



Intercultural Email Negotiation of a PhD Opportunity: A Study of Saudi Research Students in Australia.

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Declaration

I certify that, except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work that has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Amerah Abdullah Alsharif

26 October 2020

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My PhD journey has been a turning point in my life. It has influenced my professional and personal identity in a myriad of ways. In this section, I decided to be more open to my emotions and express my sincere thanks to people by mentioning some unique situations that informed my understanding of the role of academic assistance and, in turn, shaped my PhD experience.

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Dedication

في السماء رب وفي الأرض أب

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Abstract

Although negotiation via email takes place frequently between students and their supervisors, the underlying processes of these negotiations have not been adequately addressed in linguistic literature to date (Alsharif & Alyousef, 2017). Important gaps remain in relation to understanding the nature of academic negotiations. The primary purpose of this study is to examine politeness and impoliteness conventions in persuasive discourse and ways to assess academic negotiation across culture and gender, focusing on form and content. To this end, this project analysed 120 emails sent from Saudi (100) and Australian (20) students to prospective PhD supervisors, with equal numbers of men and women in the Saudi data. The main question of the project was: How do Saudi students negotiate finding a prospective PhD supervisor in Australia via email? The study was largely guided by old and new perspectives on politeness, along with cross-disciplinary theories and approaches from applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, genre, intercultural and business studies to understand the complexity of the e-negotiation texts and provide a means to analyse academic emails. Persuasion theory was used to help divide each email into three main categories based on the amount of rational, credible and affective/emotional appeals implemented by participants. There were three variables in this thesis used to assess discursive differences: power, gender and culture.

The findings demonstrate the need for a multidimensional methodology to assess a broader range of linguistic and rhetorical features so as to adequately account for cultural and gender variations. Regarding cultural differences, one finding suggests that Australian students provide more content in terms of their planned PhD topic, while Saudi students generally focus on their CV and achievements. As for gender differences, the results challenge traditional findings of other studies: the Saudi men used more compliments, greetings and more affective language due to the power imbalance, reflecting the Saudi communicative style of *Kalafah*. Saudi women used more credibility appeals, such as self-promotion, to position themselves as confident and capable of conducting PhD research.

This thesis has contributed to the exploration of Saudi cultural schemata in negotiation styles, which was largely undiscovered. It suggests new ways through which persuasion, as part of genre, can be implemented in politeness research to unpack specific (im)polite speech acts, such

as requestive behaviour. The results of this study provide deeper insights into electronic negotiation discourse as a whole, and the subtle nuances of intercultural online communication in particular, especially as far as Anglo-Arabic interactions are concerned. From a pedagogical and contribution perspective, the thesis provides the background and foundations for the future creation of training materials to assist both hopeful Saudi PhD candidates and Australian institutes that receive thousands of Saudi students annually. The current findings and discoveries contribute to filling a wide gap in the contemporary literature, which has largely ignored a holistic linguistic investigation of negotiation and politeness from the dimensions of content and form.

Chapter 1: Research Problem and Questions

1.1 Background and motivation for study

‘Colorless green ideas sleep furiously’ is a sentence composed by Noam Chomsky in his 1957 (republished in 2002) book *Syntactic Structures* as an example of a sentence that is grammatically correct, but semantically *nonsensical*. Hymes (1972) was one of the first to point out that the rules of grammar would be useless without the knowledge of other linguistic rules that enable the speaker to communicate successfully. To this end, many pragmatics studies focused on matching utterances with contexts in which they are appropriate, ignoring the fact that appropriateness is not—by itself—the ultimate goal of any speaker. Adopting Chomsky’s logic, I argue that using certain forms of language can be appropriate in terms of their politeness manifestation, but nonsensical in terms of their rhetorical and argumentative constructions. Canale and Swain (1980) pointed out that there are three levels of competence a person should be aware of to communicate successfully in any languages: *grammatical* competence (language rules); *sociolinguistic* competence (knowledge of the use of appropriate forms in a given context); and *strategic* competence (ability to use remedial strategies for communicative breakdowns). Some have proposed extending strategic competence to include not only the ‘problem solving’ aspect but also the ‘enhancement function’, or the enhancement of the rhetorical effect of utterances (Canale, 1983). In my view, strategic competence covers the aspects of knowing what to say and how to say it in a given negotiation context; as such, multiple dimensions of linguistic competence should be considered in pragmatic studies.

Current literature largely presumes that second language students’ pragmatic failure is associated with communicative breakdown (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). However, the rhetorical dimension of these communications has rarely been considered when highlighting these pragmatic errors (Nicholas & Blake, 2020; Savvidou & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2019). Moreover, teaching pragmatics to second language learners has been recommended as a solution for the observed communicative breakdown, with the chief goal of raising students’ pragmatic awareness and providing them with choices about their interactions in the target language (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003). Although all aspects of competence in a certain language are required, the idea of how these are implemented is rarely discussed, especially as far as

pragmatics and strategic aspects of communication are concerned (Caudill, 2018). My critique of the traditional pragmatic approach, which focuses on polite ways of interacting with people in the target language, is that it can do very little in circumstances where second language speakers need to be persuasive, make arguments or ask for their rights in an assertive way.

Having taken on different leadership roles as a Saudi student representative for the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission (SACM), I have worked with Saudi students to solve any academic problems with Anglo-Australian staff members. I concluded that some misconceptions were formed in the minds of the two groups—not only due to different politeness conventions, but also due to core differences in their negotiation styles. Consequently, I became interested in exploring the elements that contribute to effective academic communication, with the hope of discovering insights for Saudi students who need to negotiate certain academic needs in Australian settings. I found that the topic of approaching a prospective PhD supervisor via email provided the best model to demonstrate the different negotiation styles existing in both cultures, as it entails the use of persuasion. One aim of this study is to explore the key cultural factors that influence prospective Saudi Arabian PhD students' negotiation style via email when seeking supervision in higher education abroad. This is especially relevant with the rapid increase in Saudi Arabian graduate students seeking to undertake further study abroad. Existing studies show that many Saudi international students are faced with challenges in regard to email communications, as there are no specific guidelines regarding form and style (Danielewicz-Betz, 2013).

The new vision of the Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman 2030 includes preparing students for study abroad linguistically, culturally and academically with the appropriate global aptitudes; “This vision constitutes fundamental sociocultural and economic changes of the Saudi structure, and creating a young vibrant society that is open to other cultures” (Alanazi, 2018, p. 160). One argument is that a profound knowledge of intercultural written communication is required to avoid miscommunication, especially when requesting a PhD position via email (Kim, 1996; Savvidou & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2019). According to the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission, there are approximately 13,000 Saudi students in Australia. Among the originalities of this thesis is the examination of how Saudi students modify the content of their messages when emailing prospective PhD supervisors from Australian backgrounds. They often seem unaware of the fact that the content of their emails and their overall approach to negotiation can influence these academics' decisions to either accept or reject their PhD proposals. Drawing on my personal

experience as a Saudi student who has tried to negotiate appropriateness and persuasiveness in my emails, I decided to assess email negotiations from the pragmatic and rhetorical level to help bridge the gap in the current literature, as these two dimensions are particularly important for advanced second language speakers.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Since the emphasis of this thesis is on the language of negotiation in formal communications, it is believed that email, being in a text¹ form, provides fertile land for investigation. As Halliday (1989, p. 97) postulates, “our highly valued texts are now all written ones. Written records have replaced oral memories as the repositories of collective wisdom and of verbal art”. Some new texts have emerged from the evolution of computer-mediated communication (CMC). CMC is an umbrella term referring to any human communication via a networked computer (Simpson, 2002). A distinction can be made between synchronous CMC, where all participants are online and simultaneously interacting, and asynchronous CMC, where participants are not necessarily online at the same time. Synchronous CMC includes various types of text/video-based online chat; asynchronous CMC encompasses email, blogs and discussion forums. CMC in both forms is increasingly replacing many face-to-face interactions in the workplace, not least in universities. The growing number of empirical investigations into the role of email as a communicative medium across disciplines reflects its increasing importance in daily life (Geiger & Parlamis, 2014). Despite the rapid emergence of social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, email remains “undoubtedly the most used communication mechanism in society today. Within business alone, it is estimated that 100 billion emails are sent and received daily across the world” (Nurse, Erola, Goldsmith, & Creese, 2015, p. 70).

Email not only provides the private sphere with a means to perform all sorts of communicative tasks (Geiger & Parlamis, 2014), but also transcends time zones and gives access to cultures that are now “only a mouse click away” (Murphy, 2006, p. 1). Yet, the underlying processes of email communication are often only partially investigated, especially as far as

¹ Text is any written medium of communication that can be ‘read’, with the content taking precedence over the physical form. It is now most often used to refer to visual-digitalised writings that are typed. Discourse, on the other hand, can be communicated in a more engaging spoken or written manner. See Section 6.7 for more information on different modes of discourse and their definitions.

negotiation and discourse are concerned. Deprived of the wealth of non-verbal cues, email presents many communication challenges and misunderstandings that may be difficult to amend, especially with users from different cultural backgrounds (Murphy, 2006). In particular, this study looks at the way Saudi students employ both rhetorical moves and (im)politeness strategies while negotiating PhD supervision with a prospective supervisor. The question of how to conduct negotiation via email is of great theoretical and practical importance (Turban, Lee, King, & Chung, 2000). Self-initiated email messages have rarely been investigated from a negotiation or persuasion perspective specifically in academia, where language use and e-communication strategies play a role in educational settings but not in other workplaces (see Section 2.4.4) (Waldvogel, 2007). Email negotiations have sparked interest among business negotiation scholars. For example, Ebner (2011) points to the fact that the professional and academic negotiation fields have dismissed learning how to understand and conduct email negotiation, whereas there are courses that still train students “for interactions ‘at the table’—assuming that there would, indeed, be a ‘table’—*some physical* setting where the parties convened and negotiated” (p. 3). Likewise, most academic syllabi lack explicit instruction in email writing, which may result in confusion and uncertainty regarding the style and politeness strategies most appropriate for academic email interactions (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011).

1.3 Linguistic gap in negotiation literature

When attempting to investigate email negotiation in academia, the researcher faces three significant gaps in the literature. Firstly, only a few studies have looked at negotiation from a discursive point of view. The term *negotiation* is usually linked with bargaining and business where money and interests are involved and has not previously been analysed in a way that serves to explore how negotiation is achieved linguistically. In other words, how might the use of certain interactional features influence negotiation outcomes? Glenn and Susskind (2010, p. 118) argue that some social interactions, such as doctor-patient interactions, “demonstrate convincingly how communication shapes outcomes”. To support this notion, they gave examples elicited from Heritage (1998), who investigated the influence of a doctor’s routine question: “[Is] there *something* else you want to address in the visit today?” This kind of question is significantly more likely to elicit additional concerns than, “Is there *anything* else you want to address in the visit

today?” with the difference of just one word. Moreover, open-ended questions such as, “What can I do for you today?”, generate significantly longer and more detailed responses than closed initial turns such as, “So you’re sick today, huh?” (Heritage & Robinson, 2006, p. 93). The investigation of negotiation discourse, with a focus on how the blend of discursive features and the content of the message could achieve a successful outcome, makes a significant contribution to the current linguistic literature. Negotiation in current language studies seems to be limited to what has been called ‘negotiation of meaning’ in second language acquisition literature. This type of negotiation occurs when there is an ambiguous (English) meaning that causes a communication breakdown between speakers of two different languages; this involves back and forth communicative interaction characterised by interactional modifications, such as clarification checks and comprehension checks (Gass & Selinker, 2001). Negotiation of meaning is not what is being examined here; rather, the focus is on social and academic negotiation as ‘discoursal phenomena’ (Dolón & Suau, 1996). Firth (1995, p. 9) cited an observation made about forty years ago by Walcott, Hopmann and King (1977, p. 203), which is surprisingly still relevant:

Though negotiation is essentially verbal interaction, the bulk of empirical literature concerning it does not deal directly with words. Much of the work on bargaining behaviour has dealt with nonverbal interaction, such as the choosing of rows and columns in a Prisoner’s Dilemma Matrix. In many other studies, verbal behaviour has been permitted, but it has not been recorded or analysed systematically... [W]hat is measured is the *outcome* of the interaction (agreement, attitude change, etc.), not the content or patterning of the interaction itself.

The absence of discursive analysis is found to be a major gap underpinned by two other gaps: 1) investigating negotiation in academic and intercultural interactions by email; and 2) finding a well-established theoretical framework that investigates negotiations from both the activity dimension, dealing with negotiation moves, and the interactional dimension, which concerns discursive features. The mismatch between language focus and negotiation in terms of tactical language choices is, to some extent, the result of a long-standing tradition of negotiation literature (Walker, 1994, as cited in Dolón & Suau, 1996). The need to investigate actual language use in negotiation has become even greater in the new millennium, where the use of the internet for general communication has grown exponentially, especially as far as emails are concerned.

Succeeding in CMC “depends on largely unanalysed assumptions about the ways in which intercultural communication plays out online” (Hanna & De Nooy, 2004, p. 2). It makes it particularly interesting to investigate how participants in an intercultural setting organise their communication via email. Analysing prospective PhD students’ messages may yield new insights that enrich the current understanding about negotiation in general and identify some cultural norms of this type of message across culture and gender. This thesis endeavours to fill these gaps by both proposing a workable framework and bridging the long-standing gap between negotiation literature and academic linguistic choices in an intercultural setting.

1.4 Relevant empirical research: Framework and design issues

Although the aim of the limited studies on negotiation discourse is presumably to detect how language use influences the outcome, the implementation of this aim is problematic. Researchers investigating e-negotiation discourse have used a mix of frameworks that can say too little about how negotiation is conducted electronically. I have drawn on three studies associated with the current project, starting from the least to the most relevant.

In her paper, “Discourse Strategies in Professional Email Negotiation”, Jensen (2009) analysed 46 email exchanges between a single seller and buyer, observing the relationship progression between them. To achieve this, she combined Hyland’s (2005) concept of metadiscourse, based on how academic writers project themselves into their discourse to express understanding of their content and audience, with Charles’ (1996) categories of old and new relationship negotiations. This did not reflect the core negotiation tactics and moves used between both participants, possibly due to the fact that Hyland’s (2005) approach was designed to evaluate academic writing, not interaction or communicative aspects. Bloch (2002), on the other hand, examined 120 email messages from international students to himself as an ESL class teacher. Messages were categorised as phatic communication (57 messages), asking for help (42 messages), making excuses (16 messages) and making formal requests (five messages). Other than identifying reasons for communicating with the instructor, Bloch’s aim was to explore the various ways students negotiated their relationship with him. This was done using a discourse method of analysis developed by McCracken (1990) that allows a researcher to categorise and group the data without the need for any preconceived categories. Bloch concluded that researching emails can

potentially help shed some light onto how language encounters change in social relationships, such as maintaining power differences between students and instructors of different cultural backgrounds. Investigating the dialogic exchange of messages with his students helped him understand not only how students wanted to interact with him but also how they used email to negotiate such interaction. What is relevant and important about Bloch's (2002) study is that it argued for the evaluation of students' messages not only in terms of their pragmatic competence, but also in terms of their persuasive strategies. That being said, little is known about the persuasive strategies he pointed to. His study was descriptive in nature, with some interesting examples that reflected certain discourse phenomena in students' emails (see Section 2.4.2).

The study by Biesenbach-Lucas and Weasenforth (2002) provides more guidance for the current project. To the best of my knowledge, it is one of the rare interactional articles attempting to classify students' negotiation moves under certain categories by combining the knowledge of negotiation behaviour and politeness in an academic setting. Biesenbach-Lucas and Weasenforth (2002) compared a total of 42 email messages from 19 American native English speakers (NSs) and 9 international non-native speaking students (NNSs) from an American university. They first categorised the messages for communication topics, including setting up an appointment, submission of work and assignment topic/course work. They then parsed the messages for the negotiation and examined negotiation processes in terms of the presence or absence of certain negotiation strategies among NSs and NNSs. These tactics were: *context*, the main topic, and sometimes the title, of the email; *proposal*, the statement that carries out the goal of the email; *justification*, where students provide reasons to validate a certain proposal; *options*, where alternative suggestions are made as part of a proposal; and *request* for information/request for others, where more information is requested. They also examined these exchanges for their linguistic realisation, including modals, intensifiers, hedges and downgraders. They found that although they were similar when it came to moves like context, NNSs differed from NSs in several ways in their use of negotiation strategies, such as in their use of options. Options is one of the most efficient moves in online negotiation, as it opens the door for further negotiation without leaving the reader—in this case, the student's lecturer—with a single option that can be easily rejected. The provision of options is perceived as a status-preserving move because it shows the student's ability to think through their proposal without limiting the lecturer's response. They concluded that NSs' email messages included more initiation and negotiation than their NNS

counterparts. They also noted that tentative language, which is very common in NS email messages, was not present in NNSs' email messages. This was attributed to the lack of status-preserving strategies of NNSs.

Despite the important contribution that this study made to the field, it has a few limitations in regard to its scope. First, Biesenbach-Lucas and Weasenforth's (2002) linguistic investigation was limited to a framework that measured politeness and tentativeness used under two negotiation moves: request for a reply and proposal. This omits the analysis of language in general and does not allow for the detection of intercultural differences in a clear way. The researchers' rationale was, however, that those are essential elements in negotiation. Further, looking at some common expressions under these strategic moves might have been useful, rather than a narrow focus on hedges and single units of the messages. Overall, the results of their study provided essential strategies that could be used by non-native English speakers to boost their pragmatic competence to that of native English speakers in terms of both language and content of successful negotiations.

