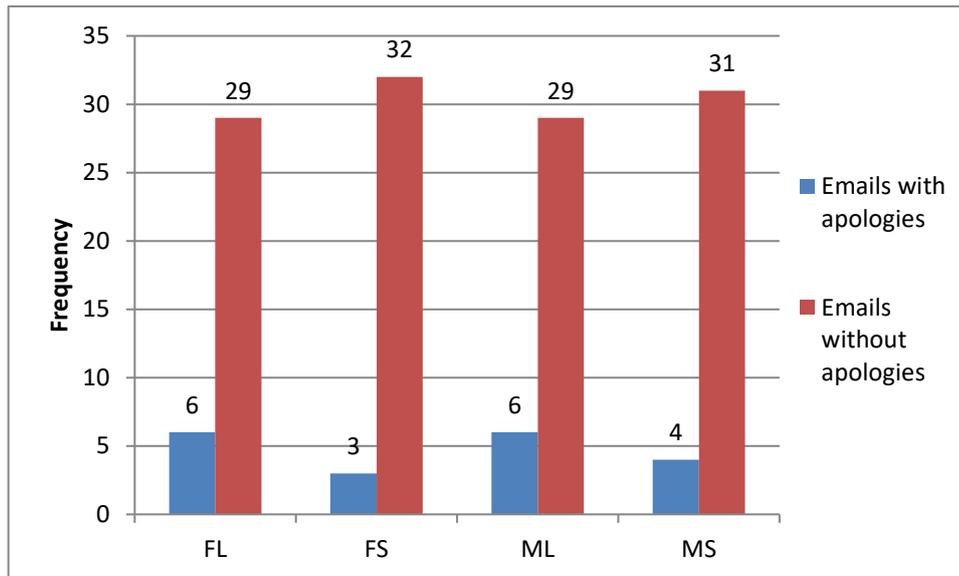
Figure 7-2: Emails with or without apologies according to the email sender's role

In terms of role, it seems that the relative status of the participants has an influence on the participants' use of apologies. Table 7-5 shows that the lecturers in this study used apologies more (8.6% of all the emails) than the students (5% of all the emails). We may note that it is quite surprising to see how the apologies tend to be directed downward more than upward, a finding that is supported by the fact that the students in this study sent emails without apologies more (45% of all the emails) than lecturers (41.42% of all the emails). This finding does not agree with what Holmes (1995: 173) found; namely, that students find it much easier to apologise than lecturers (superiors), because "the producer is already in a relatively powerless position, losing face via apologising is much less of an issue than it would be for someone in a position of power" (ibid.: 61). The above finding is also at odds with Holmes' (1989: 204) finding in that apologies that were addressed upwards were sent more often than apologies directed downwards (Holmes, 1989: 204).

The emails that contained apologies in the current data were then coded according to whether the apology occurred before or after the event for which the apology was made.

Position of apology	Emails sent by women		Emails sent by men		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Freq.	%
Post-event	13	59.1	8	36.4	21	95.5
Pre-event	1	4.6	0	0	1	4.6
Total	14	63.6	8	36.4	22	100

Table 7-6: The position of apology in terms of the email sender's sex (as a percentage of all emails)
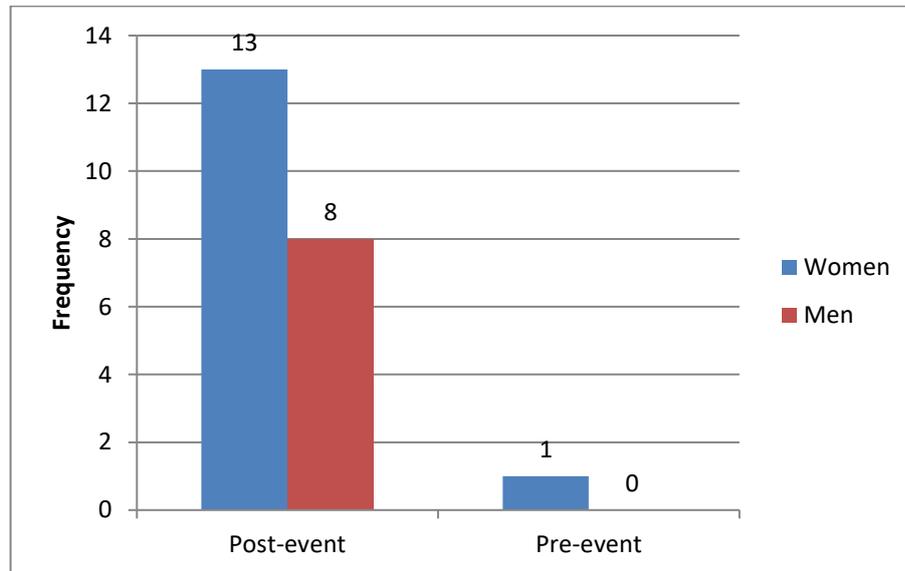
Figure 7-3: The position of apology in terms of the email sender's sex

In the email data, the results pinpoint (see Table 7-6 and Figure 7-3 above) that the majority of apologies (95.5% of all the emails that included apologies) occurred as a post-event speech act, compared to 4.6% of all of the emails where it occurred as a pre-event speech act. The percentage of the post-event apologies outranked the pre-event apologies in a ratio of 21:1. This finding confirms the other previous findings about the position of an apology as a "post-event speech act" (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984: 206 and Spencer-Oatey, 2008: 19) as well as a remedial device that transforms "what can be seen as offensive into what can be seen as acceptable" (Goffman, 1971: 109).

The tendency of apologies to be post-event speech acts also signals the assumed sincerity in making the apology, as all of the apologies that were made in the current data except one occurred after the offensive event. Thus this mostly shows the regret feeling, which means that the offence is unlikely to happen again (Davies et al., 2007: 47). However, there was a single case, in the current data, where the apology was made in advance as a pre-event speech act. This is in line with what Davies et al. (2007: 60)

found regarding the possibility of an apology occurring at an ongoing or future event. Such apologising in advance might be perceived as an FTA, according to Deutschmann (2003: 46) and Leech (2014: 118), but by looking at this particular, isolated case as contextualised in the data, it seems that the opposite face effect occurs (see Example 5 below). This interpretation is rather in line with Aijmer's (1996: 100) finding that apologising in advance conveys the speaker's attempt to build rapport and to "maintain the social harmony between the participants". This is because taking an unwelcome action needs mitigation and a softening apology to avoid any negative effect on the hearer that might arise from the FTA. However, this FTA is not only restricted to the hearer's face, but also to the apologiser's face.

Example (5) – in English:

Dear Dr. X,

I'm very happy about working with you. Ma shaa Allah [if Allah's willing,] you have a contagious positive energy which is boosting my enthusiasm towards this research. ….

Yes, X has informed me about your meeting and she told me about … and that you'd like to meet us by Thursday. <u>I would really love to meet with you</u> but as I mentioned before, <u>I have a day shift and she has a night shift this week; we will try our very best to arrange a meeting</u> were [where] we can both attend. If not, <u>unfortunately only one of us will be able to meet you</u>. <u>I'm sorry about that</u>.

Thank you very much,

Wishing you a lovely evening,

X

(Written by FS2, a final year medical student)

As shown in Example 5 above, the student started her email to a senior faculty member by showing that she is very eager and happy to work with him. She complimented the addressee by stating *you have a contagious positive energy which is boosting my enthusiasm toward this research*. She then repeated her willingness and eagerness to meet the addressee, but said that she was unable to do so and she explained the reason (incompatible shifts). It seems that she had already explained it before, because she said *as I mentioned before,* which was perhaps a reminder. She then attempted to solve the problem with a corrective action, namely suggesting an alternative meeting, or

otherwise, if she herself could not come, that her colleague would come alone. She started with a type of indirect apology *unfortunately only one of us will be able to meet you*. After that, she apologised again by saying *I'm sorry about that* and then thanked her addressee using a boosted and modified thanking form *thank you very much.* This was followed with her thanking with a closing phatic element *wishing you a lovely evening* coupled with her first name. The student's linguistic choice and writing style in conveying her apology message, her compliment towards the addressee, her eagerness to work and meet with the addressee, the explanation of why it was not possible for her to make the appointment, using a combined apology which included a modification/boosting device, thanking the addressee and finishing her message with a phatic element; all of this shows the student's concern for her addressee's face needs, and her attempt to establish and maintain a rapport with him. Thus, on this particular occasion, the pre-event apologising is possibly not an FTA[101].

In order to compare Example 5 about apologising in advance which occurred in the current data with an example from the previous literature, the following example by Leech (2014: 118) has been provided:

I'm sorry but I just think that's outrageous

In Leech's (ibid.) example above, the speaker was apologising before committing the FTA (criticising and saying something is outrageous), which is apologising in advance. Similarly, in Example 5 from the current data, the speaker's time constraints have been mentioned prior to the FTA *only one of us will be able to meet you,* which is also apologising in advance. Hence, apologies normally occur after an offence takes place.

The emails that contained apologies in the data were analysed according to the number of apologies.

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[101] It would have been useful to interview the lecturer to discuss it further to determine if it was an FTA or not.

Number of Apologies	Emails sent by women		Emails sent by men		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Freq.	%
Single apology	5	26.3	7	36.8	12	63.2
Combined apologies (2 only)	1	5.3	2	10.5	3	15.8
Combined apologies (3 or more)	3	15.8	1	5.3	4	21.1
Total	9	47.4	10	52.6	19	100

Table 7-7: Number of apologies used in terms of the email sender's sex (as a percentage of all emails)
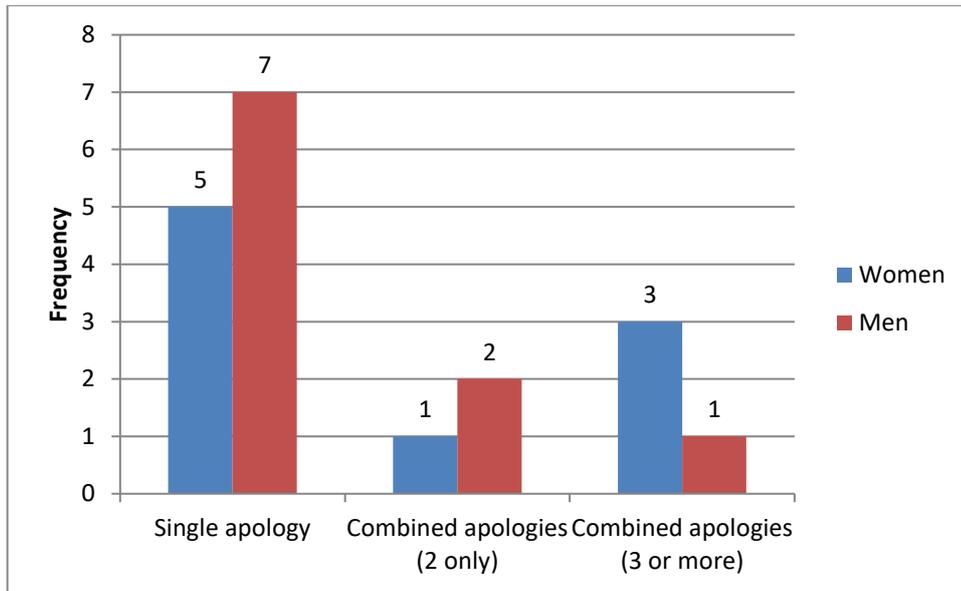
Figure 7-4: The apologies used in the emails according to the sender's sex

As shown in Table 7-7 and Figure 7-4 above, in terms of whether the type of apologies used in the email were single or combined, most of the apologies (63.2% of all the emails in their emails) that occurred in the data occurred in a single form. Almost a quarter of this percentage (15.8% of all the emails) were apologies that included two apologies together, as the following example (that was originally written in Arabic) attests.

Example (6) – in Arabic:

ولو وحدة شايفة المستوى مرررررة عالي عليها وانو ماكانت تقدر تتجاوب مع متطلبات المادة ف <u>أحب</u> <u>اعتذر</u> منها انو ده اقل مستوى قدرت اتدنى له (<u>واعتذر</u> عن الكلمة) لكن دي الحقيقة ...

And if someone feels that the level is so high for her and that she couldn't cope with the requirement of the subject so <u>I'd like to apologise</u> from her that this is

the lowest level that I could go down for (I'm sorry for this word) but this is the truth …

If anyone feels that the level is too high for them and that they can't cope with the requirements of the subject, I'd like to apologise to them, but this is the lowest level that I could go down to. I'm sorry, but this is the truth. (Written by FL3, a female lecturer).

In Example 6 above, the female lecturer FL3 used a combined apology for two events in her email that was addressed to a group of students. The first apology فأحب أعتذر منها *I'd like to apologise* was because she could not simplify the level of the subject that she was teaching more, which was the first event. The second apology فأعتذرمنها *I'm sorry* was for using a specific, perhaps, face-threatening expression *this is the lowest level I could go for* (the second event).

The percentage of single apologies outranked the combined apologies (with 2 apologies) in a ratio of 4:1. Instances that involved three or more forms of apology together made up 21.1% of the apologies used in the email data. The male participants in the data were inclined to employ single apologies slightly more (36.8% of the total number of apologies used in the emails) than women (26.3% of the total number of apologies used in the emails), while women preferred to select extended apologies with three or more apologies greater (2.14% of all the emails) than men. Despite the fact that, across the data sample as a whole, most of the men preferred to use single apologies, that does not mean that all of the men perceived single apologies as the most polite form, or that they chose to use the most polite form (see Section 7.5.2).

The emails that contained apologies in the data were also analysed according to the number of apologies, and in terms of the role of the email's sender.

Recipients' gender	Emails sent by female lecturers		Emails sent by female students		Emails sent by male lecturers		Emails sent by male students	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%[102]
Single apology	2	10.5	3	15.8	4	21.1	3	15.8
Combined apologies (2 only)	1	5.3	0	0	2	10.5	0	0
Combined apologies (3 or more)	3	15.8	0	0	0	0	1	5.3
Total	6	31.6	0	0	0	0	4	21.1

Table 7-8: Number of apologies in terms of the email sender's role
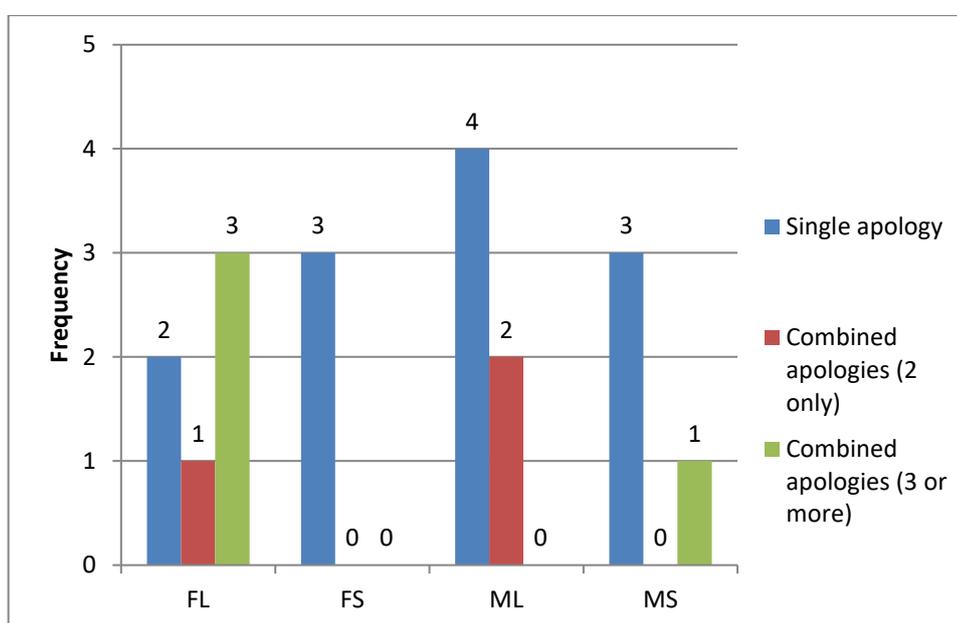
Figure 7-5: The apologies used in the emails according to the sender's role

Table 7-8 above demonstrates that in terms of role, students used single apologies with the same percentage regardless of sex (15.8% of the total number of apologies used in the emails for female students and the same for male students). Students also rarely used any other kind of apology combination. In contrast, the percentage of the apologies made by lecturers varied according to their gender. Female lecturers opted to choose

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[102] All the percentages in this table were calculated out of the total number of emails

extended apologies containing three or more apologies (15.8% of the apologies used in the emails) compared to male lecturers (0% of all the emails), which thus suggests that female lecturers used what Holmes (1990: 168) argued to be the more polite apology (combined) compared to the single form of apology. In contrast, the male lecturers favoured using a single apology more (21.1% of the apologies used in the emails) than other forms of apologies. The apologies that occurred in the data were analysed according to the type of strategy used.

Apology Strategy	Emails sent by women		Emails sent by men		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1. An Expression of an apology:						
An expression of regret	7	18.9	0	0	7	18.9
An offer of apology	4	10.8	7	18.9	11	29.7
A request for forgiveness	0	0	1	2.7	1	2.7
Total	11	29.7	8	21.6	19	51.4
2. An explanation or account	4	10.8	7	18.9	11	29.7
3. An acknowledgement of responsibility [103]						
Recognising other as deserving an apology	1	2.7	0	0	1	2.7
4. An offer of repair	3	8.1	2	5.4	5	13.5
5. A promise of forbearance	0	0	1	2.7	1	2.7
Overall total	19	51.4	18	48.7	37	100

Table 7-9: Apology strategies employed in terms of the sender's sex

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[103] Most of the subcategories in this apology strategy were not used in the data and thus were discarded from Tables 7-13 and 7-14 e.g. accepting the blame, expressing lack of intent and expressing self-deficiency.