1.5 Aim and research questions

This study aims to investigate email negotiation (e-negotiation) discourse and politeness strategies by examining emails written by international postgraduate students from Saudi Arabia to Australian academics in an attempt to find a PhD supervisor. The study further considers significant factors that may influence the choices Saudi students make when communicating via email in academia: power, gender, and culture. It adopts a multi-lens framework—pragmatics, sociolinguistics and discourse analysis—to analyse academic negotiations within the frameworks of politeness theory, genre analysis and persuasion. To further contribute to the field of linguistics, some interdisciplinary studies have been included, such as Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions model and business negotiation.

The main aim is to explore politeness rituals embedded in the e-negotiation discourse of Saudi Arabian students contacting potential PhD supervisors in Australia and to identify ways of assessing such communications in terms of:

- 1- The norms and overall differences in cultural discourse patterns between Saudi Arabian and Australian postgraduate students when approaching a prospective PhD supervisor.
- 2- The sociolinguistic and sociocultural factors influencing negotiation strategies.

- 3- Requestive behaviour as governed by gender and power distance patterns in Saudi English.
- 4- Exploring persuasive appeals and (im)politeness strategies within these negotiations between both Saudi and Australian postgraduate students.

To achieve the aim of this study, three key research questions have been formulated. Each contains subsidiary questions, focusing on more specific issues. The questions below will be addressed in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, respectively:

- 1) What are the norms of Saudi students' negotiation strategies, as revealed by their choice of generic options (moves) and rhetorical construction, in comparison with their Australian peers when approaching a potential PhD supervisor via email?**
 - a) What are the dominant linguistic features that Saudi students use in comparison with Australian students? What (if any) are the gender differences among them?
 - b) How does a participant's perception of the appropriateness of negotiation influence their linguistic behaviour?
- 2) How do Saudi students employ persuasive appeals and (im)politeness strategies in their negotiations?**
 - a) How do their persuasive appeals compare to Australian cultural expectations?
 - b) How do Saudi students employ persuasive appeals to form (im)polite negotiation moves?
- 3) What requestive behaviour do students employ to gain approval from the prospective supervisor?**
 - a) How do Saudi males and females differ in terms of their requestive patterns?
 - b) What is the impact of power distance on each gender's requestive language?

The results of these investigations aim to improve Saudi students' intercultural competence by both focusing on potential areas deemed inappropriate for Western academics and identifying core strategies that Saudis lack for competent negotiation.

1.6 Significance of the study

To the best of my knowledge, there is no study that has investigated the linguistic negotiation of Saudi students in Australia when approaching potential PhD supervisors by unpacking communication patterns and pragmatic strategies. The results of this study provided deeper insights into e-negotiation discourse in general; in particular into the subtle nuances of intercultural online communication, especially as far as Anglo-Arabic interactions are concerned. They will contribute to the growing body of research on Saudi English communicative patterns in an academic context, and further the understanding of Arabic language transfer in a specific context. Other benefits of the current research are its contribution to the field of foreign or second language learning and teaching, where students can be more acquainted with persuasive patterns and strategies. The findings will offer teachable moves and politeness strategies in academic negotiation, giving Saudi students the tools to unlock this necessary genre of academia's community of practice (Wenger, 1998). The materials of this study can also be extended for business training in intercultural emails, which aims to increase cultural awareness. Closer examination of these email interactions may further assist higher education institutions and admission faculties at Australian universities in understanding the reasons behind Saudi postgraduate students' communicative approaches.

Realising the socio-pragmatic rules of a culture may help facilitate social communication or, more importantly, minimise confrontation between people from different cultures. Besides addressing the lack of empirical research in this area, this study proposes a multimodal approach for investigating email negotiation discourse across culture and gender lines, which can be followed by other scholars in the field. Focusing on different layers of analysis, supported by participants' perceptions, helped to identify the genre and norms of these interactions, and led to the creation of some guidelines for training purposes. Specific findings regarding the Saudi cultural negotiation styles of *Mayanah* and *Kalafah* emerging in each gender group (women and men, respectively) may bring a new avenue of Saudi cultural schemata exploration for future research in this area. In terms of the impact and relevance of this study to other fields or avenues of research, it might be useful to look at how power has influenced discourse historically and within and across genders. As Saudi data is the core of this research, the study helped to clarify the reasons behind communicative attitudes that have been the subject of long-standing research biases and

stereotypical misunderstanding in general. Moreover, the representative Australian sample in this study assisted in unpacking some unexplored academic Anglo-Australian phenomena, such as the notion of networking and professionalism that tends to be dominant in their data.

1.7 Thesis overview

This thesis has eight chapters in total. Apart from the introduction, there is an overarching literature review that covers the general terms used in this thesis and studies that have formed the foundation of the research, a theoretical framework chapter that examines politeness, genre analysis and persuasion in more depth and a chapter dedicated to methodology, looking at pragmatism and the various qualitative and quantitative methods used to obtain and interpret data. There are three analysis chapters, each of which has its own literature, findings, discussion and summary. Finally, the conclusion chapter summarises the main emerging themes, answers the three research questions, provides a checklist of the aspects of academic negotiation, and points to the limitations, originality, and implications of this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 What is culture?

Before discussing the concept of intercultural communication, it is important to have an idea of what is meant by culture. The definition of culture offered by Hofstede (2011, p. 3) is “a collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others”. Hofstede et al. (2010) believe that culture is like the software of the mind, the operating system that allows humans to share and make sense of experience. Part of the difficulty in defining culture stems from the assumption that culture is homogenous and lacks internal contradictions and inconsistencies, which leads to the overgeneralisation that one may have well-defined and accurate predictions of the behaviour of the members of any given culture. In line with Spencer-Oatey’s (2000) stance, this thesis adopts the notion that culture is not an evaluative concept; rather, it is a descriptive one.

As the meaning has been so hotly contested, it is arguably more useful to think about culture in terms of its characteristics rather than in terms of a definition. Culture is *learned*, not inherited (Hofstede, 1994). According to Singer (1998, p. 5), culture is “a pattern of learned, group-related perceptions—including both verbal and nonverbal language, attitudes, values, belief systems, disbelief systems and behaviours that is accepted and expected by an identity group”. Learned culture is expressed in both written and oral forms of language, as language on its own is part of culture (Kim, 1996). In addition, culture is *cumulative* as it builds on itself without our control. It has been argued that culture reveals itself through our behaviour in deep and persisting ways beyond our conscious control (Hall, 1959, as cited in Murphy, 2006). Culture is *patterned*; anthropologists suggest that people from similar cultures tend to have patterned ways of behaving, thinking, reacting and communicating, either verbally or non-verbally. In terms of non-verbal physical behaviour, for example, it has been found that finger counting shows remarkable cultural variability among cultures (Bender & Beller, 2012). The latter authors reported that European people have the tendency to start with the left hand and the thumb with a closed fist, whereas most Chinese and North Americans begin counting on an index finger. What is quite surprising is the addition of feet to the finger counting sequence in some unique Indigenous societies in the Americas and in Papua New Guinea (Bender & Beller, 2012, p. 164).

In regard to thinking patterns, research shows that people from a specific culture have similar approaches to thinking. When comparing Americans and Japanese, for example, it has been found that Americans' way of thinking is characterised by an analytical and specific step-by-step approach. By contrast, Japanese have a synthetic and relational way of thinking, which makes them adopt a holistic approach (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). In terms of communicating, cultures differ in the degree to which speakers disclose their intentions through direct versus indirect interaction. A preference for indirect communication has been an often-noted phenomenon in Japanese culture (Jenkins, 2020). In contrast, Americans often show a preference for a precise and direct conversational style (Heritage, 1988; Jenkins, 2020).

Reeder, Macfadyen, Roche, and Chase (2004) extrapolate these different communication patterns onto CMC media. Their focus is to interpret intercultural patterns of online communication in light of cross-disciplinary theories from applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, genre and literacy theory, as well as Indigenous education. Their study attempts to analyse and record cultural differences in self-presentation in online postings. They provide empirical "evidence of differing communication patterns and instances of miscommunication in online exchanges between culturally diverse learners and online facilitators" in Canada (Reeder et al., 2004, p. 2). There were some large differences in approaches to online self-introduction and the notion of how learners' identities were established. For example, a Canadian immigrant called Sara, who was born overseas, described herself in a different way from Batsheva, a non-Indigenous English-speaking Canadian-born participant. Sara identified herself primarily by membership of a national/cultural group, as she started by writing where she lived, where she was born and where her family came from. In contrast, Batsheva identified herself by her professional role and experience in a CV-like genre. These examples indicate how people from the east, typically being 'collectivist' in nature, can differ significantly from Western people, who tend to employ a more individualistic approach. Hence, in intercultural communication, individuals from different cultural backgrounds may employ different strategies that scholars can identify based on these interactants' speech styles. The concept of intercultural communication has been defined as an interaction between people of different first languages when communicating in a common language; generally, these people represent different cultures (Kecskes, 2018). However, such representation claims have been criticised by anti-essentialist scholars, which will be detailed next.

In intercultural studies, there are two distinct approaches of evaluating culture. The most widespread, despite receiving severe criticism, is the essentialist approach in which intercultural studies treat the *other* as caught in a web of inflexible values and customs by those who claim to be free of such determinism (Bloomeart, 1998). Those who take this approach consider culture to be a concrete social phenomenon that represents the essential character of a particular nation (Holliday, 2000). Essentialist models of cultures are described with determinant variables that homogenise a national culture, imposing a singular national identity on individuals (Nashan, 2015). While they recognise the complexity of subcultures, which differ depending on the characteristics of smaller communities, they believe that these monocultures maintain the major national features (Holliday, 2000). These views are considered overgeneralisation by the anti-essentialist camp, who argue that this leads to ethical issues in terms of the disregard of cultural diversity, multiple identities and changes over time and space (Tully, 1995). Non-essentialists describe culture as a fluid term that can be adapted by different individuals at different times for purposes of politics, identity, and science (Holliday, 2000). Despite attacking Hofstede as the most influential protagonist of the essentialist viewpoint, they were unable to break away from the ‘Hofstedian grip’ (Nashan, 2015). Despite presenting compelling claims, anti-essentialists failed to provide a neat structure that can be easily followed (Nashan, 2015). As a result, Halliday (2000) asserts that the essentialist view is dominant in applied linguistics and language education where national culture is closely associated with national language. Fairclough (1997) also believes that discourse is the use of language as a means of social practice. In other words, language should be analysed within its sociocultural context. For anti-essentialists, these views confirm a rather essentialist approach.

This research adopts the view that what is ‘similar’ is not necessarily the same as ‘essential’ (Dupre, 1986). Thus, there is no harm in referring to a group of objects as a natural kind if they share a significant number of common properties, provided that they are not identified as essential (Dupre, 1986). This debate has led to an in-between model called neo-essentialism or ‘liberal-essentialist duality’, claiming a more liberal or non-essentialist standpoint (Holliday, 2010).

Since this research strives to bring about a thorough understanding of Saudi discourse, there is a need to explore the linguistic formulae that assist and facilitate intercultural interactions. There are several intercultural studies that provide well-structured models that will be useful to

examine the complexity of Saudi discourse. This is important as Saudi language and culture is still under-researched and there is a need to unpack many cultural properties and linguistic conventions. In particular, this thesis focuses on how Saudi students represent themselves within an Australian context, meaning it is crucial to have an understanding of the Saudi context in general before data analysis. As such, a discussion of Saudi culture, language and communication patterns will follow.

2.1.1 Saudi Arabian culture, language and communication patterns

Saudi society incorporates a complex mix of cultural and Islamic values to such an extent that it is difficult to distinguish between what is “cultural” and what is “religious” (Al Lily, 2011, p. 119). In other words, it is a *religious culture*, where the interplay between religion and culture has immediate impact on language use. For example, the expression ‘ya Allah’, which literally means ‘oh, God’, functions as a discourse marker for ‘let’s go’ or ‘come on’ and is used frequently during the day. Arabic language often mirrors basic values in Saudi culture with its poetic nature to express generosity, dignity, courage and self-respect (Feghali, 1997). It has long been observed that metaphor and the magical sounds of the words combined with the images have a powerful effect on the psychology of the Arab (Hitti, 1996). Hitti (1996, p. 26) also pointed out that “hardly any language seems capable of exercising over the minds of its users such as Arabic... The rhythm, the rhyme, the music produce on them the effect of what they call ‘lawful magic’ (*sihr halal*)”. Zaharna (1995) made an interesting observation comparing the English language to Arabic. For American culture, language is used to convey information; content is more important than style. However, for Arab culture, language appears to be a social art used to influence society. Emphasis is often on form over content and on image over meaning (Zaharna, 1995). This aligns with existing research that classifies Saudi Arabia as a high-context culture, according to Hall (1959).

In high-context cultures, the notion of the tribe, family or even one’s public image is more important than the individual (Hooker, 2012). Generally, high-context cultures rely on implicit communication and nonverbal cues as interactions are based on a great deal of background information; in low-context cultures, communication is more direct and elaborative because individuals are not expected to have knowledge of the other party’s history or background (Hall, 1959). In high-context cultures, it is important for an individual to be obedient to societal rules and to seek approval from others (Hooker, 2012). Dealing with people from a high-context culture may

be complicated due to their preference for more indirect communication. In contrast, Hooker (2012) argues that low-context cultures often strive for more direct information, such as detailed street maps and signs; in high-context cultures, there is little information of this type, as everyone is accustomed to obtaining information through a social context. Common expressions used in low-context cultures that are more direct include 'get to the point,' or 'say what you mean', promoting fact, technique or expectation and "avoid[ing] emotional overtones and suggestive allusions" (Zaharna, 1995, p. 243). In contrast, high-context cultures in countries such as Saudi Arabia are indirect and emotionally rich, which results in concealing or burying the message because precision is not as significant as creating emotional resonance (Zaharna, 1995). In terms of communication, Stewart and Bennett (2011) suggest that low-context and high-context culture patterns can be classified into two categories: 'doing' and 'being' cultures respectively. Doing cultures are characterised by achievement and visible accomplishments. This is seen in greetings, such as 'How are you doing?' or 'What is happening?' In being cultures such as China, Japan or Arab cultures, it is observed that an individual's family background, age and rank (*what one is*) carries greater significance than *what one does*. Zaharna (1995, p. 244) argues that in "Arabic, the equivalent of "How are you doing?" has a sole meaning of "What is your condition?", to which you would respond with your emotional or physical state or "Thank God for his blessings"". In regards to business context, one needs to establish a good relationship with Saudi managers before conducting any negotiation (Lewis, 2010). Building a good relationship in any power imbalance situation in the Saudi Arabian context usually involves compliments and avoiding any form of criticism.

In high power distance cultures such as Saudi Arabia, the relationship between superiors and subordinates is hardly personal (Hooker, 2012). For example, students cannot have a friendly relationship with their teachers or lecturers. Students are often not trusted and are in need of clear guidance from the teacher (Alamri, Cristea, & Al-Zaidi, 2014). There is an Arabic saying that translates as 'I shall become a slave to that who teaches me a single letter', and another which glorifies the role of a teacher: 'Stand up for your teacher and show him/her respect, as a teacher is about to become a prophet'. The lines of authority are not entirely clear, however. Lecturers at a university level, especially with PhD degrees, are perceived to have a high authority, to the extent that they can dismiss students from the university. In his study, Bloch (2002) noticed that some international students asked him via email to advise them on academic issues that had nothing to

do with the subject he was teaching. He believes that these students thought of him as a gatekeeper, not as a teacher with a limited role. In one role-play email, a Saudi student started his email by praising the Australian government and expressing his love for Australia, as a strategy to 'please' the lecturer and improve his grade (Alsharif & Alyousef, 2017). This strategy works well within the context of Saudi culture; however, it is considered irrelevant in Anglo-Australian culture, being classified as low context (Hall, 1959). Therefore, when Anglo-Australians negotiate with Saudis, they should never be hesitant to praise their food, country, and dress in a business context because this warrants positive outcomes (Lewis, 2010). Hooker (2012) also states that "flattery that strikes Westerners as obsequious is perfectly appropriate, particularly where superiors are concerned" (Hooker, 2012, p. 15). Danielewicz-Betz and Mamidi (2010) have also observed that over-politeness, praise, and appreciation are frequent in workplace emails in Saudi Arabia, which serves to maintain harmony in relations. Despite the prevalence of Hall's model of high- and low-context cultures, it has its limitations. Firstly, researchers believe that the model was based on Hall's personal observations as "he did not describe how he conceptualized or measured these rankings" (Cardon, 2008, p. 402). Additionally, Hall seemed to be biased towards high-context cultures as he believed they have a more holistic approach towards decision making; this may have played a role in how he classified each culture (Cardon, 2008).

The literature offers different perspectives on Arabs, Arabic culture and Arabic interactions without defining the term 'Arabic' itself, as it is too broad to make any assumptions. In line with Bachkurov, Rajasekar, and da Silva (2016), the terms Arab or Arabic culture in this study refer to the Arabic culture native to the Arabian Gulf region, specifically the Saudi Arabian region. However, the inclusion of cultural norms from other Arabic-speaking countries may be cited where the researcher believes this to be relevant to the Saudi Arabian context. For example, some of Ferguson's (1997) claims about Arabic communication norms can be representative of Saudi Arabian communication norms. Ferguson (1997) reports that religious formulae such as prayers, blessings and wishes are used in daily encounters, representing the most distinctive types of politeness forms in Arabic language and culture. Besides religious expressions, titles such as 'Doctor' and 'Professor' are frequently used in written and spoken Arabic, reflecting the parameters of social status highly valued in Arabic culture (Al-Zubaidi & Jasim, 2016). The use of titles may also reflect the influence of personal appeals on the addressee and the expectations of the kind of respect necessary during negotiation time; this may not be considered an influential

factor in Anglophone societies. A further difference that may influence how each cultural group approaches negotiation is critical thinking. While critical thinking, persuasion and debate are stressed in Australian schools from primary level, critical thinking has only recently become part of the Saudi curriculum (AlMarwani, 2020 ; Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020). However, it has not yet become part of Saudi culture, meaning that it may not play a big role in Saudi interactions.

While the descriptions offered outline general tendencies in Saudi culture, it should be acknowledged that Saudi Arabia is now witnessing great transformations due to the Saudi Vision 2030 initiative, with new generations of Saudis challenging the old traditions. Previous work largely focused on how Arabic or Saudi cultural differed from that of Western values; however, gender differences within Saudi culture have not yet been established. Although Saudi Arabia is now becoming a more open society, gender segregation is still persistent because it has always been a significant cultural element that characterises Saudi culture (Jamjoom, 2020). In most Saudi universities, women and men are separated. This provides privacy for women, allowing them to dress as they wish without the need to be covered up (Hariri, 2017). This gender segregation dilemma has impacted most of the middle-aged (33–50) population, forming particular communicative norms and politeness strategies due to limited interaction between males and females at a significant level of social life (Hariri, 2017; Jamjoom, 2020; Qari, 2017). That being said, it is not clear whether the younger generation will go through a similar dilemma, with most public schools and universities still being segregated. Hence, there is a gap of unexplored knowledge of Saudi discourse in terms of gender and politeness behaviour, particularly in a society that is not enriched with such gender exposure and communication between the two groups (Al-Ageel, 2016; Hariri, 2017; Jamjoom, 2020; Qari, 2017). This thesis endeavours to provide knowledge of the politeness and negotiation behaviour that each gender employs when communicating with a prospective PhD supervisor. Since this project is concerned with identifying the ways that Saudi prospective students negotiate in an Australian setting, it is useful to provide a brief background of Australian culture and ways of communication.

2.1.2 Australian culture, language and communication patterns

Australia can be typically considered a Western culture or civilisation, despite its unique geographical position in the Asia-Pacific. “Australianness is broadly located in egalitarian and democratic values, which emphasise common civic ideals, a reaction against the hierarchical

British class system, and which values concepts of mateship and ‘a fair go’” (Kabir, 2007, p. 63). Australians generally call each other by their first names or nicknames. They often use humor and are considered to be quite sarcastic; their sense of irony may be difficult to grasp, as it tends to be indirect. ‘Mateship’ or loyal fraternity is a code of conduct, particularly between men, along with the notion of the tall poppy syndrome (Peeters, 2004), where people who perceive themselves as greater than their peers are criticised and considered ‘up themselves’. In addition, a ‘fair go’, which suggests equal opportunities in life without any type of discrimination, is said to be a key part of Australian culture and society in modern history². In terms of Australian communicative patterns, one study suggests that when Australians meet with one another, they call each other by their first names and end their conversation in compromise where they feel both parties have taken something away (Lewis, 2006). It is to be acknowledged that these communicative patterns primarily describe Anglo-Australian norms, which is not to say that many non-Anglo Australians do not also adopt them. Notwithstanding being a largely multicultural society, Anglo-Celtic Western culture has had the greatest impact on Australian culture (Jupp, 2001). With people from different cultures, “Australians make efforts to curb their national irreverence for superiors and institutions” (Lewis, 2006, p. 4).

Since communication is largely influenced by culture, unshared cultural patterns may result in miscommunication. Research has shown that, in different instances, people from collective cultures find it hard to mingle with people from a more individualistic culture (Holmes 2005). When living together, Saudis and Anglo-Australian people may find it challenging to understand one another, especially in times of disagreements and serious negotiation. Given the paucity of research regarding Saudi-Australian interaction, some instances of relevant issues that may cause misunderstanding will be outlined. Referring to Hofstede’s (2001) model, Fallon, Bycroft, and Network (2009) believe that Saudi and Australian culture differ markedly on the four dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity/femininity, and individualism/collectivism (see Section 2.3.1). The latter researchers examined how newly-arrived Saudi students settled with homestay Australian families. They found that neither party had any prior orientation about one

² However, “Australia’s pursuit of the White only policy since the formation of the Commonwealth in 1901 gave a clear message of its racist attitude towards Asia and its non-white people” (Hamid & Kirkpatrick, 2016, p. 32). The question of whether the replacement of the White Australia policy by a multicultural social policy in the 1970s changed such prevailing attitudes towards others remains under-investigated (Hamid & Kirkpatrick, 2016).

another before they met, which caused conflict and led to withdrawal from providing such accommodation to Saudi students.

Different cultural orientation may lead to awkward reactions, if not to conflict, that may or may not be expressed. Some studies have explored characteristics of Arab students that are similar to Saudis. For example, Kamal (2008, as cited in Fallon et al., 2009) found that Middle Eastern students' concept of 'wasta'³ 'who you know' affects the way students seek help for their problems. Saudi students often complain to the director instead of discussing the matter first with the teacher; this may also be attributed to their 'wasta' orientation, differences in the perception of distance or perhaps due to their lack of negotiation skills (Rao, 2008).

In a texting culture, Saudis may use phrases like 'answer me now' to stress urgency without the use of any mitigation. 'Answer me now' in a Saudi context is acceptable. Nonetheless, in an Australian context, such requests seems like "pushy requests expressed by imperatives" (Murphy & Levy, 2009). Murphy and Levy (2009) believe that adding words like, 'If you have the time, could you send me a copy?' minimises the imposition and the illocutionary force of the request. In Murphy's (2006) thesis, an Australian interviewee expressed some urgency found in some emails; "Sometimes people overseas expect an answer within 5 minutes of receiving an email, as if you've got nothing else to do with your life" (p. 151). This brief discussion provides an overview of cultural and linguistic expectations of each cultural group, which will then be examined in light of their negotiation strategies in single email messages: the self-initiated emails that prospective research candidates sent to their prospective PhD supervisors. Negotiation will be defined below to fit the purpose of this thesis.

2.2. What is negotiation?

The word *negotiation* derives from the Latin words *neg*, which means 'not', and *otium*, which means 'ease or leisure' (Hendon, Hendon, & Herbig, 1996). Negotiation, therefore, is 'not leisure'; it is a complicated form of interaction involving hard work. One of the most widely used definitions of negotiation is that of Pruitt and Carnevale (1993), who define negotiation as a form

³ Wasta is a widespread Saudi notion that emphasises knowing some authority figures who may help you reach your professional goals. Interestingly, Saudis refer to it as 'Vitamin Wow': wow is the first Arabic letter of Wasta and without this vitamin, people cannot nourish their goals.

of social interaction that involves a process by which two or more parties try to resolve perceived incompatible goals. Due to the nature of electronic communication in this thesis, the one-sided email communication for this specific context includes a one-off negotiation event, although not necessarily an incompatible goal; students are looking to secure acceptance from a supervisor, while supervisors are looking for students. This will influence the way negotiation is defined.

There is no general consensus about what counts as negotiation and what does not (Ehlich & Wagner, 1995). However, this section is devoted to identifying and clarifying the notion in a functional way in relation to this study. Unlike other forms of communication, negotiation is distinguished by goals, relationships and normative practices (Donohue, Diez, & Stahle, 1983). This is not the case with discussion, for example, where all parties are free and able to participate and explore the topic. Nor is it the case with argument, which is less about compromise and more about overpowering, influencing an opponent, or presenting opposing views. In fact, an argument can be used as an effective competitive strategy to influence other parties during negotiation (Ganesan, 1993). It is possible to start with a complaint or argument and end with negotiation, and vice versa. Much like other forms of communication, negotiation is context-dependent. Recent studies have suggested that the context in which negotiation is referred to has a great influence on negotiation processes (Crump, 2011). That being said, what distinguishes negotiation from related types of communication is that it centres on perceived incompatibilities and employs strategies to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. The claim of perceived incompatibilities in the current data might not always coincide, as sometimes both parties need to reach the same goal, particularly when prospective supervisors are in need of new PhD students. Bhatia (2014) has deemed individual job application letters as negotiation because a person negotiates successful acceptance with a prospective employer; this is relevant to how prospective PhD students negotiate a possible PhD position with a potential supervisor. Further justifications for why the current data has been deemed as negotiation, not merely requests, are presented after examining the vast majority of existing definitions in the literature. Any negotiation exhibits certain basic characteristics, including:

- 1- **Negotiation is a process**—“a sequence of activities, perhaps with underlying patterns” (Fells, 2012, p. 3). This process can be identified as an outcome variable as it determines the quality of the produced negotiation (Crump, 2011). Researchers suggest that the process may be conducted through exploring options and exchanging offers or

even information (Fells, 2012). However, in the current data, the process is only judged by the sequence of patterns in self-initiated single emails. The ‘exchanging’ dimension between parties has been excluded as 1) this type of data was difficult to acquire; and 2) online negotiators tend to initiate messages that include multiple points gathered in one ‘bundle’ when using email (Rosette, Brett, Barsness, & Lytle, 2001). While it could be argued that one-sided communication should not be deemed negotiation, previous studies indicated that a single (email) message can be considered a full negotiation event when it includes an opening, discussion and closing (Bhatia, 2014; Kazoun, 2013; Sokolova, 2006).

- 2- **Negotiation involves two or more parties.** The parties need each other’s involvement or information to achieve some jointly desired outcome. Emailing or writing a letter requires a minimum of two people to be connected to the act: the person who commits the act and the one who receives it. It is believed that one party often has a different role or resource power compared to the other, leading to reliance on that party to make a decision (Belkin, Kurtzberg, & Naquin, 2013). The notion of status that influences e-negotiation discourse plays a role in educational settings, but not in other settings, due to the difference in workplace cultures (Waldvogel, 2007). Students, possibly due to the power imbalance, seem to be the ones initiating communication with their instructors for the purpose of reaching an understanding or agreement on academic issues (Chalak, Rasekh, & Rasekh, 2010). For this purpose, PhD applicants are encouraged to anticipate counter-arguments and address them because they are central to the process of negotiation (Firth, 2014).
- 3- **Negotiation has a goal or a reason.** Parties negotiate because they have issues in dispute (Rubin, Brown, & Deutsch, 1975), incompatible goals (Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993), or contradictory demands (Pruitt, 2013). However, it is hard to restrict negotiation only to certain purposes, such as opposing positions or a dispute to be settled. Negotiation can also be viewed as a way to work towards shared objectives (Wheatley & Firth, 1995) or interests (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 2011).
- 4- Most researchers seem to confirm that effective **negotiation ends with an agreement** (Fisher et al., 2011). It has been argued, however, that “[i]f an agreement is reached easily then it is probably not a good negotiation; it is likely that some value has been

left on the negotiating table” (Fells, 2012, p. 4). Further, Fells argues that reaching an agreement should not suggest that this is a positive outcome because “parties might agree but only reluctantly” (idem). A desired outcome can be reached by exploring possibilities and developing options that might achieve the negotiation goal (Fells, 2012). A successful outcome, in certain contexts, could be a mutually acceptable solution or compromise solution.

Academic negotiation seems to share similar features to other types of negotiation; “[n]egotiations between students and professors exhibit the same essential characteristics and can carry relatively high stakes (e.g., the completion of a degree which may determine one's livelihood)” (Biesenbach-Lucas & Weasenforth, 2002, p. 146). Scholars suggest that one of the strongest motives for students to initiate emails (or negotiations) is a request of some type (Martin, Myers, & Mottet, 1999). Hence, email negotiations in academia revolve around an academic request. The current negotiations are thus labelled negotiations of request, which involve a selection of rhetorical/persuasive moves and certain discursive features to process language and achieve the desired outcome. Further, the characteristics of requests tend to overlap with those of negotiation. Searle (1976a, p. 13) defines requests, or what he called directives, as “attempts... by the speaker to get the hearer to do something”. They can also be defined as “an illocutionary act whereby a speaker (requester) conveys to the hearer (requestee) that he/she wants the requestee to perform an act which is for the benefit of the speaker” (Trosborg, 1995, p. 187). While negotiation is said to be for mutual gain, it can be argued that, in this instance, it is more for the benefit of the person initiating it. Because negotiation centres around requestive behaviour, a whole chapter (Chapter Seven) in the current research is dedicated to exploring this phenomenon. As literature around academic negotiations is limited, exploring negotiation behaviour demands referring to business negotiation studies.

In business negotiation studies, scholars divide negotiation behaviour into two types: cooperative versus competitive negotiations, with the former focusing on win-win situations and the latter focusing solely on self-gain (see Section 5.2). These are rarely discussed in academia and will therefore be considered in this project. To date, and to the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is no research that has considered the negotiation approaches of Saudi postgraduate students when contacting prospective Australian PhD supervisors via email. The analysis of this type of

initial negotiation interaction will focus on intercultural communication investigation, as cultural differences can influence negotiation in different ways. The following section will further elaborate on this notion.

2.3. Factors influencing negotiation

2.3.1. Cultural differences

Cultural differences are hypothesised to be the strongest factor that will influence negotiation activity and linguistic choices. Other factors such as power, gender, and perceptions are influenced by cultural background. A ‘dilemma of differences’ may present when people from different cultures start to negotiate with one another (Tinsley, Curhan, & Kwak, 1999). Interestingly, the process of intercultural negotiation has been referred to as a ‘verbal dance’ or ‘cultural dance’ (Adair & Brett, 2005; Hall, 1983; Tinsley et al., 1999), in which one person does a waltz and another a tango (Tinsley et al., 1999). When a pair of dancers from a similar culture switches with other partners from different cultures, they hear a different music but work hard to adjust their movements to that music. The fact that each dancer has their own distinct steps means that the pair may find it challenging to synchronise their movements. With their attempts to make significant adjustments to complete the dance, it may be obvious that they lack the flexible movements of the target culture. Hence, intercultural dyads reach lower joint outcomes than dyads from the same culture (Adair & Brett, 2005, p. 33).

Research on negotiation and culture has suggested that people from different cultures perceive negotiation differently. Hofstede (1980) recruited 116,000 participants to identify cultural differences. He found four underlying dimensions of cultural programming: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity/femininity, and individualism/collectivism. Briefly described, power distance is the extent to which people of lesser status accept the inequality of power distribution among members. Uncertainty avoidance is the extent to which members of a society avoid ambiguous situations. Masculinity refers to gender rigidity reflected in the society, whereas femininity refers to the society’s nurturing characteristic and tendency to have overlapping gender roles. Collectivism suggests that the societal needs and goals are prioritised over those of the individual, whereas individualism suggests the opposite. Independent research in Hong Kong led Hofstede (2001) to add a fifth dimension—long-term orientation—to cover aspects of values not

discussed in the original paradigm. This dimension links the past with current and future actions; short-term societies value traditions and steadiness, whereas long-term cultures are oriented towards changes and development. In 2010, Hofstede added indulgence/self-restraint; indulgence is “related to the choice of focus for people's efforts: the future or the present and past,” whereas self-restraint is “related to the gratification versus control of basic human desires related to enjoying life” (Hofstede, 2011, p. 8).

While Hofstede's work is important because it sparked cultural awareness sensitivity among practitioners and theorists, it also needs to be viewed critically. Although Hofstede made a distinction between culture-level and individuals, there has been some arguments that national culture should not be bounded by borders (DiMaggio, 1997). Hofstede's response was that national-level identities are the only possible measure to identify cultural differences (Hofstede, 1998). Apart from the argument around nationality and culture, scholars point to the essentialist nature and overgeneralisation of his work. Hofstede utilised group-level national averages that cannot be deterministic for individuals without adopting a neo-essentialism perspective (Halliday, 2011). From a theoretical standpoint, his model has been criticised, with scholars adhering that surveys are ineffective in determining cultural differences (Schwartz, 1999). Further, some researchers argue that his study is outdated and hardly has any modern relevance, particularly in light of today's rapidly evolving global environments, convergence and internationalisation (Jones, 2007). Despite long-standing criticism of Hofstede's now-outdated oversimplification of complex realities, the systemic nature of his work has fuelled theory development for over twenty-five years. Additionally, he has made methodological developments to his model since it was first introduced and responded to the criticism, noting that no one can escape the fact that culture has shared rules and that understanding them is a precondition for group survival (Hofstede et al., 2010). His cultural dimensions are paramount for unpacking Saudi culture as manifested in the participants' language; as such, his initial four dimensions will be considered in this thesis to frame cultural differences. Power distance is the most salient, as the thesis is concerned with how postgraduate students approach a prospective PhD supervisor where there is a perceived power distance between them.