As shown in Table 7-13 above, the use of apology strategies by women and men were quite similar. However, women in this study employed apology strategies slightly more (51.35% of all the apology strategies) than men (48.7% of all the apology strategies). In terms of the most favoured type of apology, an (explicit) expression of an apology (item 1 in Table 7-13 above) was the most preferred strategy for all of the participants (51.4% of all the apology strategies) followed by an explanation or account strategy (29.7% of all the apology strategies). The female participants employed the explicit expression of an apology more (29.7% of all the apology strategies) than the men (21.6% of all the apology strategies), whereas the men used an explanation or account apology strategy more (18.9% of all the apology strategies) than women (10.8% of all the apology strategies).

Example (7) – in English:

Sorry to bother you

(Written by FS2, a female student to her lecturer)

In Example 7, the FS2 female student started her email by introducing the content or the purpose of her email to the lecturer by saying *I want to inform you about the case and ask you about another please*. She then listed both matters quite elaborately. Since this email needed some attention to be paid (on the part of the lecturer) to concentrate on what was mentioned, the student apologised at the end for any inconvenience that may have resulted, through using an explicit type of apology, namely, *Sorry to bother you*.

An example of an implicit explanation apology can be seen in the following example that was originally written in Arabic.

Example (8) – in Arabic:

وأفيدك بأن المادة ليست مادتي، أنا أدرسها للمنتظمين ، وبالنسبة للمنتسبين فهي تابعة أيضاًلوحدة المواد العامة وعندهم دكاترتهم ، والتصحيح يتم بالحاسب الآلي ، ولا يمكن لي أن أتدخل بإضافة أي شي إلا خمس درجات فقط للمتفوقين من المنتظمين ـ وما عداها لا يقبله الجهاز أصلاً .

And I'd inform you that the subject isn't mine, I teach it to internal students, and for external students it also belongs to the Unit of General Subjects and they have their own member of staff, the marking is done through IT, and can't be

intervene by adding anything except 5 marks for outstanding internal students –
except that the computer does not accept actually.

I'd like to point out that the subject isn't mine, I teach it to internal students, and
for external students it also belongs to the Unit of General Subjects. They have
their own member of staff, the marking is done through IT, and it can't be
adjusted by adding anything except 5 marks for outstanding internal students –
the computer will not accept it, actually.
(Written by ML2, a male lecturer to his student)

The ML2 male lecturer in Example 8 above replied to a male student who asked the
lecturer to help him to get better results. The lecturer, instead of stating his refusal to
do so, rather explained to his student in more detail as to why it is impossible for the
lecturer to give more marks to the student. This lecturer could have omitted the
explanation of why this was not possible and rather just refused by saying *I'm sorry I
can't*. Instead, he conveyed his refusal implicitly and indirectly by providing an
explanation. Thus, this shows the lecturer's concern for the student's face, and it was
also an attempt by the lecturer to build a rapport with the student.

The above examples and discussion of the results suggest that in this study, the
female and male participants handled an offence in different ways. The women in this
study, when causing an offence, have attempted to minimise the negative effect
associated with it by choosing to apologise explicitly, which thus suggests women's
concern for the addressee's face. Therefore there is a greater establishment and
maintenance of rapport with the addressee. The male participants, in contrast, show
concern, but to a lesser degree than the women do. Men in this study, rather, prefer to
offer an explanation or account for what has gone wrong.

The results also indicated that the participants tended to avoid acknowledging
responsibility entirely when making apologies, perhaps to save the apologiser's face.
However, there was only one single occasion (2.7 % of all the apology strategies) where
acknowledging responsibility occurred. This was when a female lecturer realised that
she had made a mistake in allocating a mark to her student, which was in fact lower than
the mark that the student deserved. After this mistake, the student contacted her
lecturer about it. The lecturer then realised that the student was *right* which implicitly

meant that the lecturer took responsibility for the offensive act (Goffman, 1971: 113), provided "support for the H (hearer)" (Olshtain, 1989: 156) and admitted that the student deserved an apology.

Example (9) – in English:

… mmmm [showing agreement] .. you are right

I counted it out of 90 instead of 85 because you are the only one who missed the midterm.

In this case, don't worry, I will change it but it is going to take some time

Sorry for the inconvenience.

Ask me again sometime later to check what happens OK

Sorry again

(Written by FL3, a female lecturer to her female student)

Example 9 demonstrated that, although the lecturer's social status and hierarchical level were higher than the student (especially in a culture where social distance is high as in Saudi Arabia), this had not prevented the lecturer from admitting to her mistake and showing that the student was right and deserved an apology. Thus, the lecturer established for herself a humble identity which was full of equity and justice even in her relationship with students, which is in line with Davies et al.'s observation (2007: 61) concerning the use of apology as "an important resource for identity construction" that promotes rapport and trust in a student-lecturer relationship.

Table 7-9 earlier also shows that female participants tended to offer repair for offences more (8.1% of all the apology strategies) than men (5.4% of all the apology strategies) in their apologies. Once the female lecturer in Example 9 above realised that she had made a mistake (see the discussion of Example 9 earlier), she decided to take corrective action and offer a repair to her student. The lecturer particularly promised to amend the marks that she gave to her student. Another similar case from the data, but in Arabic, is as follows:

Example (10) – in Arabic:

أعتذر بشدة لنسياني تسليم الورقة المطلوبة إلى السكرتيرة وذلك لانشغالي في أمور أخرى ثم حضوري اجتماع بعدها ..

سأسلمها قبل الساعة العاشرة غدا بمشيئة الله إلى سكرتيرة القسم ..

أعتذر لك مرة أخرى ..

I'm so sorry for forgetting to hand the required document to the secretary because of being busy doing other things then attending a meeting after that..

I'm going to hand it in before ten o'clock tomorrow if Allah's willing to the secretary of the department.

I'm sorry again

I'm so sorry for forgetting to hand the required document to the secretary; I was busy doing other things, then attending a meeting after that.

I'll hand it in before ten o'clock tomorrow, God willing, to the secretary of the department.

Sorry again

(Written by FL1, a female lecturer to a male student in the medical field)

When the female lecturer in Example 10 forgot to fill in the student's questionnaire, she apologised to the student, provided an account[104] for her action and offered a remedy (see the underlined expression in Example 10 above). The male participants also sometimes showed some eagerness to remedy their mistake in Arabic, as the following example attests:

Example (11) – in Arabic:

أنا أوعدك اني سوف اشرفك في البحث و اجتهد في دراستي خلال الأسابيع الجاية دون أي قصور إن شاء الله

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[104] The account seems to be a way to mitigate her own blame by explaining her workload, which might not be her own responsibility.

I promise you that I'm going to let you be proud in the research and I'll do my best in my studies during the next weeks without any idleness if Allah's willing

I promise you that I'm going to make you proud of the research, and I'll do my best in my studies in the coming weeks without any laziness, God willing

(Written by MS4, a post-graduate student to his supervisor)

The post-graduate student in Example 11 above, who repeatedly did not send any dissertation work to his supervisor, promised to work harder in the future and asked his supervisor to give him a chance to improve himself (see the next example for more discussion).

Results in Table 7-9 also showed a limited use of "a promise of forbearance" apology strategy. A promise of forbearance was only used once by a male student, who was attempting to convince his supervisor that he would become a better student, by saying *we start a new page* which is in Arabic an idiom that means *let us put the problem behind us and start with a clean slate* or *let us make a fresh start*.

Example (12) – in Arabic:

أرجو منك أن تعذرني و نبدأ صفحة جديدة

I wish from you to forgive me and we start a new page

I hope you can forgive me and that we can start with a clean slate

(Written by a post-graduate student to his supervisor)

The apologies that occurred in the data were also analysed according to the type of strategy, and in terms of the email sender's role.

Apology Strategy	Emails sent by female lecturers		Emails sent by female students		Emails sent by male lecturers		Emails sent by male students	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1. An Expression of an Apology:								
An expression of regret	4	10.8	3	8.1	0	0	0	0
An offer of apology	4	10.8	0	0	2	5.4	5	13.5
A request for forgiveness	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2.7

2.	An explanation or account	4	10.8	0	0	5	13.5	2	5.4
3. An acknowledgement of responsibility									
	Recognizing other as deserving apology	1	2.7	0	0	0	0	0	0
4.	Offer of repair/ redress	3	8.1	0	0	1	2.7	1	2.7
5.	A promise of forbearance	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2.7
Total		16	43.2	3	8.1	8	21.6	10	27

Table 7-7: Apology strategies employed in terms of the sender's role

After disaggregating the results according to role (Table 7-10 above), the findings varied in terms of the favourite apology strategy that was used. Male students in this study tended to offer an apology (as a specific explicit expression form of apology) more (13.5% of all the apology strategies used in the email data) than other apology strategies. In this study, the male lecturers were inclined to use an explanation or account apology strategy more (13.5% of all the apology strategies) than other apology strategies. In contrast, female students in the current study tended to favour the expression of regret strategy more (8.1% of the apology strategies). Female lecturers in this study opted to use an expression of regret, an offer of apology and an explanation or account with equal frequency (10.8% each). Thus, the student participants (regardless of their sex) in this study tended to select an explicit expression when apologising to their lecturers, which thus helped to minimise the offence and re-establish a rapport with the lecturers by showing their regret directly. In this study, male lecturers seemed to be less concerned with apologising by not using and sometimes avoiding using explicit forms of apologies. The male participants in this study employed indirect forms of apologies, for example, an explanation or an account. Similarly, the female lecturers in some situations in the current study also employed the explanation or account apology strategy (10.8% of all the apology strategies) when writing to their students. This might be influenced by the lecturers' higher social status compared to the students, which made the female

lecturers in this study resort to employing indirect and implicit forms of apologies when apologising to their students rather than explicit forms, perhaps to save their own face.

Table 7-10 earlier indicated that among all groups, participants tended not to acknowledge responsibility at all, except in one single situation when a female lecturer (2.7% of all the politeness strategies) used the apology form "recognising other as deserving apology" (for more details see the interpretation of Example 8 earlier). In this study, the tendency of participants to avoid acknowledging responsibility may be culturally specific. In the Saudi academic context, participants seem to deny responsibility for an offence which has been caused by them, perhaps to save their face and to avoid embarrassment. This suggests that in Saudi Arabia, acknowledging responsibility may, to some extent, be perceived as an FTA for the apologiser and thus needs to be avoided, which contradicts another previous finding about Arab cultures by Al-Zumor (2003: 29) (see Section 7.2.3).

However, some particular forms of apologies may be examples of FTAs, i.e., acknowledging responsibility, as the data has shown. Hence, exploring apologies highlights the complexity of the phenomenon. When some types of offences occurred, female lecturers offered repair[105] and redress three times more (8.1% of all the apology strategies) than male lecturers (2.7% of all the apology strategies) and male students (2.7 %), in a ratio of 3:1. In contrast, female student participants did not show any offer of repair/redress at all. A promise of forbearance apology strategy showed a limited use in the data; just once by a male student (2.7% of all the apology strategies) when contacting his lecturer after causing an offence.

7.5.2 Qualitative Findings

In order to see how far the interpretation of the quantitative results in the current study holds true, and as part of a first order politeness approach, an interview was conducted

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[105] See Example 10 earlier when the female lecturer apologised, provided an account (her workload) and offered a remedy *I'm going to hand it before ten O'clock*.

to explore participants' perception of the apologising interaction. As I discussed in Sections 7.2 and 7.5.1, apologies tend to occur either in previous literature or in current data as a post-event speech act. A male lecturer, who emphasised the importance of apologising in showing respect (rather than friendliness) to other people, also commented that apologising is mostly a post-event speech act.

غالبا بعد إلا إذا كان ب excuse ياخد قبل دايما بعد إذا يبغى يستأذن من حاجة معينة ياخد قبل بس ماحد يعتذر قبل ما تصير المشكلة it can be but it's rare

Often after except if it was with an excuse it takes [comes] before always after if he wants to take permission for a particular thing it takes [comes] before but no one apologise before the problem happens it can be but it's rare.

An apology often takes place after the offence, except if it is combined with an excuse (in which case it always comes before), but no one apologises before a problem happens, although apologies can sometimes be made before a problem happens, but rarely.   (ML1)

Hence, apologies normally occur after an offence takes place, but this does not mean that it cannot appear before the offence (see Section 7.5.1 for some examples).

In terms of the functions that apologies serve, as discussed in the definitions of apologies (see Section 7.2) and in Section 7.2.2 on functions of apologies, apologies may be face-saving. In the interview data, one of the participants thought that apologising was an inherent face-saving act for the hearer for maintaining the hearer's face and a way of establishing and maintaining solidarity, rapport and social harmony. When the participant ML1 was asked whether it was appropriate for a person to apologise to an inferior-status person (e.g. a lecturer apologise to a student), the answer was that it is "normal" as all humans are perceived equal in rights.

عادي[normal] all people are the same not difference [different]   (ML1)

Despite the various other views of apologies as face-threatening (e.g. Brown and Levinson (1978: 73), Coulmas (1981) and Deutschmaann (2003: 46) (see Section 7.2.2)), my qualitative data from the interviews showed the opposite. In the interview data, one of the participants (ML1) in the present study commented that it is not true that apologising is considered to be an FTA for damaging the apologiser's face, as it signals

the apologiser's respect, and a good, strong personality, although it may cause some embarrassment to the speaker.

الاعتذار يدل على قوة الشخصية ... في الأخير يدل على شخصية جيدة و قوة شخصية المتكلم يدل على قوة شخصية المتكلم في نفس الوقت المتكلم يشعر بنوع من الحرج أما المستمع او هادا فيصيبه نوع من الحرج لكن يقدر المعتذر

Apologising indicates the strong personality … it indicates the good personality and the strong personality of the speaker it indicates the speaker's strong personality in the same time the speaker feels a kind of embarrassment but the hearer and so may get a kind of embarrassment but respect value the apologiser

Apologising indicates the apologiser's good, strong personality. It also causes some embarrasement to both the speaker and the hearer, but the hearer respects the apologiser (ML1)

In cases where the seriousness and gravity of the offence are high (see Example 4, Section 7.3), these may influence the choice of apology used, for example, an intensification would be added or an apology would be extended, in order to minimize any possible negative effect. One of the participants (ML1) was asked to put five apology forms in order, according to the appropriateness of the apologising forms as a response to a heavy offence. ML1 thought that the appropriate way to respond to heavy offences was by apologising using intensification devices and boosters and to employ a more extended and longer apology.

As I discussed in Section 7.5.1, Table 7-7, male participants tended to use single apologies slightly more than women participants. However, this does not necessarily mean that men in this data perceive single apologies to be the most polite form. Some male participants in this study did not use an extended apology even though in previous literature extended apologies are claimed by Holmes (1990: 177) to be a more polite

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form. Other male participants at least believed that a combined apology (particularly through giving a reason/justification) was the most polite strategy[106].

أنا دايما أفضل الإعتذار مع الreason

I always prefer apologising with a reason

I always prefer an apology that gives reason   (ML1)

The male lecturer (ML1) also thought that the next most polite way to apologise was through using intensification devices and boosters, (e.g. *very/so/terribly sorry*).

While my qualitative results highlighted that male participants tended to offer an explanation or an account (which is a type of implicit apology) for what has gone wrong, more than women, their preference might be different. In the interview data, one of the male participants (ML1) explained his preference for apologising indirectly, even though this person was aware that apologising indirectly might lead to a breakdown in communication because the apology may not be understood/perceived correctly.

أنا دايما يعجبني الإعتذار indirect بس المشكلة الآخر ما يفهم أنه هادا إعتذار يعني educated لازم الواحد يكون

I always like apologising indirectly but the problem is that the other wouldn't understand that this is apologising I mean a person has to be educated to know

I always like apologising indirectly but the problem is that the other person might not understand that this is apologising I mean, a person has to be educated enough to know (ML1)

As shown in both the quantitative and qualitative analysis, apologies tend to be post- events that are face-saving. Moreover, results highlighted that the most polite way to apologise is by using a combined apology, particularly through giving a

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[106] It is not clear whether men or women are using polite or impolite forms, because people have different opinions of what a polite form is; it is hard to make generalisations.

reason/justification and also by using intensification devices. In cases where the seriousness of the offence are high, one way that is appropriate to apologise is by using intensifications or to use a more extended and longer apology. In contrast, apologising implicitly may not always be perceived correctly.

7.6 **Conclusion**

Much of the analysis in this chapter confirms earlier research on apologies. First, apologies function as a remedial device (Goffman, 1971: 109; Holmes, 1993: 104) and are predominantly a "post-event speech act" (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984: 206 and Spencer-Oatey, 2008: 19). Second, as previously observed by Davies et al. (2007: 40) an apology may also occur (rarely) before the offence. In addition, this study also provides evidence that apologising in advance was not found to be face-threatening, as Deutschmann (2003: 46) and Leech (2014: 118) have argued, by imposing on the addressee, but rather rapport building, which agrees with Aijmer (1996: 100). Likewise, apologies in general were also perceived to be a face-saving and rapport building device. The only occasion where apologies might be perceived as face-threatening and rapport threatening was when acknowledging responsibility, which participants tended to avoid entirely. Therefore, apologising in a Saudi context seems to resemble apologising in other (English) contexts in many ways.