Research has found that students tend to use more polite and formal language when communicating with lecturers. Adapting Hofstede's (2001) notion of power distance, Bjørge (2007) examined formality in students' email communication with two lecturers in Norway. Her

data included 344 emails sent by 11 local students and 99 overseas students from 34 countries. She focused her analysis on the opening and closing of these emails. Bjørge (2007) found that students from high power distance cultures were more likely to choose formal greetings and complimentary closings than students from low power distance cultures. Research has also shown that when power is imbalanced, the more powerful negotiators are able to obtain higher stakes and make fewer concessions, and are more satisfied with their outcomes (Dwyer & Walker, 1981, as cited in Ganesan, 1993).

2.3.2. Perceptions of appropriateness of negotiation

Other research has focused on how culture influences the perception of the appropriateness of negotiation. In some cultures, members feel they are entitled to negotiate certain things; for other cultures, this is inappropriate or even impolite. According to Hofstede et al. (2010), teachers in high power distance cultures are considered gurus who have knowledge to share with students. Because students believe that their teachers are knowledgeable, they typically refrain from questions, accepting the knowledge offered to them and their lower status (Hofstede et al., 1991). Yook and Albert (1998) conducted a study that focused on perceptions of the appropriateness of negotiation among Koreans (n=110) and mainstream American college students (n=193) and rated the appropriateness of negotiation with instructors and classmates in 13 situations. Their first research question asked what negotiation meant to American and Korean participants. Korean students seemed to emphasise the concessional aspect of negotiation, while U.S. students defined negotiation as working through mutual cooperation and compromising. When asked to give examples for negotiation topics, American students mentioned different kinds of negotiations, such as negotiation between parent and child and negotiation between religious parties. However, Korean students often reported price negotiation and “haggling at the market” (Yook & Albert, 1998, p. 22) . They also asked about students’ perceptions of situations that were negotiable in academia. American students were able to identify a greater number of possible negotiable situations: a general difference of views about test items, a difference of views about the topic of discussion, whether to have a group or individual class arrangement or even challenging the instructor on factual matters such as whether a particular response should be counted as correct. Interestingly, Korean students identified only three situations that they perceived as negotiable

when interacting with their instructor: negotiating about an incomplete grade, extending due dates, and asking for less homework.

Biesenbach-Lucas and Weasenforth (2002) reported similar findings when comparing American students' e-negotiation style with international students. They found that American students used more extensive strategies in negotiation than international students. Biesenbach-Lucas and Weasenforth (2002) noticed that American students used more negotiation strategies due to the way they perceived their communication with their professors; international students seemed to perceive negotiation as a form of asking for favours, rather than negotiation.

2.4. Introduction to email negotiation

Negotiation interactions are increasingly taking place through new mediums other than face-to-face encounters. In the new millennium, the use of the internet for general communication has expanded exponentially and negotiators therefore find themselves engaging through a range of e-communication channels, including emails. Email has become the most popular and widely used mode, which in many cases has replaced traditional letters and phone calls. According to recent statistics, the number of global email accounts will grow from 3.9 billion in 2019 to almost 4.48 billion in 2024 (Clement, 2020). In 2018, about 281 billion e-mails were sent and received around the world, with an expected increase to over 347 billion emails daily in 2023 (Clement, 2020). It is widely understood that negotiation is something that takes place on a daily basis. Thus, a good percentage of these exchanges take place in the form of negotiation that can be completed via email (Geiger & Parlamis, 2014). This trend certainly raises theoretical questions on how electronic negotiations vary from face-to-face negotiations.

According to Nadler and Shestowsky (2006), traditional negotiation literature does not typically consider the possibility that the type of communication media used by negotiators could be a factor affecting their negotiation. However, researchers generally agree that the medium through which negotiation is conducted affects the dynamics of the interaction, the tactics used, the information shared and the outcome (Ebner, 2011; Gelfand & Brett, 2004). There are generally two dimensions that influence communication dynamics: media richness and media interactivity (Barsness & Bhappu, 2004; Ebner, 2011; Gelfand & Brett, 2004). Media richness is the capacity of the medium to convey visual and verbal or socio-emotional cues, providing immediate feedback

and facilitating communication of personal information (Fleischmann, Aritz, & Cardon, 2020). For example, in the world of negotiation, deception cannot be detected in writing but can be noticed through body language: tension, eye contact, hesitation or body movements. The lack of these cues in e-communication results in less fear that deception will be detected (Schweitzer & Croson, 1999). The absence of body language in online interaction can also result in misunderstanding while negotiating. The fact that email is considered a ‘lean’ means of communication has led negotiators to rely heavily on text rather than on each other, as they do not have a full understanding of each other’s circumstances (Tan, Bretherton, & Kennedy, 2005). Therefore, the lack of contextual cues in email interaction causes people to focus on textual argument and facts rather than personal appeal or emotional engagement (Barsness & Bhappu, 2004). Despite the fact that email messages have the flexibility of changing colours and adding emoticons to mitigate the interaction, these can also be misused and misinterpreted (Ebner, 2011). Yuan, Head, and Du (2003) found that text-only communication was associated with less mutual understanding and acceptance, as well as less mutual trust, compared to communication that included either audio or audio and video in addition to text. The negotiation process can also be more complicated if ambiguous messages are sent via email (Ebner, 2011). This may confuse the receiver and elicit a reaction that may not suit the intended meaning of the sender. Studies indicate that email interlocutors do not ask for clarification; as a result, parties have a tendency to interpret—or misinterpret—the text they receive (Rossin, 2009).

Media interactivity is the second dimension of communication influencing negotiation processes. Interactivity is the potential of the medium to sustain a seamless flow of information between two or more negotiators (Kraut, Galegher, Fish, & Chalfonte, 1992). Face-to-face negotiation is considered synchronous; each party receives an utterance once it is produced, meaning that turn-taking tends to occur sequentially. With asynchronous interactions such as email, parties write and reply whenever they desire, not necessarily sequentially (Ebner, 2011). Further, online negotiators tend to exchange messages that include multiple points gathered in one ‘bundle’ when using email (Rosette et al., 2001). It has been claimed that argument bundling may facilitate cooperative negotiation by encouraging parties to link issues together and consider them simultaneously rather than sequentially (Rosette et al., 2001). However, overbundling may impose high understanding costs (Ebner, 2011), as too much information sent at one time “can place high

demand on the receiver's information processing capabilities" (Ebner, Bhappu, Brown, Kovach, & Schneider, 2009, p. 94).

In terms of negotiators' different approaches, it has been found that negotiators were more cooperative in face-to-face settings than with email negotiation (Thompson & Nadler, 2002). Email may cause negotiators to become more competitive and risk-seeking. In one study, negotiators who communicated via email were more likely to use a competitive bargaining approach than negotiators who communicated face-to-face (Purdy et al., 2000, as cited in Rosette et al., 2001). Studies show that email encourages negotiators to become more contentious and confrontational in the way they communicate (Kiesler & Sproull, 1992). When strangers negotiate via email, they are more likely to negatively confront each other and behave impolitely or even impulsively (Thompson & Nadler, 2002). "In short: email negotiation is a rough playing field!" (Ebner, 2011, p. 5). Despite all these disadvantages, email interaction can be sometimes more advantageous than face-to-face. Negotiation via text-based email offers an excellent opportunity for negotiators to organise and prioritise their thoughts. There are also some distinctive social cues present in email discourse that can be hardly detected in face-to-face communication. This means that there can be gender differences in how email users convey information. For example, Thomson and Murachver (2001) conducted a discrimination analysis on email content. Their analysis showed that it was possible to identify the participants by gender; in 91.4% of cases, they found that females made more references to emotions, provided more personal information, used more hedges, compliments and more intensive adverbs than their male counterparts. Email may also reduce the salience of individual differences through de-emphasising race, gender, accent or any other impact of unconscious bias on negotiation (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998). Although the bulk of the literature asserts that the absence of contextual cues may cause confusion or misinterpretation, it can be argued that such an absence can save face and relationships as people have enough time to edit, hide their negative feelings, or—in the worst case scenario—hide their deception (Schweitzer & Croson, 1999).

2.4.1 Email, written or spoken

In 1998, Baron published one of her most-cited articles, "Letters by phone or speech by other means". She described the complexity of email communication by introducing an interesting but very old story she had read about some humans on a planet who communicated via "trimensional

imaging” (p. 133). In that story, a man was talking to a woman through her image, but the woman insisted that he could only ‘view’—not ‘see’—her, because he could not in fact ‘touch’ her. It can be concluded from the story that the woman believed that their interaction would make all the difference were it conducted face-to-face. Baron (1998) then introduced the role of online communications, mainly via email, and also quoted a Microsoft employee who said: “[a]t Microsoft, the phone never rings” (p. 134). The majority of people at that time believed that email was increasingly replacing traditional means of communications, including the telephone. What is very important about Baron’s (1998, p.144) study is her proposal of “the linguistics of email”, which suggests a new branch of knowledge. She focused on emails as one of the main asynchronous channels of communication in academia. Generally, online channels have different forms, including asynchronous and synchronous ways of online communication. Email, which is the focus of this study, is generally considered an asynchronous form of CMC where there is a time ‘lag’ between when messages are sent and when they appear (Garcia & Baker Jacobs, 1999). Additionally, asynchronous forms of CMC have greater delays between sending and replying than synchronous forms.

In her article, Baron (1998) attempted to unpack different issues, including whether an email is written or spoken language; ultimately, she decided that email may be deemed as a written form of verbal communication. Another researcher points out that CMC has features that are distinct from either spoken or written communication, such as interactivity and the electronic options available (Pasfield-Neofitou, 2012). Uhlíová (1994) examines the textual properties of a corpus of email messages and concludes that email contributes significantly to the development of language use, which offers new writing approaches in the context of new constraints and requirements of the medium. While some scholars believe that email messages are no less interactive than speech in some respects—to the extent that some called it ‘netspeak’ (Crystal, 2011) —the existence of many features of spoken registers does not necessarily mean that CMC texts take the typical spoken register. Collot and Belmore (1996) posit that electronic language cannot be strictly labelled as spoken messages since the participants neither see nor hear each other, nor can they be considered strictly written as many of them are composed directly online. Generally, the differences between the screen and paper text include size and the way the text is read and structured. For example, screen readers move through the text scrolling, whereas paper text readers move through by page turning. Further, the writer of the email has the advantage of

an auto-correction program for spelling and grammar. Writing is usually characterised by correct punctuation and grammatical sentences, whereas oral communication often has a less correct syntax, employs contractions and less formal language (Absalom & Pais Marden, 2004). This brings about the argument of how discourse relates to text. While discourse has a more interactive nature and can be in spoken form, text relates to concrete written utterances⁴. Formal emails sent to prospective PhD supervisors resemble—to some extent— traditional letters, with features including similar structure and the possibility of editing. Formal emails and traditional paper letters share the same pragmatic function, such as thanking people for job interviews, and a social dynamic function, such as privacy, that enables participants to communicate in a less constrained manner than face-to-face (Baron, 2002). This resemblance means that emails are generally claimed to be ‘written-like’ by a number of linguistic CMC scholars (Baron, 2002; Crystal, 2011; Danet & Herring, 2007; Herring, 2003, 2004). In this thesis, emails are considered written communication, because many paper letters nowadays are ‘typed’ electronically and printed as hard copy. However, there are some technical features specific to emails: the constraints imposed by the computer screen and the associated software, along with the dynamic aspect of sender-receiver dialogue (Crystal, 2011).

2.4.2 Academic emails

In a university context, communicating with faculty members via email may be more advantageous, as students have more time and more control over the composition, planning, editing and delivery of the messages. Despite an increasing preference among students for email interaction with their lecturers, some potential issues may arise. It has been claimed that email has made professors too accessible to students, which may erase boundaries that traditionally kept students and lecturers at a healthy distance (Duthler, 2006). Given the power imbalance, students are therefore expected to use status-congruent language that acknowledges their lower institutional status and their instructor’s higher status (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007). As previously mentioned, Bloch (2002) conducted a study within an educational setting to explore academic emails, examining 120 email messages from international students to himself as the ESL class teacher. Messages were categorised as phatic communication (57 messages), asking for help (42

⁴ In a text, the grammar and structure of sentences are analysed whereas in discourse the participants engage in communication, with the social purpose and medium being analysed.

messages), making excuses (16 messages) and making formal requests (five messages). Other than identifying reasons for communicating with the instructor, Bloch's aim was to explore the various ways students negotiated their relationship with him by using a discourse method of analysis developed by McCracken (1988). Bloch analysed each email sent to him in depth, providing authentic examples from the emails he received from his students. In one instance, a student wrote:

Mr. Bloch:

Attached is the first draft summary. It is a MS word file. By the way, we missed you in Wednesday's class. (p.125) (spelling error in the original document)

Bloch (2002) believed that the above message illustrated what is meant by the term 'heteroglossia', in that "the message may be seen as both playful in its use of language and resistant to what I considered the serious nature of the assignment" (p. 12). Bloch concluded that researching email can potentially facilitate understanding of how language encounters a change in social relationships, such as maintaining the differences in levels of power between different cultures. Investigating the dialogic exchange of messages with his students helped him understand not only how students wanted to interact with him, but also how they used email to negotiate such interaction.

A large body of linguistic literature on email interaction excludes the persuasive nature of email language. While some of these studies focused on online communication as a means of language learning (Absalom & Pais Marden, 2004; Liaw & Johnson, 2001), others investigated language in terms of its politeness (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Duthler, 2006; Krish & Salman, 2018; Murphy, 2006). A number of other studies examined cultural differences in the structure of *speech acts* (see Section 3.5 for definition) within a certain framework of communication such as compliments, requests or functions of small talk (Chalak et al., 2010; Jalilifar, Hashemian, & Tabatabaee, 2011; Knapp, 2011; Krulatz, 2012).

Almost a decade ago, Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) was already pointing out the importance of teaching email communication rules in academia due to the increasing number of young university students who have grown up in the instant messaging culture. She added that some university professors encouraged their students to contact them via email to receive quicker responses. Her study examined email requests sent by Greek Cypriot university students who were

non-native speakers of English to faculty members over a period of several semesters. Besides requests, the study examined politeness aspects such as forms of address, the degree of directness and lexical modifiers used by students to soften their e-requests. Major findings included an absence of downgraders, omission of greetings/closings, more confronting requests such as ‘want statements’, and unacceptable forms of address such as starting an email with the professor’s first name without any greetings or title. One of the interesting elements—which can be referred to as a negotiation element—is the absence of generating options (optionality), which appears to give the academics no choice in complying with the request. For example, a student might provide different courses of action when discussing a topic by saying ‘I am wondering whether I can do this or that’, rather than simply saying ‘I suggest that I do this’. When these instances are found in students’ emails, some scholars argue that such emails result in pragmatic failure (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). This conclusion is in line with many other pragmatics studies conducted in academic settings (Biesenbach-Lucas & Weasenforth, 2002; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996).

Other scholars, however, suggest focusing more on strategic rhetorical behaviour rather than limiting the focus to language choices (Bhatia, 2014). Hence, many pragmatics studies do not consider a holistic view of analysis and focus partly on certain linguistic choices among native and non-native speakers of English. Other researchers focus on professional identity development via email between supervisors and supervisees in academia (Luke & Gordon, 2012). They found that the use of certain discourse markers such as, ‘That being said’, create solidarity and display supervisee competence. They also suggested that inclusive pronouns such as ‘we’ and ‘our’ create a shared alignment for professional needs.

2.4.3. Cultural influence of email interaction

Investigating CMC across cultures is a relatively recent domain of negotiation studies. Although CMC takes place every hour between people of different cultures, its “outcome depends on largely unanalysed assumptions about the ways in which intercultural communication plays out online” (Hanna & De Nooy, 2004, p. 2). De Nooy and Hanna (2003) summarise four very interesting—but contradictory—arguments in the literature about whether or not people’s cultures and backgrounds can be detected through their internet use. The first argument suggests that the internet removes cultural difference, creating “a cultural free zone” or even “a culture in itself” (De Nooy & Hanna, 2003, p. 3), whereas the second argument suggests the opposite, claiming that

the internet reinforces cultural differences. The third argument is that CMC mirrors real life cultural differences. That is to say, what happens on the internet happens in real life, and that the absence of non-verbal cues should not be viewed as the cause of any problem; “it is just face-to-face without the faces” (De Nooy & Hanna, 2003, p. 5). Lastly, “CMC is inflected by but also inflects cultural and genre-related expectations” (De Nooy & Hanna, 2003, p. 5). For example, when using email, people from low-context cultures such as Japan, Hong Kong, or East Asia seem to switch to a more direct and explicit style because of the medium (Rosette et al., 2011). However, it is not clear whether this tactic has helped them communicate effectively. In fact, there is some evidence that, even though some Japanese intercultural managers tried to be direct and explicit with their US peers in face-to-face settings, US managers failed to understand the Japanese priorities in the negotiation; on the other hand, the Japanese understood the US negotiators’ priorities, which were made explicit in a typically Western manner (Brett & Okumura, 1998).