However, the analysis in this data also showed something specific about the Saudi context. The patterns of apologies that occurred occasionally in the Saudi data were not observed in previous studies. The apology patterns that occurred in the emails that were originally written in Arabic in an *I wish from you + an explicit apology* are evidence of apology patterns used in the Saudi context, but not observed in other contexts. Another similar distinct apology pattern found in the email data was *I wish from you + accept my apology*. Both of these patterns seem to combine a request and an apology, whose use, form and choice might vary from one cultural context to another. Existing work and frameworks for apologies, particularly Olshtain and Cohen's (1983) framework seem to account quite well for my current data. However, there were exceptions, where the classifications in the framework did not occur in the current data; specifically accepting the blame, expressing self-deficiency and expressing lack of intent.

A request for forgiveness occurred in the following pattern in the data: *I wish from you + explicit form of apology* and the pattern: *I wish from you + to accept my apology*, which in both cases seems to be a hybrid form which combines the Saudi cultural request form and the form of apology. Thus, apologising, whether implicit or explicit, plays a key role in promoting rapport between interactants and aims to save face, as do other politeness features like opening and closing, thanking and requesting which have all been discussed in previous chapters.

Chapter 8:   Implications and Conclusions

8.1   Introduction

This chapter attempts to summarise the findings of this study by answering the research questions that were listed in Chapter 1, reflecting on the models of politeness and discussing the concept of rapport management. This chapter explains briefly the originality and contribution to knowledge and also explains future directions.

8.2 Research Questions

Answers to the research questions of this study (stated in Chapter 1 and reiterated below) are briefly summarised here:

1. What politeness strategies were used in emails sent by Saudi Arabian lecturers and students?

Many findings in this study were consistent with other previous studies. In terms of email openings and closings, the current study indicated that while openings and closings are optional (Crystal, 2001, 2006), the majority of participants (in this study) still started their emails with openings and ended them with closings as a rapport enhancing strategy, to establish and maintain solidarity in interpersonal communication. For thanking, this study found that expressions of gratitude in emails from female participants occurred more often than in emails by male participants (consistent with Pishghadam and Zarei, 2011: 140-144). This study also found some similarity in the use of requesting in the Saudi context and in previous studies, and supports the claim that "people typically use explicit direct forms when they hold a higher position in the institutional hierarch than their addressee(s), and the addressee(s) obligations are clear" (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003: 34). Moreover, as previously observed by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2008: 113), when requests are directed hierarchically upwards, the greater the mitigation and the less directness is needed, as "politeness considerations typically weigh more heavily" (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003: 44). In terms of apology, this study found that apologies function as a remedial device (Goffman, 1971: 109; Holmes, 1993: 104) and are predominantly a "post-event speech act" (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984:

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206 and Spencer-Oatey, 2008: 19). Additionally, as previously observed by Davies et al. (2007: 40) an apology may also occur (rarely) before the offence.

In the email data considered in my study, there were various politeness strategies that were used and accompanied with some different speech acts. In email openings, the Saudi participants in this study tended to use the addressee's first name combined either with titles, greetings or salutations (e.g, مساء الخير دكتورس *Good afternoon Doctor X*). They also used socio-religious salutations, either in a long form (*May Allah's peace and mercy be upon you),* or a short form (*May peace be upon you).* On the other hand, *hi + title + first name initial*, *hello + surname,* and *dear + sir* are examples of the opening patterns that were not used in the Saudi academic context. In thanking, the Saudi participants tended to employ the thanking adjective *thankful* as well as the expression *thank you deeply,* and to avoid particular thanking expressions that were observed in previous studies, e.g., expressing gratitude to God and intensified thanking forms. In terms of requesting, the Saudi participants tended to use the requesting expressions *I + hope/wish from you/your honour to + verb* and *I'd (like to) inform you about the necessity of.* However, the request forms that seem to be very direct, e.g., *I am asking you* and *you must + verb*, and some forms that are conventionally indirect, e.g., *could you* and *will you,* were used infrequently. In apologising, the Saudi participants tended to use the apologising patterns *I wish from you + an explicit apology,* and *I wish from you + accept my apology* forms, and avoided the forms *excuse me* and *I'm afraid*. In closings, participants also tended to use socio-religious prayers and cultural-address terms, such as الله يوفقك *May Allah grant you success* and شكرا أبو س Thanks X's (the eldest son first name) father.

2. Do the politeness strategies of the participants in this study vary according to their sex and their professional role? If so, how?

The current study demonstrated that some patterns of choice appear to have a relationship to whether the writer/receiver of an email is a woman or a man, and/or a lecturer or a student, although they often interact, as I discuss below. These findings about the use and choice of politeness strategies cumulatively support theories of politeness such as Holmes (1995). For some particular politeness features that occurred

in the emails, a particular choice sometimes appeared to be related to the sex of the email sender. For instance, results showed that women in the study tended to employ thanking or closing features at the end of their emails more than men in the study. In contrast, for other politeness features, such as email openings, requesting and apologizing, there was only a subtle difference between men and women in the use of these politeness features in this study.

Similarly, other findings indicated that patterns of use of politeness features were related to the participants' professional role. For example, lecturers in this study showed a greater use of email openings, implicit type of apologies (i.e., explanation or account) and direct requests. In contrast, students tended to employ thanking and requesting, particularly non-conventionally indirect requests, and they did so more than the lecturers in this study. In short, students in this study did more thanking and requesting overall, whereas lecturers used more openings and implicit apology overall.

However, this study also found that sex and professional role intersect with each other in complicated ways; in particular, the choices of the male participants in the study often reflected the expected hierarchical norms, whereas the female participants' choices did not. For example, female lecturers tended to spend more effort on openings, closings and apologising (when needed) compared to female students, whereas for men, it was the opposite, as the male students used more openings, closings and apologies than the male lecturers. In other words, male students used frequent politeness strategies (such as openings and closings) when addressing their male lecturers, but female students acted against the expected norms of hierarchy, since their use of politeness strategies was less frequent than what is expected while writing to their female lecturers.

In addition, the current findings and interpretations of examples suggest that there is a relationship between the choice of politeness strategy and identity construction. More specifically, the use of some politeness strategies that often accompany various actions, e.g., requests, thanking and apologies, were linked to the construction of identity of an email sender in this study. For instance, when one participant (a female lecturer) chose to combine her request with a grounder (e.g., in

ask me later to check what happens), the writer appeared to be attempting to create a caring and diligent identity for herself rather than directive, assertive or coercing. This result confirms earlier findings by Ho (2010: 2253) who argued that choices made in requesting are related to the requester's desire to establish a particular identity, such as caring. Similarly, as the interview data revealed, student participants viewed closing that included thanking as a means to help them to create a polite identity for themselves when contacting their lecturers. Likewise, through apologising, the apologiser builds a caring identity for himself by taking into account the addressee's face needs, which is in line with Davies et al.'s (2007: 61) finding that apology may be used as "an important resource for identity construction" that promotes rapport and trust in a student-lecturer relationship.

3. How do lecturers and students in a Saudi Arabian academic context perceive the rapport potential of different politeness strategies as these occurred in the emails considered in this study?

As I will discuss further in Section 8.4, the findings in this study highlighted that the rapport potential varied for the different politeness devices, as a single item might perform different functions. This study also found that perceptions and practice are different components. If a particular group of participants (e.g., female lecturers) used a type of politeness feature more, this does not mean that this favoured strategy was the most polite form. Likewise, a politeness feature that is considered unimportant or less important does not mean that it is not used very often.

Now, I will discuss the consequences of my findings for theories of politeness and rapport management.

8.3 Models of Politeness

Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of politeness remains influential in the field of pragmatics. However, by taking into account a first-order politeness perspective, the current study suggested that there seems to be no clear cut boundary between each politeness classification as implied in Brown and Levinson (1987). That is, it is quite hard to sustain the polarised categorisation suggested by Brown and Levinson (ibid.), where

solidarity and *deference* were treated as totally separate items belonging to separate categories; solidarity being a positive politeness type, and deference a negative politeness. In contrast, my interview responses highlighted that a linguistic item might do both solidarity and deference work at the same time, as well as convey concern for the addressee's face and thus project rapport management. For instance, the opening items *dear* and *hi* in this study were not just flexible and bound to people's perception, but sometimes tightly interwoven rather than separate. Moreover, this study has also shown that while various previous frameworks on politeness seem to account well for the Saudi context (e.g. Olshtain and Cohen's, 1983 apology framework), some of them may need to be extended to cover the politeness features that occur in the Saudi context (e.g., Wong's 2010 thanking framework).

Similarly, concerning speech act theory, the results in this study demonstrated some problems with it in practice. Many instances in the current data showed that categorisation into functions is not as clear-cut as it is assumed to be in speech act theory. For instance, as I demonstrated in Chapter 5, the use of a form of *thank* may not be a form of thanking, because *thank* is also used for other purposes (e.g., to indicate a closure of a conversation or as saying please). Another example of an ambiguous case occurs when a request and an apology are merged, e.g., أرجو منك أن تعذرني, which is literally translated as *I wish from you to forgive me* (or, more idiomatically, *I hope you can forgive me*), where such instances may be categorised as a request as well as an apology (for more details see the discussion of Chapter 7).