In a later article, Hanna and De Nooy (2004, pp. 40-49) cite 80 articles discussing cultural patterns in online communication. These articles investigated the online patterns of more than 15 cultural backgrounds including China, Japan, Taiwan, Ukraine, Germany, Spain, France, Greece, Canada, Latin Americans, Mexico, Trinidad, Australian Indigenous and Azerbaijan. None of the studies cited considered Middle Eastern cultures or Arabic-speaking countries. In terms of email topics, scholars from different disciplines investigated email media for various reasons. Currently, there are over 50,000 research papers investigating this media. Linguists, for example, have focused on different issues surrounding email. Among these, language learning or acquisition (Absalom & Pais Marden, 2004; Vinagre, 2005), cross-cultural request differences (Chalak et al., 2010), terms of address (Rau & Rau, 2016), and openings and closings (Bou-Franch, 2011; Huang, 2016). Most of the above studies have only partially investigated how culture impacts email interaction as a whole. More recent studies suggest that cultural differences in email communication can be present in almost all moves in an email (Holtbrügge, Weldon, & Rogers, 2013; Li & Chen, 2016). Specifically, they can have an impact on the preference for formality, preciseness, and task-relatedness (Holtbrügge et al., 2013).

Research into contrastive socio-pragmatic studies has demonstrated cultural differences in the ways certain speech acts are used, particularly on ‘socio-pragmatic transfer’: how the native language of the speaker influences the way they structure their speech act in the foreign language (Golato & Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006). Iimuro (2006) focused on the consequential organisation of

requests via email between Japanese students and American students. His study provided a means of analysing request accounts via email in general, although his focus was in the context of learning English as a second language in the field of interlanguage pragmatics.

In regard to the field of pragmatics, there have been two Middle Eastern studies that adopted the Biesenbach-Lucas (2005) coding scheme in analysing students' communication strategies. The first was Bulut and Rababah (2007), who analysed Saudi female students' email communications with a non-Saudi male lecturer. Although the Biesenbach-Lucas (2005) model was used to examine how Americans differed from international students in terms of the purpose of communication and the communicative strategies used, Bulut and Rababah (2007) focus only on Saudi female students. They found that most of the female students' communicative strategies resembled American norms, basing their judgement on the American data found in the work of Biesenbach-Lucas (2005). However, the study did not include American participants to enable the researcher to accurately examine how both groups differed or were similar.

Following the same study design, Chalak et al. (2010) conducted a study on Iranian non-native English speaking students at both undergraduate and graduate levels. They investigated the students' (224) authentic email interactions (581) with their instructors in terms of their communicative strategies: requesting, reporting and negotiating. Their aim was to "find out which communication strategies and topics were used to address the instructors" (Chalak et al., 2010, p. 141). Most of their findings confirmed previous research, which identified similar strategies and topics. However, their study did not differentiate between requesting as a strategy and negotiating; the researchers often conflated the two. Students were found to 'request' potentially sensitive issues like an extension of a due date. This specific type of request was not classified as a negotiating strategy in their study but could arguably be classified as a point of negotiation between students and their lecturers that needs to be agreed on. Other studies have indeed identified a request for an extension as a topic of negotiation (Biesenbach-Lucas & Weasenforth, 2002; Yook & Albert, 1998). The requesting strategy in Chalak et al. (2010) has been found to be employed at 77% compared to negotiating, which surprisingly received the lowest percentage in both groups (10%). The findings relevant to this study are that all the negotiating emails included requests. Another minor but interesting finding is that the postgraduate students (MA) used more sophisticated topics compared to the undergraduates (BA): unlike the BA students, the MA students seemed to avoid communicating with their instructors about topics like an extension of a

due date or a request for explanation. Chalak et al. (2010) found that substantive topics—clarification, submission of work, or evaluation of work previously submitted—received the highest percentage as the most common topics students discussed via email. The above-mentioned studies can be criticised for reflecting a rather essentialist approach to cultural online behaviour; however, it is commonly argued that researchers cannot avoid at least some kind of essentialism as it is “psychologically inevitable feature of the way human beings think” (Philips, 2010, p.2). This explains why essentialism is prevalent in applied linguistics where national culture and national language are inextricably linked (Holliday, 2000).

2.4.4 Gender differences in online communication

To provide a context for examining gender-specific language in email, a review of literature on gender differences is essential. An early study in psychology by Spence and Helmreich (1979) proposed the term ‘expressiveness’ for women to indicate a set of attitudes and behaviour and ‘instrumentality’ for men, suggesting that they were more agentive or interested in making things happen. Later studies supported the influence of this kind of nature on both genders’ communicative style (Holmes & Meyerhoff, 2008; Tannen, 1990). Thus, women use a facilitative style and men a restricting style (Maccoby, 1990). The differences in communication styles between men and women remain a controversial issue to date.

Coates (1986) summarised the historical range of approaches to language and gender in her book *Women, Men and Language*. She identified four approaches known as the deficit, dominance, difference, and dynamic approaches. The deficit approach defines men’s language as the standard or ‘benchmark’ when analysing women’s language. Similarly, the dominance approach believes that the difference in style of speech between both genders results from male supremacy. The difference approach advocates equality and attributes the difference in styles among genders as belonging to different subcultures. The dynamic approach, which is more open to the context and the dynamic factors of an interaction, results in a socially appropriate gender construct (social constructionist approach). Tannen (1990), on the other hand, ardently argued that society prescribes gender roles⁵. It has the power to shape conceptions of femininity and

⁵ Aside from social roles, new research attempts started to dig deep into the definition of gender and whether gender identity is based on biological or psychological factors. This and similar complexities are outside the scope of this study.

masculinity, and it is evident in many respects: types of clothing, colour preferences, language preferences, profession choices, hairstyles and other facets of life (Bacang, Rillo, & Alieto, 2019). Comparing conversational goals, Tannen (1990) argued that men tend to use a report style, aiming to communicate factual information, whereas women more often use a rapport style that is more concerned with building and maintaining relationships.

With the rise in internet communication, gender differences online have been investigated by a number of researchers. It has been argued that women use more politeness strategies in email than men (Hariri, 2017). Very early on, Herring (1996) assumed there were some gender-specific styles in email communication. She found that women tend to use an aligned style in communication and men use an opposed style; in other words, men tended to close the discussion, while women encouraged further communication. Later, Herring (2003) found that, unlike women, men appear to be not so much concerned with politeness. The tentativeness of women's language has been attributed to having a low status in society (Lakoff & Lakoff, 2004) or perhaps in a particular context, such as men being moderators of some online forums (Park, 2008). In a thesis about gender differences in a discussion forum for expatriate Saudi Arabian students in Brisbane, Madini (2012) claims that women have a lower hierarchical status in Saudi society; therefore, their tentative language can be predicted in the online forums. This may be relevant when interacting with people, particularly with men, from their own culture online. The view that Saudi women's tentative language can be predictable due to their cultural expectations could be challenged nowadays, where Saudi women have both prestigious PhD positions in Australian institutions and academic careers back in their home country. Being in a new Australian culture may also contribute to the change of female communication strategies due to the change in the power dynamics. It will be shown throughout this thesis how Saudi women use language differently from Saudi men when they write to Australian academics.

Waldvogel (2007) examined two New Zealand workplaces: one in an educational setting and the other in a manufacturing plant. At the educational institute, women acknowledged their addressee more frequently than men and made greater use of greetings and closings. By contrast, men dominated staffing numbers at the manufacturing plant. This study, along with other recent studies, suggests that workplace culture influences each gender's communicative patterns (Vine, 2020). Motalebzadeh, Mohsenzadeh, and Sobhani (2014) found that gender is influential in the choice of email topics and communicative strategies. Female students tend to frequently send

relational topics, whereas male students focused on substantive topics. In one study of emails to friends, women were found to be more responsive and considerate than men (Colley & Todd, 2002). Women showed evidence of sensitivity and awareness of the recipient by using forms of warnings, questions, and references to ‘you’ (the recipient) (Colley & Todd, 2002). A more recent study suggests that female students’ use of politeness is heavily dependent on the gender of the person they send emails to; hence they can be more direct and informal with female academics than with males (Thomas-Tate, Daugherty, & Bartkoski, 2017).

Conflicting views with reference to how both genders differ online may be related to unanalysed factors, which generally attribute masculinity to impoliteness and femininity to politeness (Mills, 2003). The question remains of how gender variations in politeness are examined in a way that links a particular situation with language use (Hobbs, 2003). Hobbs’ (2003) data were drawn from voicemail messages in a legal setting. She found that the male speakers’ use of politeness markers was roughly equal to that of women. Moreover, positive politeness strategies were used almost exclusively by male speakers, and only by attorneys, and the two speakers who used the greatest number of politeness markers in individual messages were both men. Factors which may play a role in explaining these findings include the one-sided nature of voicemail communications and the fact that the data were generated in a legal setting.

The inconsistent views of gender variations could also be attributed to the fact that “[g]ender and language studies to date have evolved from frameworks largely designed and imposed by men” (Wright, 2002, p. 1). Scholars such as Dunbar (2015) along with Holmes and Meyerhoff (2008) suggest that linguistic behaviour for both men and women shifts based on power dynamics; either gender can dominate. A recent study suggested that women evaluated themselves higher within female-dominated workplaces, whereas men were more confident in mixed-gender environments rather than in male or female dominated environments (Larsson & Alvinus, 2019). These results—and perhaps other experiences each gender has—are reflected in their linguistic behaviour, which in turn affects politeness strategies (Lakoff & Lakoff, 2004). For example, as stated earlier, men were found to use more politeness strategies in comparison to female colleagues in legal settings, which is a typically male-dominated environment (Hobbs, 2003). Since the early nineties, women have competed in the workplace and strived for better institutional positions while maintaining positive relationships with others (Tannen, 1994). More recently, this trend became

prevalent for Saudi women who, under the vision of 2030, are increasingly empowered by being integrated into development plans and trained for important leadership roles (Mohamed, 2020).

While the knowledge available focuses on how men and women differ in their language in different settings, scarce attention has been paid to how they differ in an initial negotiation email communication and on a specific topic, especially in terms of comparing genders from both intra-cultural and intercultural perspectives. AlAfnan (2014) stressed that future research is of paramount importance in relation to gender. He asserted that gender differences should be viewed more seriously and should be examined in terms of politeness in workplace emails. This thesis takes into account gender factors, focusing on the persuasive and polite discourse that both genders employ in their email communication. Hobbs (2003) notes that most research into gender differences in politeness has not considered the relationship, situation and language use. Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 30) propose that, to examine the variations in politeness levels between both genders, we need to specify certain circumstances where both genders are from the same *status-bearing* groups and play similar roles; otherwise, politeness production is hard to predict.

In this thesis, emails were written by students wishing to continue their higher degree studies (similar status), all of whom were writing to prospective PhD supervisors that were higher in power and had a crucial role in their future acceptance. Thus, both genders were writing under similar circumstances and for the same purpose, which should elucidate clear differences in the communication strategies used by each gender. A new Saudi study suggested that Saudi women use involvement strategies that focus on supportive and collaborative statements when communicating in the mixed-gender environment (Zaghlool & Yahia, 2020). Thus, as some researchers suggest, there is a need to identify gender-specific language schema when investigating gender differences instead of focusing on general norms, which tend to be similar to both genders from a specific cultural group (Hancock & Rubin, 2015). Mills (2014) also argued that gender differences can be revealed through the investigation of genre. In the current thesis, genre analysis and the framework of persuasive appeals (see Section 3.4.1) provided accurate accounts into schematic differences between both Saudi genders. The investigation of gender differences is particularly significant for Saudi culture, being a largely gender-segregated society. The next chapter will expand on the theoretical frameworks employed in this thesis and why each were necessary to enrich the exploration of negotiation discourse in these emails.

2.5 Chapter summary

This chapter provided an overview of the main themes in this thesis: culture, negotiation, email communication and gender differences. These were supported by definitions and the literature surrounding these themes, situating the scope of the current investigation and allowing the reader to better understand the context. The next chapter details the theoretical frameworks of this study, justifies their selection criteria, and provides definitions, arguments and views of key scholars regarding certain models, while critiquing them. The second half of Chapter Three digs deep into how other researchers in the field have approached these frameworks, with their findings and contributions.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

3.1 Theoretical framework

The research framework design is complex due to the nature of CMC, and emails in particular, being an asynchronous means of communication where people have time to plan their interaction. Thus, it is important to classify each email according to a certain structure or process with the aim of uncovering these processes to determine each participant group's discursive and cultural behaviour. Since this study is exploratory in nature,⁶ the emails were investigated using cross-disciplinary theories and approaches from applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, genre analysis, intercultural communication and business studies. The major overarching theory considered in this project is that of politeness in its traditional and discursive versions; other complementary approaches include genre analysis and persuasion. While politeness and genre analysis were adopted in different pragmatic studies that will be discussed in this chapter, persuasion is derived from genre analysis in most contrastive studies research. All approaches were necessary to serve the main purpose of this study, as will be discussed in detail in this chapter.

3.1.1 Scope of study

Under the larger framework of computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) (Herring, 2004), this project will look at (im)politeness and discourse patterns (genre analysis) through a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data analysis to strengthen the validity of research results. The study operates within a framework that links discourse analysis and pragmatics—‘pragmatics of discourse’—within the scope of both sociolinguistic and pragmalinguistic analysis. Politeness theory is claimed to be a function of both pragmalinguistics and sociolinguistics, as it blends features such as the social distance between interlocutors and the degree of illocutionary force to produce an appropriate politeness strategy for the situation (Leech, 2016). However, in terms of general discourse analysis, linguists assert that discourse analysis should not be perceived as

⁶ Exploratory research is used when the topic is new and the data is difficult to collect; it aims to gain familiarity with a phenomenon to gain new insights and reach an understanding of a research problem (Babbie, 2007). This is relevant to this research as it is considered the first project investigating academic email proposals sent by Saudi students to prospective supervisors. The main source of data in this study—private emails—is also part of an ‘occluded genre’ (Swales, 1996) and is not available to the public.

falling outside the realm of pragmatics; rather, it can be deemed as an integral part of it (Barron & Schneider, 2014; Locher & Watts, 2005). The pragmatics of discourse represents two complementary levels of analysis, correspondingly shedding light on more macro and micro aspects of human interaction. It has been suggested that different approaches to discourse analysis are pragmatic in nature because they are more connected with the interactional sphere than with syntax (Al-Hindawi & Saffah, 2017). This resulted in the birth of what has been called ‘discourse pragmatics’ (Blum-Kulka, 1997; Herring, Stein, & Virtanen, 2013). As this study is based on CMC, overarching guidance by CMC scholars must be followed to justify the decisions of choosing the main theoretical frameworks. Below is a diagram of the process of the framework implemented in the current research.

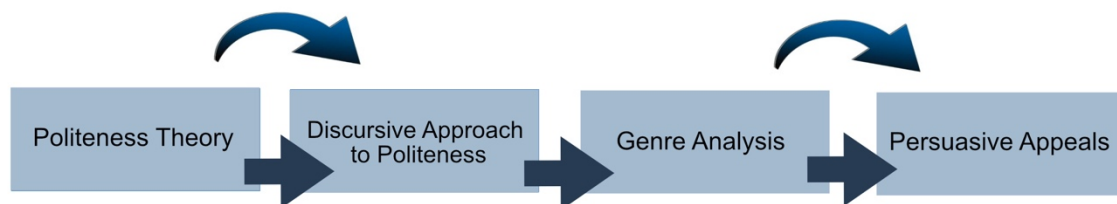


Figure 3.1 Theoretical frameworks guiding this study

Figure 3.1 demonstrates how the data were analysed. The pragmatic approach of politeness required a blend of both traditional politeness theory, as well as a more discursive approach. These were the overarching pragmatic approaches that were carried out in all chapters. Genre analysis, as demonstrated in the diagram, assisted in identifying the content of the email by breaking down each email into communicative moves such as ‘self-identification’, ‘greetings’ and ‘sign off’. This was used to classify emails in general, and the requestive behaviour and persuasive appeals in particular (Section 3.4.1). Each supervision request was analysed by looking at the moves before and after it, furthering the understanding about the strategic positioning of the request—the central aspect in e-negotiation discourse.

Persuasion was identified by dividing the emails into three types of persuasive appeals: affective, rational and credibility. Under each appeal, there were different moves (see Appendix D), illuminating the differences of persuasive appeals among gender and culture. Genre analysis played a role in understanding the nature of each appeal by identifying its moves. Both genre analysis and persuasion assisted in identifying the content of each email message; politeness, on

the other hand, highlighted the tone of the moves. Hence, politeness, genre analysis and persuasion are all vital when examining the language of e-negotiation. Figure 3.1 shows how all these approaches and theories are connected in a way that could make them overlap at times, working together to unpack the e-negotiation discourse.

According to Herring's (2004) philosophy in understanding computer-mediated discourse, a mixture of paradigms and methodologies should be combined when studying a certain linguistic phenomenon online. She suggests that certain frameworks could be "adapted from language-focused disciplines such as linguistics, communication and rhetoric to the analysis of computer-mediated communication" to research online linguistic behaviour (Herring, 2004, p. 338). Hence, while Figure 3.1 represents the main theories and approaches used in this study, other underlying approaches of business negotiation and intercultural communication were also implemented to interpret certain forms of cultural and linguistic behaviour.

3.2 Overview of Politeness

According to Kádár (2017, p. 1) "[p]oliteness comprises linguistic and non-linguistic behavior through which people indicate that they take others' feelings of how they should be treated into account". Politeness behaviour has been defined as "linguistic behaviour which is perceived to be appropriate to the social constraints of the ongoing interaction" (see Section 3.2.3) (Watts, 2003, p. 19). According to *Lisān al-ʿArab (the tongue of the Arabs)* dictionary, politeness in Arabic, which literally means 'literature' (*adab*), is defined as the way that leads people to be good and forbids them from being bad (Ibn Manzur, 1290). Similarly, the Persian word *adab* "is defined as the knowledge by which man can avoid any fault in speech" (Shahrokhi & Bidabadi, 2013, p. 17).

Polite behaviour in general covers different aspects such as body language and gestures. It also highlights cross-cultural differences. For example, making direct eye contact while speaking with your parents is perceived as rude in Saudi Arabian contexts, while avoiding eye contact can be considered impolite in some Western countries (Davies & Bentahila, 2012). Most scholars do not define politeness; even Brown and Levinson (1987), who best described politeness in verbal language, do not define the term in their entire book (Fraser, 1990). Instead, some scholars point to the purpose of politeness, which concerns building or maintaining harmonious and smooth social relations within a community (Allan, 2016). Brown and Levinson (1987) have also

suggested that speakers employ politeness strategies to maintain social harmony, rather than to have a successful communicative outcome. Traditional politeness theorists tend to situate the study of politeness within social and linguistics fields, focusing more on the production of language rather than the context of it. These scholars, part of what has become known as first-wave politeness research, typically view language as being universal and applicable across cultures and languages. In the second wave, politeness researchers attempted to approach politeness as an individualistic—and often idiosyncratic—interactionally co-constructed phenomenon (Jucker, 2020). Third-wave politeness research can be seen as “a middle ground that integrates classic and discursive approaches to (im)politeness” (Haugh & Culpeper, 2018, p. 1). These views will be explored in detail in the next sections.

3.2.1 First-wave politeness research

The tradition of first-wave politeness research has been pioneered by three main scholars: Lakoff (1973), Leech (1983), and Brown and Levinson (1987). These theorists focus on the principle of politeness with two distinctive views; Lakoff (1973) and Leech (1983) focus on the conversational maxims view, while Brown and Levinson focus more on face management. Their work is discussed in detail below.

Politeness maxims — Lakoff (1973)

Lakoff's (1973) seminal work is structured around Grice's⁷ (1975) Cooperative Principle (CP), which is divided into four Maxims of Conversation known as Gricean maxims. They describe specific principles observed by people in pursuit of meaningful and effective interactions (Grice, 1975). There is the maxim of quality (say what is true), the maxim of quantity (be as informative as is required, not more or less), the maxim of relevance (be relevant), and the maxim of manner (be perspicuous and avoid ambiguity). To communicate effectively, interlocutors try to be informative, truthful, relevant and to avoid ambiguity. Lakoff (1973) added a new perspective to politeness theory in terms of sociopragmatic investigation. For her, politeness is an individual user's strategy, chosen in advance or determined by the situation. Lakoff, as a formalist linguist, tried to establish language as a system through adopting pragmatic rules. Expanding on Grice's

⁷ Grice's model was first introduced in 1967, however, his most commonly used reference is the 1975 version.

views, she argued that there are two main rules of pragmatic competence: be clear and be polite. Based on these rules, there is always a need for an appropriate balance of clarity and politeness in interactions to avoid or minimise any potential conflict in communication. Lakoff noted that sometimes the need for clarity clashes with the need for politeness; Leech (1983) would echo this sentiment later. Unlike Leech, Lakoff (1973, p. 297) asserts that “it is more important in a conversation to avoid offense than achieve clarity” because she believes that the overarching purpose of politeness in society is “to reduce friction in personal interaction” (Lakoff & Lakoff, 2004, p. 87). Lakoff (1973) also suggested three sub-maxims to the latter Politeness Principle: don’t impose, give options and make your receiver feel good. The second rule, ‘Be polite’, refers to the maxim of distance, deference, and camaraderie. For these rules to be followed efficiently, there should be some balance of shared cultural and linguistic knowledge between interlocutors. Once the balance of such maxims is violated, the social behaviour could be perceived as impolite.

Lakoff’s model is appealing because it perceives politeness as a universal construct and thus sets a framework that does not see politeness from one culture’s perspective. However, according to Brown and Levinson (1987), the problem with Lakoff’s analysis of politeness is the rigidity of her account about the rules that constitute politeness. Another criticism made by Watts (2003) concerns the ambiguity around how speakers come to form these maxims, as Lakoff only explained and categorised the pragmatics rules of politeness. Tannen (2005) also commented on the lack of clarity around some of Lakoff’s politeness rules, referring to them as aloof and informal. From the suggested rules of her model, we can conclude there is a focus on the addressee’s needs, where strategies can then be chosen in advance or determined by the situation.

Politeness principles — Leech (1983)

Like Lakoff (1973), Leech (1983) drew on Grice’s (1975) Cooperative Principle. Leech described politeness as a type of behaviour that allows the participants to engage in a social interaction in a relatively harmonious atmosphere. Leech (1983) proposed six maxims of politeness, with two kinds of uniquely labelled illocutionary acts; he calls “assertives” representatives, and “impositives” directives (p. 132). They are all in favour of the notion that negative politeness (avoiding discord) is more important than positive politeness (seeking concord). These six maxims are the Tact Maxim, the Generosity Maxim, the Approbation Maxim, the Modesty Maxim, the Agreement Maxim, and the Sympathy Maxim. The discussion of each of these is out of the scope

of this study. However, it is worth mentioning that Leech does not claim that these maxims apply to all cultures, but notes that the Politeness Principle maxims are weighted differently in different cultures (Culpeper, 2011a). For Leech (1983), indirect speech acts are favoured over direct acts if the speaker wishes to be more polite, as they increase the degree of optionality and tentativeness of speech acts by reducing the intensity of their illocutionary force. However, it can be argued that for some cultures, such as Saudi Arabia, choosing indirect speech acts does not warrant optionality, which is one of the most significant negotiation behaviours (Biesenbach-Lucas & Weasenforth, 2002; Fisher et al., 2011). Both Lakoff (1973) and Leech (1977; 1983) consider politeness in terms of principles, which are not the focus of this study either. Other scholars in the field, such as Brown and Levinson (1978), define politeness as redressive action taken to counterbalance the disruptive effect of face-threatening acts (FTAs), one of the major focuses in this study.

Politeness and face — Brown and Levinson (1987)

Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of politeness has frequently been described as one of the most influential politeness frameworks to emerge from the perspective of linguistic pragmatics and sociolinguistics (Eelen, 2001). Brown and Levinson's (1978) theory is centred on the notion of face, derived from Goffman (1955) and the 'conversational logic' proposed by Grice (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Goffman (1955) 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" (Goffman, 1955, p. 213). Lakoff also inspired the model of Brown and Levinson in terms of conflict avoidance. The most original contribution by Brown and Levinson, however, is the provision of a comprehensive face model according to which interlocutors behave. It also provides interlocutors with ways to counterbalance possible face threats using different linguistic strategies.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), there are two kinds of face that reflect two different desires present in every interaction: positive face, the desire to be liked and admired; and negative face, the desire not to be imposed upon. Positive face refers to one's self-esteem, whereas negative face refers to one's freedom to act. Positive politeness strategies aim to satisfy the addressees' desire to enhance their self-image; their action or wants should be thought of as appropriately 'approach-based'. Positive strategies are divided into three categories: 1) claiming common ground by building in-group membership, intensifying interest to hearer (H) (or reader), or seeking agreement; 2) conveying that the speaker (S) (or writer) and H are cooperators by

claiming reflexivity and reciprocity; and 3) fulfilling H's want for some X by giving gifts (goods, sympathy, understanding) to H (Brown & Levinson, 1987). According to this theory, individuals are required to adhere to the politeness conventions by minimising the threat posed by face-threatening acts (FTAs). The authors believe that all speech acts are potentially face-threatening, either to the hearer's or speaker's face. When an FTA needs to be performed, there is a choice of five major strategies, as suggested by Brown and Levinson (1987):

- 1- **Bald-on-record strategy** performs FTA without redress, doing it in the most direct way.
- 2- **Positive politeness strategy** focuses on the hearer's positive face, which is "the positive self-image that he claims for himself" (Brown and Levinson, 1978, p. 70).
- 3- **Negative politeness strategy** focuses 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 avoid the "inescapable accountability, the responsibility for his action that on-record strategies entail" (Brown and Levinson, 1978, p. 70).
- 5- **Withhold the FTA** (avoidance). With this strategy, the speaker fails to achieve his/her desired communication by refraining from performing FTA (not talk at all) to avoid offending the hearer.

Many linguistic studies draw on Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, as it offers the most comprehensive treatment of face and language use. It has been followed by other key linguistic scholars including Bella and Sifianou (2012), Herring (1994), Kádár (2019), Mills and Mullany (2011) and Spencer-Oatey (2000).

Criticism of politeness theory

Notwithstanding the popularity of Brown and Levinson's model, their account of politeness has been questioned in the politeness literature. It has been argued convincingly that politeness does not necessarily manifest itself in linguistic features and is heavily a contextual judgment (Haugh, 2007; Locher, 2004; Watts 2003). Their model has also been criticised for ignoring the "wider linguistic context" essential for interpreting pragmatic meaning, and focusing instead on

“isolated speech acts” (Hössjer, 2013, p. 616). Further, some critics believe that Brown and Levinson’s model posits an overly pessimistic view, especially as it revolves around potential face-threats and a conflict avoidance perspective (Kasper, 1990; Nwoye, 1992; Schmidt, 1980). Were it always true, it “could rob social interaction of all elements of pleasure” (Nwoye, 1992, p. 311). Conceptual clarity has not matched the debate around this theory, as it included different interpretations and definitions ranging from a focus on language use to the use of specific linguistic formulae (Eelen, 2001). Scholars such as Mills (2003) argue that, instead of solely relying on the strategic employment of politeness for the purpose of avoiding face threats, politeness can encompass a wider range of behaviours. Watts (2003) insists that Brown and Levinson’s theory is based on a face-work model, rather than on politeness conventions. Other scholars believe some aspects that appear to be linked with politeness norms are deeper manifestations of language and culture (Wierzbicka, 1985). For example, Holmes and Wilson (2017) believe that in languages such as Chinese, Japanese and Korean, politeness is typically a matter of social convention or linguistic etiquette, rather than strategic choice.

A number of scholars have pointed out some inconsistencies in the applicability and usage of Brown and Levinson’s model (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; Eelen, 2001; Leech 2007; Meyer, 2001; Sifianou, 1992; Terkourafi, 2008; Wierzbicka, 1985). Scholars found that Brown and Levinson’s predictions were not accurate in several ways; for example, they predicted that people closely associated to one another use less politeness strategies (social distance). However, Baxter (1984) found that familiarity was associated with using more politeness strategies and that some strategies simultaneously affect both positive and negative desires. In the same vein, studies have shown that negative politeness is closely intertwined with conventionalisation for performing face-threatening acts (FTAs) in most Western countries (Meyer, 2001; Watts, 2003).

Although the concept of ‘face’ is claimed to be universal, research has shown significant cross-cultural differences (Eelen, 2001). Gu (1990) made a critical comparison between the Western notion of face and modern Chinese politeness. Generally, Chinese scholars emphasise that Brown and Levinson assume an individualistic concept of face, which is not theoretically applicable to cultures with broad collectivistic values in emphasising the importance of in-group interests over individual wants (Gu, 1990; Lim, 1994; Mao, 1994). Similarly, other researchers suggest that Brown and Levinson’s model revolves around the European Anglo-Saxon standard of politeness and autonomy, leaving no room for other cultural politeness norms and the social

perception of the face (Gu, 1990; Leech 2007; Matsumoto, 1988). What is surprising is that many critics seem to disregard the very statement in Brown and Levinson's later book, which acknowledged the critique of their earlier work and an admission that their model is subject to further cultural elaboration: "This is the bare bones of a notion of face which (we argue) is universal, but which in any particular society would expect to be the subject of much cultural elaboration" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 13). Fukada and Asato (2004) challenged those who claimed that Brown and Levinson's model cannot be applicable to certain cultures, discussing the possibility of improving a framework consistent with Brown and Levinson capable of capturing certain Japanese cultural norms. Other studies focus on ways to improve this important theory. The debates in these studies have contributed to further our understanding not only to what is 'missing' but also to what can be 'added' to enrich the initial model. Craig, Tracy, and Spisak (1986) proposed that it is inappropriate to try to quantitatively falsify Brown and Levinson's framework, arguing that it is an interpretive model that enables an analyst to understand a range of examples of language use that would be unintelligible otherwise. By extension, the most appropriate way to test the efficacy of the model is to apply it to new examples, as second-wave politeness theorists have proposed.

3.2.2 New waves of politeness research

*Second-wave politeness*⁸

Since the early 2000s, work by leading politeness theorists such as Eelen (2001), Mills (2003), and Watts (2003) has been classified as second-wave politeness research, constituting a fundamental critique of first-wave politeness and providing alternative research avenues (Haugh & Watanabe, 2017; Van Der Bom & Mills, 2015). Generally, second-wave theorists note that Brown and Levinson's approach lacks both the recognition of the hearer's perspective and the discursive context in which utterances are made and politeness is negotiated (Watts, 2003, p. 251). The focus of second-wave politeness research seems to cluster around forming a discourse-oriented approach, an area neglected by first-wave theorists (Fukushima, 2015; Kasper, 1996). In other words, critics of traditional politeness theory believe it is biased towards the speaker and the way

⁸ The first analysis chapter (Chapter Five) in this study is introductory in nature and focuses on first- and second-wave politeness. Chapters Six and Seven deal with issues surrounding (im)politeness and are more in line with third-wave politeness.

the language is assessed, and demand a more developed model that is sensitive to the amount of politeness required in certain situations (Culpeper, 2005). Second-wave theorists adopt a more social, rather than individualistic, view of politeness and “how politeness underpins social order both across and within different relational networks or communities” (Haugh & Watanabe, 2017, p. 5). Among the pioneers of second-wave politeness research whose achievements will be briefly discussed are Spencer-Oatey (2000), Mills (2000; 2003), and Watts (2003).

Spencer-Oatey (2000) proposes expanding the field of politeness to adopt cultural and sociopragmatic aspects of face. She also focuses on rapport management, rather than face management, stating that “the term ‘face’ focuses on concerns for self, whereas rapport management suggests more of a balance between self and other” (Spencer-Oatey, 2000, p. 12). Therefore, she substituted the notion of ‘face’ for the notion of ‘rapport’ by proposing a sociopragmatic framework that extends the work of Brown and Levinson (1987). In line with Culpeper, Marti, Mei, Nevala, and Schauer (2010), Spencer-Oatey (2011) believes that a shift from individual concerns is necessary, as communications are governed by relational concerns correlated with interpersonal relations as variables. She suggests two different interrelated faces to elaborate on people’s desires to be approved. The first face, ‘quality face’, is associated with a positive estimation to the individual’s qualities and abilities. The other face, ‘identity face’, is about a positive evaluation in terms of social roles. To sum up, the quality face represents a personal perspective, whereas the identity face conveys a social perspective.

As a postmodernist theorist, Watts (2003) presents another contribution to the field of politeness by classifying first-order politeness (politeness1) and second-order politeness (politeness2), referred to in this thesis as first and second-wave politeness research. He attempted to bridge the gap of what other theories seemed to miss, believing that theories of politeness should investigate first-order (im)politeness from a descriptive perspective. According to Watts (2003), it is not the role of second-order politeness to be used as an analytical tool assessing and elaborating instances of what can be deemed polite or impolite behaviour. In his opinion, an utterance cannot be recognised as polite or impolite in advance; therefore, it is impossible to develop a predictive approach to second-order linguistic (im)politeness. He states that “it is impossible to evaluate (im)politeness behaviour out of the context of real, ongoing verbal interaction” and also “social interaction is negotiated on-line” (Watts, 2003, p. 23). He relies on an explicitly sociological conceptualisation of interaction that emphasises both the nature of its interpretation and the role of

power in shaping the form and content of (im)polite behaviour. What distinguishes Watts' (2003) approach is the introduction of new concepts: 'politic' and 'polite' behaviour. Politic behaviour is directed towards the goal of maintaining a state of equilibrium between the individuals of a social group, whereas polite behaviour is something beyond "what is perceived to be appropriate to the ongoing social interaction" (Watts, 2003, p 21). In his later work, Watts discusses the concept of relational work, which contributed to the next wave of politeness research (Jucker, 2020). Along with Locher (2004), Locher and Watts (2005) define relational work as the process of negotiating relationships in interaction. This term not only accounts for polite behaviour, but covers all aspects of interpersonal linguistic behaviour associated with identity construction (Locher, 2008).