An additional problem with the speech act theory that was encountered in my data, was with the use of *thanks in advance.* According to Searle's rule (1969: 67), the kind of act that the speaker express gratitude for should be performed by the hearer in the past and should have benefited the speaker and thus feel gratitude. However, my data indicated that these rules of thanking seem to be for canonical cases of offering thanks. Nonetheless, *thanking in advance* does not fulfil Searle's (ibid.) "past act" criterion concerning the theory of speech acts which seem to rely on precise rules.

8.4 **Rapport Management**

All the politeness features considered in my research (i.e., email openings, closings, thanking, particular forms of requesting and apologizing), including the politeness features that are used specifically in the Saudi academic culture, were found to enhance rapport potential, which thus support theories of rapport management such as Spencer-Oatey (2000) and Page (2014). Sometimes, particular forms of a feature seemed to be more rapport building than others (e.g., *take care* as a closing signal). In this respect, the current study demonstrated that there seems to be a scale of rapport potential (see Section 4.3). This scale stretches from a lower level of rapport building which conveys a lesser extent of solidarity (e.g., addressing a person with their title + the first name directly) to a higher level of rapport building which implies greater solidarity, such as the use of cultural address forms, e.g., *sister/brother* plus the addressee's first name (see the discussion in Chapter 4).

The current data indicated that it is not possible simply to interpret rapport or politeness strategies from a single linguistic form. The analysis showed more evidence of the importance of taking both content and context into consideration when interpreting what the social meaning of the linguistic forms might mean. Thus, applying the labels in an abstract way does not really help in interpreting whether, for instance, a particular form is really face-threatening or not, because the way the face is constructed is context-dependent. Therefore, one contribution of this study lies in its attempt to combine both first and second order politeness approaches. This strategy helps to reduce the subjectivity which comes from relying on only the analyst's judgments about whether an item is polite, by also drawing on participants' perspectives.

8.5 Originality and Contribution to Knowledge

The originality and contribution to knowledge for this study are as follows:

1. The current study explored the Saudi academic context for the first time.
2. The study focused on authentic electronic communications between students and lecturers in both directions (lecturers-students and students-lecturers) and did not focus only on students' emails, as many previous studies have done.
3. The study adopted a relatively new approach by combining a first and second-order politeness approach and thus is a contribution to the existing body of work on politeness.
4. Although most of the features found in previous studies were also found here, the study found that there were some aspects which are particular to the Saudi context (see Section 8.2).

8.6 Future Directions

For the future, it would be helpful to expand the email data sample size, in order to be able to test significance and to generalise findings. It would also be helpful to try and gather student-to-student email data to balance the lecturer-to-lecturer emails in the sample. In the future, when gathering emails, it would be better to ask the participants who are willing to provide their emails to identify whether each email is sent to one person or a group of people, each message was the first in an exchange and provide some more information about the participants' social role. Moreover, focusing on examining emails collected from a homogeneous set of participants, for instance, from the same university, faculty, with the same specialty and background, would be useful. It would also be interesting to compare the email linguistic behaviour of Saudi students who were studying in England with those studying in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, it would be possible to explore other politeness strategies such as the use of honorifics in the academic emails. Investigating politeness strategies in other mediums of CMC, e.g., on Twitter, might also yield fruitful results.

Appendix A

University of Leicester

Dear member of staff / student

I am a research student at the University of Leicester, who is supervised by Dr. Ruth Page in the School of English. I am working on gender-based linguistic differences in Computer-Mediated Communication CMC discourse (particularly focusing on emails) in an academic context.

You have been invited to participate in this research study. Before you agree to participate, it is important that you read and understand the following information. Participation is totally voluntary. All information you provide or reveal in this study will be kept confidential and anonymised, and will be analysed later on. If you would like to understand anything and to know more about the study, please let me know.

I am very grateful for your help. If you are happy to participate in this study, please also complete the consent form at the end of this page and kindly return it back to me. Thank you

Nisrin Hariri

Email: nisrinhariri@yahoo.co.uk

Consent Form

I am giving my consent for the following type of data (please specify):

□ providing a selection of email texts   □ complete a survey

□ audio-taped interviews

To be used for the above research study. I understand that the data provided by me do not contain any of my personal information and will be stored separately from this document as part of the research study. I am over 18 years of age.

Name: **Sex:** □ **Male**   □ **Female**

Contact details:

University: **School/Department:**

Signature: **Date:**

سعادة عضو/ عضوة هيئة التدريس/ طالب/ طالبة

أفيدكم بأني باحثة بجامعة ليستر ببريطانيا. تحت إشراف د. روث بيج بكلية اللغة الإنجليزية. أقوم بدراسة الفروقات اللغوية بين الجنسين بالتركيز على الإختيار اللغوي عند التواصل بواسطة الحاسوب (تحديدا من خلال الإيميل) في البيئة الأكاديمية.

أنت مدعو/ة للمساهمة في هذه الدراسة. قبل الموافقة على ذلك، من المهم قراءة و فهم المعلومات التالية، علما بأن هذه المساهمة هي تطوعية. جميع المعلومات التي سيتم تزويدها أو الإفصاح عنها من قبلكم سيتم التعامل معها بسرية تامة و سيتم تحليلها لاحقا. في حالة وجود أي استفسار أو عند الرغبة في معرفة المزيد عن هذه الدراسة، الرجاء عدم التردد في إعلامي بذلك.

شاكرة و ممتنّة لكم على هذه المساعدة. إذا كانت لديكم الرغبة في المساهمة في هذه الدراسة، الرجاء إكمال نموذج الموافقة الموجود في نهاية هذه الصفحة و التكرم بإعادتها.

شاكرة لكم تعاونكم

نسرين حريري

Email: nisrinhariri@yahoo.co.uk

نموذج موافقة

أوافق على ما يلي (الرجاء التحديد):

□ إكمال إستبانات   □ تزويد نصوص مختارة من الإيميل

□ إجراء مقابلة مسجلة.

بهدف الإستفادة منها في الدراسة الموضحة أعلاه. أقر بأن جميع البيانات التي تمّ تزويدها من قبلي لا تحتوي على معلوماتي الشخصية، و سيتم الإحتفاظ بها بمكان منفصل عن هذا النموذج كجزء من هذه الدراسة. أنا تجاوزت 18 من العمر.

الإسم: **التوقيع:**

الجنس: □ ذكر   □ أنثى

عنوان التواصل (إيميل مثلا):   **التاريخ:**

الجامعة: **الكلية/ القسم**

Appendix B

Interview Questions (Student's Version)

General Questions

1. In your opinion, what does 'politeness' mean?
2. Do you think that politeness is important when communicating with other people? And why? □ Yes □ No
3. What do you normally use e-mail for in your work/studies?
4. What do you think e-mail is good for? And what are its weaknesses as a mode of communication?
5. In your opinion, when would an e-mail be perceived as polite or friendly?
6. Which of the following do you think is the most important feature to be found in an e-mail? Please rank these features from 1 to 8 where <u>1 is the least important</u> feature and <u>8 is the most important</u> feature to include in an e-mail (please use each number only once):

Features Important to Include in an e-mail	Rank
Salutation	
Address form	
Using people's titles	
Deference	
Friendliness	
Being indirect	
Expressing thanks	
Closing	

5. When do you think is an e-mail characterised as impolite, inappropriate, offensive or unfriendly? Why?
6. Have you ever received e-mails that you would characterise as impolite, inappropriate, offensive or unfriendly? What were they and why did you think that?
□ Yes □ No
7. Do you think that women and men's e-mails are the same in terms of assertiveness, politeness, solidarity or appropriateness? Or do you think that they are different and how? Same: □ Yes □ No
8. Do you think that an e-mail has to begin with an opening (e.g. salutation, term of deference, address form or using people's first name) and end with a closing?

How would either including them or not, be perceived in terms of appropriateness?   □ Yes □ No

9. How would you characterise e-mails you have received from your lecturers using the choices below? Explain why.

Very impolite □ impolite □ neither impolite nor polite □ polite □

very polite □

10. How do e-mails from your lecturers vary in terms of respect or friendliness?

11. How do you think students should show that they are writing to someone superior to them?

12. Do you think that students' sex makes a difference in the way they are writing to their lecturer e.g. when a female student is writing to a male lecturer? Why?

13. Do you think that lecturers' sex makes a difference in the way they are writing to their students e.g. when a male lecture is writing to a female student? Why?