Mills (2002; 2003) uncovered various problems in modern politeness theories before spelling out her own approach. She is a postmodern theorist who combines recent theoretical work on gender, based on work in feminist linguistics, with new theories on linguistic politeness. Though Mills (2003) classifies herself as a third-wave feminist linguist, she is often referred to as a second-wave linguist (Linguistic Politeness Research Group, 2011). She is critical of second-wave linguistics, which focused on 'women's language' as a homogeneous entity and takes an anti-essentialist viewpoint. Women in such a homogenous model seem to be 'nicer' than men in interaction (Mills, 2005). Mills (2003, p. 174) points out that early feminist research is problematic, as it often focuses "exclusively on the language usage of white, middle class women and then made generalisations about all women", which marginalises other working-class or race groups (p. 174). She also argues that some current research seems to highlight women's interactional competitiveness, suggesting that "supportiveness may play a role in other interactants' judgments of women's linguistic behaviour and may result in assertiveness being categorized as impoliteness" (Mills, 2005, p. 263). Thus, in her 2003 book *Gender and Politeness*, she does not simply generalise and assume that males and females speak differently, but aims to produce a more context-based model of gender. Mills (2009) also argues for drawing a contrast between politeness at the individual and social levels. She asserts that it is necessary on an empirical level to regard politeness as occurring over long periods of talk and within a community of practice context, rather than as produced by individual speakers (Mills, 2002). Mills (2002) calls for greater complexity of gender analysis by shifting from the level of the sentence to the level of discourse.

Thus, many theorists have contributed to the field of politeness, either in the first wave—where the focus was on the speaker—or in the second, which took both the speaker and hearer into

account. Next, I will draw on a number of third-wave theorists who focus on discursive-relational approaches and contextual factors that influence the judgement of (im)politeness behaviour.

Third-wave politeness research

Third-wave politeness linguists tend to use the discursive approach of (im)politeness, which heavily relies on contextual level, rather than on a sentence level, to fill the gap left by Brown and Levinson's work. For many linguists, the discursive approach seems unsystematic compared with Brown and Levinson's model; it is very difficult to know how to employ it when analysing interaction (Haugh, 2007; Holmes 2005). Indeed, there has been a return to Brown and Levinson's model "both in terms of the numbers of PhD theses submitted recently [...] and in terms of journal articles [...] which draw explicitly on Brown and Levinson's model" (Van Der Bom & Mills, 2015, p. 180). The absence of such a non-systematic approach to (im)politeness has contributed to the creation of a third-wave order, where different scholars from the mid-2000s onward have aimed to develop some scientific accounts to politeness (Haugh, 2007). Most third-wave theorists emphasise the importance of context and the role of the hearer when judging any linguistic behaviour as being polite or impolite (Culpeper, Haugh, & Kádár, 2017; Locher, 2010a). The term *discursive* relies more on the ongoing perceptions of what constitutes inappropriate forms of behaviour, rather than belonging to a theoretical concept of impoliteness (Watts, 2008). Thus, it has been argued that there should be a theory of (im)politeness that offers a systematic and coherent account of any subjective judgements that marks the role of how these evaluations play out in interpersonal relations (Haugh, 2007). It has also been observed that some theoretical accounts of (im)politeness that have emerged adopt various epistemological lenses and, hence, different methods of analysis (Haugh, 2007).

Some theoretical accounts connect the analysis of (im)politeness with the claiming or disputing of identities from interactional or discursive-relational approaches (Haugh, 2007). A more recent trend of (im)politeness includes the genre approach, developed by Blitvich (2010, 2012), which favours qualitative and quantitative discourse analytic methods supplemented by observer coding of a particular thematic analysis method. Blitvich's approach to (im)politeness provides further justification for the adoption of the genre analysis method in the current thesis. Since the current research is concerned with *academic politeness* via email, the complexity of analysis necessitates the consideration of different layers of investigation. More specifically, these

include adapting certain paradigms in view of past, present and future politeness trends, looking at how users employ the wealth of multimodal resources provided by email technology to get things done, and identifying the ideologies that underpin the construction of such academic texts in the social world. The next section will provide a detailed account of what is meant by academic politeness and how it is implemented in this thesis.

3.2.3 Academic politeness

Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford's (1990) work in academic politeness has been employed by many scholars (e.g. Biesenbach-Lucas & Weasenforth, 2002). Although their focus was on language acquisition and interlanguage pragmatics, their model can be considered as a forerunner to the new interactional politeness trend. They developed a dynamic politeness model for some negotiation tasks, specifically in academic advising sessions where university students determine the subjects they intend to select for the next semester. In these advising sessions, Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1990) developed a model of status-balance for students to maintain their academic identity and show their scholarship initiatives. They noticed that non-native speakers were generally less successful because of the absence of status-preserving strategies that minimised the force of noncongruent speech acts. These strategies allowed students to take out-of-status turns without jeopardising the relationship with their advisors. Because of the advanced proficiency level of the non-native speakers, their lack of success was not attributable to a lack of linguistic competence, but to a lack of context-specific pragmatic competence involving the use, kind, and number of status-preserving strategies. The content and form appropriate for noncongruent speech acts are also factors. Their approach is particularly relevant for the current thesis, as it blends the use of negotiation language with appropriate politeness forms. Kádár and Haugh (2013) argue that politeness researchers need to situate their understanding of politeness in relation to other approaches to achieve their aims.

The next section will elaborate how this thesis combines other theories and approaches within the framework of politeness. The framework of politeness is not comprehensive enough to fully encapsulate the data, as this research began with a preliminary question regarding the characteristics of academic negotiation texts, the tone and the pragmatic features used. The next section will also provide further justification by showing how other scholars approached politeness alongside other frameworks.

3.3 Politeness and genre analysis

Since the 2000s, there has been a shift in the understanding of politeness solely from a pragmatic-linguistic and sociolinguistic point of view to a more discursive focus, particularly a genre-based approach (Al-Ali 2006; Blitvich, 2010, 2012; Blitvich, Lorenzo-Dus, & Bou-Franch, 2010; Izadi, 2013; Spilioti, 2011; Upton & Connor, 2001). According to Hyland (2002), the focus on genre in language serves a dual purpose: to understand the link between language and its contexts of use, and to interpret particular communicative situations and how these can change over time. This serves the purpose of the current research, which seeks to explore both the context-specific characteristics that academic negotiation texts possess and the kind of performances these academic email proposals entail. The choice of each generic option (move) conceals features of culture and academic styles.

One benefit of integrating genre analysis with politeness research is eliminating the ambiguity of some moves by further providing their politeness formulae (Flowerdew & Dudley-Evans, 2002). For example, some moves within certain genres have embedded strategies, such as the compliments (positive politeness) found in moves like focus on supervisor in the current data (see Section 6.5.3). This will be discussed further during the analysis of results in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. Gimenez (2005) defines embeddedness in the email genre as having more than one message embedded in one text. Further, Bhatia (2008, p. 169) argues that sociolinguistic investigation into genre provides an answer to the question: “Why do members of specific professional communities use the language the way they do?”. Hence, it is necessary to integrate the analysis of professional genres interdiscursively with the analysis of different professional practices (Bhatia, 2008). When each email is divided into different moves, this will satisfy both top-down and bottom-up impoliteness analyses (Blitvich, 2010). Another benefit of genre analysis is that it provides fertile land to trace differences between cultural patterns (Canagarajah, 2013; Hyland, 2008; Kaplan, 1966; Kirkpatrick, 1991) and gender differences (Herring & Paolillo, 2006). Ventola (1989) contends that genre may reveal implied layers of politeness in CMC communication. An example of this is a refusal strategy; while finishing the action of negotiation in CMC may only require a simple refusal without negotiation close, a closure of some kind must be negotiated in face-to-face genres (Ventola, 1989).

In terms of genre expectations, Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson (2014) indicate that certain scientific fields have a “unique set of cognitive needs”, such as legal, medical, social welfare and educational fields. For each field, there are certain genre formats and schemata. In academia, research articles, introductions, acknowledgements and abstracts have been widely examined in terms of their move structure. However, despite the “growing interest in the identification of genres on the World Wide Web” (Herring, Scheidt, Bonus, & Wright, 2004, p. 2), little is known about the genre of certain email communications in academia, such as writing to a prospective PhD supervisor via email. According to Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson (2014), the significance of studying the generic properties of email is that it provides clear instructions on how participants should be using emails for specific purposes, as most emailers derive their modes of use, style and language from their previous knowledge and experience. Macro-level (textual and framing) genre tends to have a larger organisation of a specific discourse function. Academic emails at a macro-level have an opening, discussion and closing structure; at a micro-sentence level, each email has specific moves, such as the self-identification move, the request for information move, or the promoting further contact move (Huang, 2016). At a theoretical level, this thesis aims to bridge a gap in genre analysis, namely the tendency to become a checklist of instruments, procedures and standards relatively well-established in a specific discipline (Swales, 1990). This results in less effort and creativity by the writer to work out textual coherence and intercultural competence by using specific politeness formulae expected in certain contexts. Herring and Paolillo (2006) have also called for a more fine-grained genre analysis in CMC research. The next section will elaborate on the definition of genre and its functions.

3.3.1 What is genre?

According to Swales (1990, p. 58), a genre is “a class of communicative events, the members of which share some sets of communicative purposes”. A genre exhibits different patterns of similarity in structure, content, style and intended audience (Swales, 1990). Although key linguists tend to have different definitions, they share a broad thinking of genre as regularities of staged, goal-oriented and cultural activity consisting of a sequence of *moves* standing for the overall purpose of the social activity (Bhatia, 2014; Martin, 2012; Swales, 1990; Ventola, 1989). The notion of moves was first introduced by Swales (1990), who uses it to refer to each meaningful unit/component that conveys a rhetorical function. Bhatia (2014) developed the term and applied

it to different professional and academic settings. To Bhatia (2014), a move is any meaningful unit presented by lexical or grammatical forms (linguistic aspects) conveying a specific goal. The unit or move is also defined as “a discoursal and rhetorical unit that performs a coherent communicative function in a written or spoken discourse” (Swales, 2004, p. 228). The moves in this study will be classified according to their functions (see Section 4.5.4). Each move combines with other moves in some way to give the overall communicative purpose of the activity in which the members of the community are engaged (Bhatia, 2014). When describing these moves in a given text, genre theorists often refer to them as generic characteristics or generic options (Al-Ali 2006; Bhatia, 2014). Ventola (1989) argues that the framework of genre ultimately leads to an interpretation of culture in terms of what kinds of processes various cultures are made of. Hence, schematically global meanings are attained through representations based on people’s prior/existing cultural knowledge. This also brings about the argument that was first raised by Swales (1990) regarding a discourse community that actively shares goals and communicates with other members to achieve these aims.

The current study is concerned with the discourse community that uses the genre of academic email proposal: prospective PhD students coming from different cultural backgrounds, composing a completely new genre to appeal to a new admissions committee or prospective supervisor. Swales (1990) suggests that a discourse community might be a society of what he calls ‘stamp collectors’, scattered around the world but sharing a common goal of collecting all the stamps of Hong Kong. They might never gather physically, but they can be united by a newsletter, forum or other medium with a particular form of text organisation (making it a genre) that is used to help members pursue the goal. Upon attempting to send an academic email proposal, applicants are confronted with the conventions of the new genre, readers’ expectations, and the desire to promote themselves and their research experiences as perfect candidates for the prospective supervisors. In this rhetorical situation, PhD prospective students are “inferior to their interpretive/evaluative counterparts in terms of academic and professional backgrounds, power, attitudes, and knowledge” (Ding, 2007, p. 371). In many cases, these applicants share similar patterns to achieve their goals or genre. For example, a job application letter often carries the same purpose and contains similar persuasive moves (Bhatia, 2014). Further, Pinto dos Santos (2002) classified business letters of negotiation and found that all the letters served the purpose of

providing negotiation and favours to gain approval. These studies focused on the genre of letters, rather than emails.

There has been a growing interest in the identification of genres on the World Wide Web or even emails (Herring et al., 2005). Academic emails in particular have the distinct privilege of being not only a ‘mystifying genre’ (Prior, 1995), but an *occluded one* (Swales, 1996), meaning students are extremely unlikely to find naturalistic sample texts due to email privacy. Since the academic email genre can eschew strict taxonomies as having complex systems (Prior, 1995), an exploratory genre analysis of email academic requests (in this case, PhD supervision requests) might reveal and demystify this necessary part of postgraduate students’ communicative practice. Some moves in the current data were inspired by prescriptive guidelines from university websites, such as the Australian National University, the University of Edinburgh or the University of Sussex. These guidelines expect students to mention certain information such as the ‘timeframe’, or when the students expect to start their PhD program. These guidelines helped in labelling the moves in the current data, such as the timeframe move (see Table 4.2). While there have been various studies examining the genre of letters (Bhatia, 2014; Upton, 2002; Upton & Cohen, 2009), the kind of emails these postgraduate students send are different in several ways:

- 1- The ‘**communicative purposes**’ (Swales, 1990), or the reason why the emails are written, is different. For example, a promotion or sales letter is written to inform and seek feedback aiming at maintaining future business. In the case of the current data, an academic supervision request is written to persuade a prospective PhD supervisor, aiming to gain their approval.
- 2- In this context, there is a **status difference**. A postgraduate student is writing to a PhD supervisor, who is supposed to be the authority and is in a higher position, making it critical for the writer. In comparison with other letters, the sender and recipient are of nearly identical status, such as a business writing to another business.
- 3- The **conventions and circumstances** in this academic setting are much more specific, being confined and particular to specific universities or supervisors, compared to ones that are written to a more general audience. The latter point is important as emails used in the context of academia tend to be written with certain conventions, with a remarkable range of variation within them (Crystal, 2011).

Numerous studies show that there are four elements in email messages: subject line, opening, body and closing (Aldhulaee, 2017; Mehrpour & Mehrzad, 2013). The overall patterns of the emails students compose to their professors often include a self-introduction, the main message and a formulaic thanking at the end (Huang, 2016). In this thesis, I focus not only on the classification of texts or forms of inquiry, but on what they perform; more precisely, the underlying politeness strategies and the cultural rhetoric that the participants establish within their electronic communication.

3.4 Politeness and persuasion

It is theoretically possible to employ politeness theory to analyse persuasive texts, as some scholars believe that the overarching goal of persuasion is considered as “an inherent threat to autonomy” (Jenkins & Dragojevic, 2013, p. 560). One of the main aims of this research is to evaluate how people use politeness when trying to convince others, as the emails sent by prospective PhD students to their future supervisors can be considered a persuasive attempt to obtain approval for their request. The analysis of the texts will assess the students’ steps in writing these emails as persuasive appeals or negotiation moves. Research on persuasion has traditionally been dominated by rhetorical and psychological approaches and studies of persuasive discourse in pragmatics are not common, bringing about a gap in the knowledge on the nature of persuasion in formal and intercultural academic settings. There have been some scholarly attempts to theorise the phenomenon of persuasion from a pragmatic/politeness perspective. Cherry (1988) was one of the first scholars who attempted to look at how politeness is used in persuasive texts. Current literature is in need for a follow-up to Cherry’s work, which looks at politeness through a persuasion lens, thus drifting away from Brown and Levinson’s (1987) notion that all speech acts are potential face threats. This claim clearly ignores the fact that some persuasive messages or moves are informative in nature and do not fall into the general class of directives, instead outlining information and opinions to influence the decision-making process of the recipient (Jenkins & Dragojevic, 2013; Wilson, Aleman, & Leatham, 1998).

There has been some research that seeks to investigate the socio-pragmatic and persuasive functions of politeness in some fields. These studies are divided into two theoretical approaches.

The traditional attempts relied heavily and solely on the politeness model to understand the persuasive texts; the other, which is more recent, is an amalgamation of different frameworks, namely the politeness model and the persuasive model. The following literature review will start with the traditional attempts and then move on to more recent ones. As for adopting politeness theory to examine persuasion in communication research, this kind of empirical research has furthered our understanding as to how politeness can play a role in a persuasive context. For example, in a study conducted to understand children's persuasive strategies using politeness theory, the authors were able to identify 1369 acts intended to control or influence the behaviour of others and found correlations between the increase of politeness and remedy of failures in the interactions; this was consistent with Brown and Levinson's expectations (Ervin-Tripp, Guo, & Lampert, 1990). Obeng (1997) examined persuasive discourse in a legal setting using politeness theory and found that legal professionals use persuasive strategies to help them deal with the face-wants that arise in the judicial process. Zheng (2015) explored how politeness strategies are used in persuasive English business. Leichty and Applegate (1991) investigated the influences of three situational variables on the use of face-saving persuasive strategies by role-play persuasive tasks that varied according to the dimensions of speaker power, request magnitude, and familiarity. The messages were coded in accordance to the level of autonomy granted and positive face strategies. They found that speakers who have little power and have to make large requests implement more positive politeness strategies in their approach. Pishghadam and Navari (2012) explored the politeness strategies adopted in English and Persian advertisements; they found that more direct strategies were used in English advertisements, whereas indirect or off-record strategies were favoured by Iranians. To this end, the advertisements were tailored to meet the intended culture's expectations.

More studies in the new millennium have merged both the politeness and persuasive approaches. Del Saz-Rubio and Pennock-Speck (2009) conducted a study to compare British and Spanish advertisements, looking at the difference in the use of the persuasive methods and politeness strategies. They found that, generally, both cultures' advertisements focused on the product and its practicality to justify and rationalise its purchase. Positive politeness techniques (explicitly stating the benefits of the product) were employed more by Spanish advertisements, whereas British advertisements used more off-record strategies (indirectly conveying the claims without stating them). In a recent study, Issa (2017) analysed Jordanian advertisements and

focused on the linguistic politeness strategies they deployed in persuasion. He concluded that the success of the advertisements hinged upon the use of persuasion and politeness strategies that appealed to the cultural specifics of Jordanian society. Contrastive rhetoric literature claims that different cultures typically have different rhetorical systems that manifest themselves, not only in organising ideas but in other ways (Moreno, 2008). These different ways have rarely been discussed. There seems to be a strong tendency to organise ideas and focus on the rhetorical pattern preferences among cultures (Al-Ali, 2004). For instance, an early study conducted by an Arabic author (Alharbi, 1997) indicated that Arabic rhetorical patterns tend to lack a variety of structural devices to engage the reader's attention in a job application context.