14. What do you think/know about apologising?

15. Do you think that apologising is important? Why?

16. Does apologising effect the speaker's and hearer's face?

17. Choose the answer you feel is appropriate:
Apologies show: □ respect   □ friendliness   □ both

18. Say yes or no: An apology is:

□   An inherent face-saving for the hearer for maintaining the hearer's face

□ Face-threatening for the apologiser for damaging the apologiser's face

□ A way of establishing and maintaining solidarity, rapport and social harmony

19. Does an apology has to be a post-event that has to occur only after an offence or can it occur before? How?

20. Do you think that students find it easier to apologise than lecturers? Why?

21. Is it appropriate for a person to apologise to an inferior (someone in a lower hieratical position) e.g. a lecturer apologise to a student? Why?

22. Put the following statements in order where 5 is the most and 1 is the least polite way to apologise.
□ Simple explicit form of apologising sorry
□ Combined apology (using 2 or more forms of apology e.g. sorry + giving a reason)
□ Using an indirect, implicit way
□ More extended and longer apology
□ Using intensification devices and boosters e.g. I'm very/so/terribly sorry

Control Questions

E-mail 1, between 2 lecturers: Rescheduling a Meeting

Dear Dr. Ahmed/Sarah

Peace be upon you

Due to having to attend a conference at the beginning of next week I am sorry that I can't make our meeting. I wish from you [plural] postponing it until I come back two weeks later in Allah's willing.

Knowing that I will then contact you to arrange another appointment.

Thanks

Khalid/Fatima

How would you describe the e-mail above in terms of the following:

a. **Politeness**: impolite □   neither impolite nor polite □   polite □
b. **Respect**: disrespectful□   neither respect nor deferential□   deferential□
c. **Assertiveness**: assertive □   neither assertive nor compliant□   compliant □
d. **Friendliness**: unfriendly □ neither unfriendly nor friendly□   friendly □

Which words or phrases from the above e-mail are considered to be:

a. Friendly: ………………………………………………………………………………………
b. Respectful: ………………………………………………………………………………………
c. Assertive: ………………………………………………………………………………………
d. Rude: ………………………………………………………………………………………

(Please list examples in the spaces above)

E-mail 2, from a student to a lecturer: A request for postponing an exam

My respectful lecturer

May Allah's peace be upon you

I wish you are fine and healthy

I apologise for not being able to attend the exam yesterday because of being ill (attached is a copy of the medical report)

And I hope from your honour accepting my apology and postponing my exam

Sorry again and thank you in advance for your [plural] cooperation.

The student

Khalid/Fatimah

How would you describe the e-mail above in terms of the following:

a. **Politeness**: impolite □ neither impolite nor polite □ polite □
b. **Respect**: disrespectful□ neither respect nor deferential□ deferential□
c. **Assertiveness**: assertive □ neither assertive nor compliant□ compliant □
d. **Friendliness**: unfriendly □ neither unfriendly nor friendly□ friendly □

Which words from the above e-mail are considered to be:

e. Friendly: ……………………………………………………………………………………………………
f. Respectful: …………………………………………………………………………………………………
g. Assertive: …………………………………………………………………………………………………
h. Rude: ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

(Please list examples in the spaces above)

E-mail 3, between 2 lecturers: Rescheduling a Meeting

Due to having to attend a conference at the beginning of next week, I can't make our meeting. I wish from you postponing it until I come back two weeks later in Allah's willing.

Knowing that I will then contact you to arrange another appointment.

Khalid/Fatimah

How would you describe the e-mail above in terms of the following:

a. **Politeness**: impolite □ neither impolite nor polite □ polite □
b. **Respect**: disrespectful□ neither respect nor deferential□ deferential□
c. **Assertiveness**: assertive □ neither assertive nor compliant□ compliant □
d. **Friendliness**: unfriendly □ neither unfriendly nor friendly□ friendly □

Which words or phrases from the above e-mail are considered to be:

e. Friendly: ……………………………………………………………………………………………………
f. Respectful: …………………………………………………………………………………………………
g. Assertive: …………………………………………………………………………………………………
h. Rude: ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

(Please list examples in the spaces above)

E-mail 4, from a student to a lecturer: A request for postponing an exam

Dr. Ahmed/Sara

I wasn't able to attend the exam yesterday because of being ill.

I hope from you postponing my exam.

The student

Khalid/Fatimah

How would you describe the e-mail above in terms of the following:

a. **Politeness**: impolite □ neither impolite nor polite □ polite □
b. **Respect**: disrespectful□ neither respect nor deferential □ deferential□
c. **Assertiveness**: assertive □ neither assertive nor compliant□ compliant □
d. **Friendliness**: unfriendly □ neither unfriendly nor friendly □ friendly □

Which words from the above e-mail are considered to be:

a. Friendly: …………………………………………………………………………………………………
b. Respectful: …………………………………………………………………………………………….
c. Assertive: …………………………………………………………………………………………….
d. Rude: …………………………………………………………………………………………………

(Please list examples in the spaces above)

Questions about the participant's own data

How would you perceive the example taken from your own emails in terms of:

a. **Politeness**: very impolite□ impolite□ neither impolite nor polite□ polite□ very polite□
b. **Respect**: very disrespectful□ disrespectful□ neither respect nor deferential□ deferential□ very deferential□
c. **Assertiveness**: very assertive□ assertive□ neither assertive nor compliant□ compliant□ very compliant□
d. **Friendliness**: very unfriendly□ unfriendly□ neither unfriendly nor friendly□ □friendly very friendly□

How would your response differ if the request or e-mail was coming from someone who is superior to you?

Question to end-up the interview with:

Thank you for all your valuable information. Is there anything else you would like to add before we e

Interview Questions (Lecturer's Version)

General Questions

1. In your opinion, what does 'politeness' mean?

2. Do you think that politeness is important when communicating with other people? And why? □ Yes □ No

3. What do you normally use e-mail for in your work/studies?

4. What do you think e-mail is good for? And what are its weaknesses as a mode of communication?

5. In your opinion, when would an e-mail be perceived as polite or friendly?

6. Which of the following do you think is the most important feature to be found in an e-mail? Please rank these features from 1 to 8 where 1 is the least important feature and 8 is the most important feature to include in an e-mail (please use each number only once):

Features Important to Include in an e-mail	Rank
Salutation	
Address form	
Using people's titles	
Deference	
Friendliness	
Being indirect	
Expressing thanks	
Closing	

7. When do you think is an e-mail characterised as impolite, inappropriate, offensive or unfriendly? Why?

8. Have you ever received e-mails that you would characterise as impolite, inappropriate, offensive or unfriendly? What were they and why did you think that? □ Yes □ No

9. Do you think that women and men's e-mails are the same in terms of assertiveness, politeness, solidarity or appropriateness? Or do you think that they are different and how? Same: □ Yes □ No

10. Do you think that an e-mail has to begin with an opening (e.g. salutation, term of deference, address form or using people's first name) and end with a closing? How would either including them or not, be perceived in terms of appropriateness? □ Yes □ No

11. How would you characterise e-mails you have received from your students using the choices below? Explain why.

Very impolite □ impolite □ neither impolite nor polite □ polite □

very polite □

12. How do the e-mails from your students vary in terms of respect or friendliness?

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13. Do you think the student is rude when saying …? Why?

☐ Yes ☐ No (not applicable to all lecturers)

14. How do you think students should show that they are writing to someone superior to them?
15. Do you think that students' sex makes a difference in the way they are writing to their lecturer e.g. when a female student is writing to a male lecturer? Why?
16. Do you think that lecturers' sex makes a difference in the way they are writing to their students e.g. when a male lecturer is writing to a female student? Why?
17. Do you think that apologising is important? Why?
18. Does apologising effect the speaker's and hearer's face?
19. Choose the answer you feel is appropriate:
Apologies show: ☐ respect ☐ friendliness ☐ both
20. Say yes or no: An apology is:

☐ An inherent face-saving for the hearer for maintaining the hearer's face

☐ Face-threatening for the apologiser for damaging the apologiser's face

☐ A way of establishing and maintaining solidarity, rapport and social harmony

21. Does an apology has to be a post-event that has to occur only after an offence or can it occur before? How?
22. Do you think that students find it easier to apologise than lecturers? Why?
23. Is it appropriate for a person to apologise to an inferior (someone in a lower hieratical position) e.g. a lecturer apologise to a student? Why?
24. Put the following statements in order where 5 is the most and 1 is the least polite way to apologise.
☐ Simple explicit form of apologising sorry
☐ Combined apology (using 2 or more forms of apology e.g. sorry + giving a reason)
☐ Using an indirect, implicit way
☐ More extended and longer apology
☐ Using intensification devices and boosters e.g. I'm very/so/terribly sorry

Control Questions

E-mail 1, between 2 lecturers: Rescheduling a Meeting

Dear Dr. Ahmed/Sarah

Peace be upon you

Due to having to attend a conference at the beginning of next week I am sorry that I can't make our meeting. I wish from you [plural] postponing it until I come back two weeks later in Allah's willing.

Knowing that I will then contact you to arrange another appointment.

Thanks

Khalid/Fatima

How would you describe the e-mail above in terms of the following:

a. Politeness: impolite □   neither impolite nor polite □   polite □

b.   **Respect**: disrespectful□   neither respect nor deferential□   deferential□

c.   **Assertiveness**: assertive □   neither assertive nor compliant□   compliant □

d.   **Friendliness**: unfriendly □ neither unfriendly nor friendly□   friendly □

Which words or phrases from the above e-mail are considered to be:

a. Friendly: ……
b. Respectful: ……………………………………………………………………………………………………..
c. Assertive: ………………………………………………………………………………………………………..
d. Rude: ………

_(Please list examples in the spaces above)<u>E-mail 2, from a student to a lecturer: A request for</u>

<u>postponing an exam</u>

My respectful lecturer

May Allah's peace be upon you

I wish you are fine and healthy

I apologise for not being able to attend the exam yesterday because of being ill (attached is a copy of the medical report)

And I hope from your honor accepting my apology and postponing my exam

Sorry again and thank you in advance for your [plural] cooperation.

The student

Khalid/Fatimah

How would you describe the e-mail above in terms of the following:

a.   **Politeness**: impolite □ neither impolite nor polite □ polite □
b.   **Respect**: disrespectful□ neither respect nor deferential□ deferential□

c. **Assertiveness**: assertive □ neither assertive nor compliant□ compliant □
d. **Friendliness**: unfriendly □ neither unfriendly nor friendly□ friendly □

Which words from the above e-mail are considered to be:

e. Friendly: ………………………………………………………………………………………………………
f. Respectful: ………………………………………………………………………………………………….
g. Assertive: ………………………………………………………………………………………………….
h. Rude: ……

(Please list examples in the spaces above)

E-mail 3, between 2 lecturers: Rescheduling a Meeting

Due to having to attend a conference at the beginning of next week, I can't make our meeting. I wish from you postponing it until I come back two weeks later in Allah's willing.

Knowing that I will then contact you to arrange another appointment.

Khalid/Fatimah

How would you describe the e-mail above in terms of the following:

a. **Politeness**: impolite □ neither impolite nor polite □ polite □
b. **Respect**: disrespectful□ neither respect nor deferential□ deferential□
c. **Assertiveness**: assertive □ neither assertive nor compliant□ compliant □
d. **Friendliness**: unfriendly □ neither unfriendly nor friendly□ friendly □

Which words or phrases from the above e-mail are considered to be:

e. Friendly: ………………………………………………………………………………………………………
f. Respectful: ………………………………………………………………………………………………….
g. Assertive: ………………………………………………………………………………………………….
h. Rude: ……

(Please list examples in the spaces above)

E-mail 4, from a student to a lecturer: A request for postponing an exam

Dr. Ahmed/Sara

I wasn't able to attend the exam yesterday because of being ill.

I hope from you postponing my exam.

The student

Khalid/Fatimah

How would you describe the e-mail above in terms of the following:

e. **Politeness**: impolite ☐ neither impolite nor polite ☐ polite ☐
f. **Respect**: disrespectful☐ neither respect nor deferential ☐ deferential☐
g. **Assertiveness**: assertive ☐ neither assertive nor compliant☐ compliant ☐
h. **Friendliness**: unfriendly ☐ neither unfriendly nor friendly ☐ friendly ☐

Which words from the above e-mail are considered to be:

i. Friendly: ……………………………………………………………………………………………………
j. Respectful: …………………………………………………………………………………………………..
k. Assertive: …………………………………………………………………………………………………..
l. Rude: ……

(Please list examples in the spaces above)

Questions about the participant's own data

………

How would you perceive the example taken from your own emails in terms of:

i. **Politeness**: very impolite☐ impolite☐ neither impolite nor polite☐ polite☐ very polite☐
j. **Respect**: very disrespectful☐ disrespectful☐ neither respect nor deferential☐ deferential☐ very deferential☐
k. **Assertiveness**: very assertive☐ assertive☐ neither assertive nor compliant☐ compliant☐ very compliant☐
l. **Friendliness**: very unfriendly☐ unfriendly☐ neither unfriendly nor friendly☐ ☐friendly very friendly☐

How would your response differ if the request or e-mail was coming from someone who is superior to you?

Question to end-up the interview with:

Thank you for all your valuable information. Is there anything else you would like to add before we end?

Follow-up Interview (for the lecturers)

1. In your opinion, does starting an email with an opening and ending it with a closing show: ☐ Friendliness/rapport building/solidarity

☐ Respect and deference

☐ Both friendliness and respect and how?

2. Would you end an email with *cheers*? Explain why?

3. Do you think that *cheers* is more associated with drinking alcohol? □Yes □No

4. In terms of formality and informality, how would you perceive *Good luck* & *Thank you* at the end of an email, do you think that they are perceived like *Take care*, *Best wishes* & *Have a nice day/weekend* or would you perceive them more formal? Why? □Yes □No

5. Do you think that when students use more closings, they would get the most polite reply and help by their lecturers? Why?

6. If a student ends his/her email with *Thanks in advance* would this:

   □ have a negative effect on the lecture

   □ be appropriate

   Does it show: □ respect   □ Friendliness   □ Both and why?

7. If a student ends his email with thanking when contacting his/her lecturer, is it that they are aware of his/her non-dominant role and aware of the power that lecturers have over them? □ Yes   □ No   Why?

8. If a lecturer chooses to end his/her email with a phatic element (e.g. take care, have a nice day,… etc.) coupled with the lecturer's name, is this used as a rapport strategy with his/her students to establish solidarity? □Yes □ No Why?

9. Do you think this use of phatic element by lecturers at the end of their emails is to minimise distance between lecturers and their students and build rapport?

   □ Yes   □ No Why?

10. Do you think that the lecturer's use of socio-religious prayers (Doaa) at the end of the email establish rapport and solidarity between lecturers and their students? □ Yes □ No? Why?

11. When a student uses socio-religious prayer at the end of the message to reward somebody (e.g. lecturer) for helping the student or doing a favour, does it please the lecturer, compared to using 'thank you' or not using anything at all? □ Yes   □ No   Why?

12. الله يوفقك   أسأل الله لك النجاح و التوفيق

May you succeed   or   *May All grant you success and prosperity*

At the end of the lecturer's message, does it show that the lecturers are aware of the students' eagerness to succeed in their studies and that lecturers try to show that they can feel what it is like to be a student and what they might look forward to achieve, so they pray for them to get what they want? □ Yes   □ No   Why?

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13. Is it appropriate for a student to end an email to his lecturer with your brother/sister the student X and why?

Appendix C

Feature	Men								Women							
	1-2		3-4		5-6		7-8		1-2		3-4		5-6		7-8	
	L	S	L	S	L	S	L	S	L	S	L	S	L	S	L	S
Salutation	1	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Address	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0
Titles	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0
Term of deference	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	0
Thanking	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1
Closing	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0

Perception of the most important characteristics to include in an email according to the respondant's role

Key code:

1-2: Least important   L: Lecturer

3-4: Less important   S: Student

5-6: important

7-8: Most important

Feature	Men				Women			
	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8
Salutation	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	4
Address	0	1	2	1	1	0	2	1
Titles	1	2	1	0	0	1	1	2
Term of deference	0	0	0	4	0	1	3	0
Thanking	1	1	2	0	1	1	1	1
Closing	2	2	0	0	2	2	0	0

Perception of the most important characteristics to include in an email according to the respondent's gender

Appendix D

Participants	Codes	College	University
Female student 1	FS1	Dentistry	AL Riyadh Medical College
Female student 2	FS2	Medicine	King Abdul-Aziz University
Female student 3	FS3	Computer Science	The Open University, Saudi Arabia
Female student 4	FS4	Education	Umm Al-Qura University
Female student 5	FS5	Science	King Abdul-Aziz University
Female lecturer 1	FL1	Dentistry	King Saud University
Female lecturer 2	FL2	English Language Institute	King Abdul-Aziz University
Female lecturer 3	FL3	Arts- English	Umm Al-Qura University
Female lecturer 4	FL4	Arts- English	Umm Al-Qura University
Female lecturer 5	FL5	Arts- Religion	King Abdul-Aziz University
Male student 1	MS1	Science	King Abdul-Aziz University
Male student 2	MS2	Administration	King Abdul-Aziz University
Male student 3	MS3	Science	King Abdul-Aziz University
Male student 4	MS4	Science	King Abdul-Aziz University
Male student 5	MS5	Administration	King Abdul-Aziz University
Male lecturer 1	ML1	Science	King Abdul-Aziz University
Male lecturer 2	ML2	Arts-religion	King Abdul-Aziz University
Male lecturer 3	ML3	Arts-religion	Al-Imam University
Male lecturer 4	ML4	Engineering	King Abdul-Aziz University
Male lecturer 5	ML5	Science	King Abdul-Aziz University

Participants of the current study

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