There have been rare studies that merge the three dimensions of genre analysis, politeness and persuasion, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Six (see Section 6.2) (Al Abbad, Al Mansur, & Ypsilandis, 2019; Farnia, Ypsilandis, & Ghasempour, 2019; James & Ypsilandis 1994). These studies have helped provide a legitimate justification for employing a multi-model framework that merges politeness, genre analysis and persuasion to examine the language of negotiation of emails in the current thesis. However, none of these have considered the new wave of (im)politeness; rather, they have mostly relied on Grice's (1975) maxims, which are part of traditional first-wave politeness research. Thus, this study will add a new dimension to this type of inquiry.

3.4.1 What is persuasion?

Persuasion is a process aimed at influencing a person's beliefs, attitudes, intentions, motivations, or behaviours (Gass, 2010). Despite the importance of analysing persuasive language in written records, most genre studies are concerned with studying one language's structure and contrasting it with another language, which says very little about persuasive tactics that are at the root of Aristotelian rhetoric (Scollon, 1997). When looking at persuasive language across gender or culture, it is impossible not to consider Kaplan's (1966) hypothesis that second language students transfer rhetorical patterns from their first language to their second language writing. Kaplan (1966) claimed that the second language transfer of rhetorical patterns is reflected not only in the writing of beginner learners, but also in that of advanced writers of the second language. Such ESL writers have mastered the English language's grammatical patterns, but their communicative patterns or writings still involve "a persistently un-English 'feel'" (Doushaq, 1986, p. 28)—a taste

of “peculiar strangeness” (Koch, 1981, p. 2). Kaplan’s contrastive rhetoric claims, which were followed and expanded by a number of ESL scholars, were not accompanied by credible empirical evidence and had a potential lack of consistency (Ansary & Babaii, 2009). Thus, Kaplan was subject to strong criticism, as reviewed by Ismail (2010). There have been some attempts to adopt Kaplan’s contrastive rhetoric when analysing the differences of persuasive writing between Arabic and English (Ismail, 2010). Although it is beyond the scope of this study to explore every instance of persuasive language, the study aims to shed some light on rhetorical variations in terms of persuasive appeals in students’ email negotiations (see Chapter Five and Six).

The current thesis considers three measures of persuasive appeals, as proposed by Connor and Lauer (1988): rational appeals, credibility and affective appeals. According to Hyland (2018), the rational appeal refers to *logos*, or reason; in texts, it is found in the arrangement, sophistication, arguments and types of facts. *Ethos*, the credibility appeal, refers to the personal appeal relating to the integrity of the characters or writers as demonstrated by their expertise or reputation. *Pathos*, on the other hand, refers to emotions or affective appeals, which are often connected with the characteristics of the audience, its knowledge, interests, ethnicity or gender. Ho (2014) believes that *pathos* appeals to the recipients’ emotions to enhance rapport. Aristotle argued that messages aiming to persuade the intended audience do not necessarily rely solely on the rational (*logos*); rather, persuaders frequently build on their credibility (*ethos*) or even appeal to their audience’s emotions (*pathos*). Some researchers argue that a good balance of these dimensions helps writers and speakers achieve their goal of persuading their target audience (Connor & Lauer, 1985; Durst, Laine, Schultz, & Vilter, 1990).

The bulk of persuasion literature focuses on the persuasive discourse from the perspective of marketing, media and written articles, with a rare focus on the interactive aspect of persuasion. As such, these studies define each of the three persuasive measures to fit their own investigative purposes. For example, Stafford and Day (1995, p. 2107), who investigated advertisements for services, defined rational appeals as “a straightforward presentation of factual information, characterized by objectivity”, whereas Johar and Sirgy (1991) stated that rational appeals often focus on a product’s utilitarian benefits. Examples include messages showing a product’s superior quality, economy, value, performance, and reliability. For the purpose of the current thesis — and in line with how Hyland (2018) defined persuasive appeals —, rational appeals are defined as the sender’s attempt to support their eligibility by outlining sufficient proof that their viewpoints or

arguments are valid, and that their PhD plans or desires are logically justified. Effective use of rational appeals entails focusing on the PhD project and why it is worthwhile, with compelling and valid reasons that directly link the evidence to the claim. Ineffective use of rational appeals entails inappropriate or irrelevant evidence for the claims, which then become a form of affective or credibility appeal. Rational appeals can also be betrayed by inappropriate content, such as a failure to explicitly state warrants between the data and the claim. For example, some participants in the current study claimed they had research experience, which is at the core of rational appeal. However, they provided the wrong evidence, stating that they hold current academic positions instead of showing publications or research papers; this meant that it was instead deemed as a credibility appeal, rather than a rational appeal. Credibility appeals are defined as “the author’s attempts to present his or her character in a manner that positively impacts his or her audience and facilitates persuasion. Thus, ‘persuaders attempt to project themselves as fair, thoughtful, open-minded, trustworthy, and knowledgeable about the subject matter’” (Ismail, 2010, p. 159).

According to Connor and Lauer (1985), affective appeals are rhetorically manifested in written texts via vivid pictures, charged language, or metaphor to evoke the audience’s emotion. For the purpose of this study, affective appeal is defined as the sender’s use of language to get the prospective supervisor emotionally involved; for example, complimenting prospective supervisors, either directly by praising them or indirectly by praising their work. Some affective appeals might include pleading for the supervisor’s help to accept the prospective student. The use of metaphor can also be used to show enthusiasm or positive representation of the self. When used appropriately, affective appeals break the ice and establish common ground between the intended audience (the potential supervisor) and the writer in a manner that facilitates persuasion (Ismail, 2010). However, too much “reliance on affective appeals with inadequate use of logical appeals might lead the audience to suspect the writer’s motive and thus reject his or her message” (Ismail, 2010, p. 161). In their study, Connor and Lauer (1988) employed their persuasive appeals model to measure cross-cultural variation in persuasive writing by US, British and New Zealand students. The two researchers rated 50 student essays and found that the writers’ use of rational, credibility and affective appeals significantly varied for each language group. They noticed that the New Zealand group, for example, used more rational, credibility and affective appeals than the US and British groups. However, all students—regardless of language background—used more rational appeals than credibility and affective appeals, the latter being the least implemented by all groups.

The current thesis analyses each email and classifies it in accordance with these persuasive appeals. This will be elaborated further in Chapter Four.

3.5 The communicative function of the speech act of request

The requestive behaviour constitutes the goal of general negotiations; therefore, this study examines all the strategies and moves the students use before, during or after requests. Pragmatic scholars believe that most speech acts—whether it is disagreeing, imposing, asking a favour or requesting information—are face-threatening (Brown & Levinson, 1987). It is argued that in such speech acts, especially in CMC settings, “the requester is resuming some right to access to the hearer’s time, energy and attention” (Morand & Ocker, 2003, p. 2). Requests are considered the main motive in sending emails or ‘letters’ (Swales, 1990), which was the focus of numerous pragmatic studies (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2006; Dombi, 2020; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011, 2018). Therefore, the request is assumed to be the central aspect the parties organise their negotiation around. This study will dedicate a separate chapter (Chapter Seven) to investigating how students from different cultural backgrounds negotiate an academic request. Requestive behaviour has always been connected to speech act theory, which was developed from the philosophy of language (Searle et al., 1971). A speech act is generally defined as an utterance that has a performative function in language and communication.

According to Austin (1962), speech acts can be analysed on three levels: the locutionary act refers to the performance of the actual words uttered, the illocutionary act refers to the pragmatic force produced by a particular act, and the perlocutionary act is the actual effect on the hearer to carry out the particular act. Searle’s (1979) work on speech acts further developed and refined Austin’s (1962) conception. One of Searle’s most interesting contributions was the sharp distinction between direct and indirect speech acts. For the former, utterances are understood from the context without mentioning the act itself (Searle, 1976b). A statement like, ‘It is cold in here’, could be an informative statement of low temperature, but it could also be an indirect request for the heater to be turned on.

Linguists believe that speech acts should not be treated as isolated elements; rather, they should be analysed within the speech interaction or conversation. Moeschler (2001, p. 2) asserts that “[s]peech acts are not isolated moves in communication: they appear in more global units of

communication, defined as conversations or discourses”. In the current study, as an example, before students negotiated or placed their request in an email communication, they would employ some supportive moves, such as providing reasons, to modify the impact or force of the core requests (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). As the latter authors suggest, core requests or head acts refer to main requests, as shown in the following example:

‘I am looking for a PhD opportunity in spinal cord imaging. Could you please supervise my research? You will help me approach my dreams if you accept my request’ (head act underlined)

Researchers believe that these supportive moves preceding or following the head acts are used to increase the likelihood of the hearer’s acceptance (Dombi, 2019; Trang, 2019). Being the central aspect of negotiation, this study looks at how requestive behaviour is positioned and justified with a sharp focus on gender differences and a general discussion about cultural differences. It does not lend itself to a single theoretical framework when analysing requests, instead utilising a data-driven approach that outlines the main requestive features. This strategy is consistent with the key (im)politeness theorists, who believe that some classification attempts of the requestive behaviour, such as Searle’s (1969), are of limited use as they do not lend themselves to neat categorisation (Culpeper & Terkourafi, 2017). This is further elaborated on and justified empirically in Chapter Seven.

3.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has provided the main framework of this study: discourse analysis, though the combination of genre and persuasive lenses with politeness theory means that it is largely classified as pragmatic. That being said, considering variables such as gender and culture qualify this as a sociolinguistic study as well. Secondly, this chapter has provided detailed accounts of the main theoretical dimensions that will be considered in the current research. It started with looking at both traditional and new waves of politeness theory—the overarching lens used to analyse the current data. It then provided other approaches that have been adopted due to their empirical links with politeness theory, as evidenced by various studies that provided the rationale for choosing them. Each approach, such as genre analysis and persuasion, was defined and elaborated on. The chapter concluded with a discussion of requestive behaviour, one of the main investigative

dimensions of this thesis. More empirical studies and justifications will be provided in the analysis chapters (Chapters Five, Six and Seven) to support discussion of the findings.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this project is to understand the dynamics of negotiation discourse in naturalistic written email data. Different approaches and theoretical frameworks at different levels (macro vs. micro) were adopted, as focusing on a single framework to understand the complexity of single email negotiations would not yield the desired results. In his study, Bloch (2002, pp. 131-132) concluded that “to be successful email users require more than simply fluency; it always requires the ability both to express oneself using a variety of language forms and rhetorical strategies as well as to know when it is appropriate to use these different forms”. Bloch’s (2002) conclusion has indicated three aspects—linguistic features, rhetorical structures (genre), and politeness strategies—that are important in unpacking the negotiation texts when evaluating gender, culture, and power distance. The current thesis builds on the previous literature on genre analysis, politeness and persuasion to answer the following general research questions (discussed in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, respectively):

- 1) What are the norms of Saudi students’ negotiation strategies, as revealed by their choice of generic options (moves) and rhetorical constructions, in comparison with their Australian peers when approaching a potential PhD supervisor via email?**
 - a) What are the dominant linguistic features that Saudi students use in comparison with Australian students? What (if any) are the gender differences among them?
 - b) How does a participant’s perception of the appropriateness of negotiation influence their linguistic behaviour?
- 2) How do Saudi students employ persuasive appeals and (im)politeness strategies in their negotiations?**
 - a) How do their persuasive appeals compare to Australian cultural expectations?
 - b) How do Saudi students employ persuasive appeals to form (im)polite negotiation moves?
- 3) What requestive behaviour do students employ to gain approval from the prospective supervisor?**
 - a) How do Saudi males and females differ in terms of their requestive patterns?
 - b) What is the impact of power distance on each gender’s requestive language?

The adoption of a multimodal framework requires a *pragmatic* philosophical stance to justify such a combination of frameworks and methodologies. Hence, the underpinning worldview of pragmatism will be discussed first, followed by the research design and methodology. As the theoretical frameworks of this study have already been elaborated on in Chapter Three, this chapter will be divided into two sections, outlining 1) the interpretive methods and 2) the empirical methods used. The section on interpretive methods provides the philosophical worldview that informed the researcher's analysis and approach to the data (quantitative and qualitative), probing meaning-making strategies. The section on empirical methods, on the other hand, outlines the technical processes of data collection and data analysis procedures; in short, it describes the practical aspect of how this research was conducted. The empirical method section also presents the data sources, the rationale behind their selection, the data collection context, and how the data were processed in preparation for analysis. Also outlined are the procedures of the project, along with some analytical taxonomy employed to analyse the data in terms of moves and persuasive appeals. A questionnaire was used to evaluate participants' responses in relation to what they believed to be effective in their email data. A descriptive statistical method was used to analyse the students' move characteristics and move frequencies under each persuasive appeal, exploring how these were used to persuade the prospective supervisor. The justification for each data collection method used in the study is also discussed. Finally, to ensure the reliability of research results, appropriate criteria for the coding process are discussed.

4.2 Interpretive methods

4.2.1 Pragmatism worldview

The research philosophy is the underpinning epistemological stance in the research under investigation, or "the philosophical stance lying behind a methodology [which] provides a context for the process involved and a basis for its logic and criteria" (Crotty, 1998, p. 66). When developing the methodology of any research, Crotty (1998) argues that two questions need to be answered: what methodologies will be employed and, more importantly, *why* these methodologies have been chosen. The justification of why in any social research must be addressed to foster the validity of the outcomes (Crotty, 1998). The researcher's choice of methodologies is often influenced by their worldview, which should not contradict the nature of the research methods. All

research is based on some underlying philosophical assumptions about reality or truth (ontology), ways of knowing (epistemology), ways of valuing what is intrinsically worthwhile (axiology), ways of adopting a strategy or plan of action (methodology); finally, a researcher should be able to successfully use specific techniques and procedures to collect and analyse data (methods) (Creswell, 2009; Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2017; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Pragmatism is the worldview applied to this thesis. Pragmatism is a philosophical tradition that emerged in the United States in the late 1800s. Its main proponents were Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey (Rescher, 2000). Since a mixed method approach has been widely used in social sciences research (Christ, 2013) and other related disciplines, such as education and linguistics (Paltridge & Phakiti, 2015), the adoption of the pragmatic paradigm becomes a necessity in this research. Creswell and Creswell (2017) believe that pragmatism is a flexible paradigm in that it is not related to a particular reality or philosophy. Specifically, it is neither a purely quantitative approach that lends itself to a post-positivism philosophical stance, nor is it a qualitative approach associated with interpretivist or constructivism paradigms (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Maxcy, 2003; Rallis & Rossman, 2003). Creswell and Creswell (2017) also believe that the researcher has a free choice to mix different methods or procedures — or even theories and frameworks — to meet the purpose of their research aims. Pragmatists perceive the world as an external fact independent of the mind, opening the door to different worldviews, assumptions, and forms of analysis and data collection. The pragmatism paradigm concerns itself with focusing on the research problem and using pluralistic approaches to derive knowledge about the problem (Morgan, 2007; Patton, 1990).

In terms of application, pragmatists are concerned with ‘what works’ and providing solutions to problems (Patton, 1990). Finding what works was particularly important for this thesis, as the first problem faced was finding the right frameworks from within the field of linguistics capable of capturing and analysing e-negotiation discourse with its structural and linguistic layers. The pragmatic paradigm justifies the multi-level approach of combining different theories and using a mixed methods approach to understand the linguistic phenomena under investigation. Pragmatism also focuses on a “changing universe rather than an unchanging one as the Idealists, Realists and Thomists had claimed” (de Picanço, de Lucena, de Lira, & de Lucena, 2018, p. 1). This project has a wider perspective to reflect upon the discourse pattern across cultures and genders, with the intent to focus on differences more so than on similarities among these patterns.

“Issues of language and meaning are essential to pragmatism, along with an emphasis on the actual interactions that humans use to negotiate these issues” (Morgan, 2007, p. 67). Crotty (1998) argues that pragmatist philosophy is the most noteworthy variation of interpretivism which suggests that language is a social construct. In other words, to understand things or experiences, one should understand the culture surrounding them. Thus, “[s]eeking the meaning of experience becomes an exploration of culture” (Crotty, 1998, p. 74). Culture, as a main variable in this thesis, has its influence on the language of the participants and on their views and perceptions. It not only reveals the beliefs and thoughts of others, but their values and cultural norms at a deeper level. The creative aspect that pragmatism grants to any project is the right for free interpretation with whatever methods the researcher finds justifiable.

Understanding multiple realities in this project can be achieved by adding some creative research methodologies through which the researcher can gain a deeper understanding of the participants’ negotiations, comparing this to their perceptions from both the questionnaire data and the representative Anglo-Australian sample. I come from a perspective that the language people use is a guide to understanding their cultural mindset. This is consistent with early nineteenth century German philosophers, in particular Wilhelm von Humboldt, who believed that language defines human knowledge; when a person “spins language out of himself, he spins himself into it” (Losonsky & Heath, 1999, p. 60). This approach aims to inductively find out how subjective understandings (*verstehen*) and experiences are derived from larger discourses (or speech genres) and practices that construct reality (Terre-Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). Qualitative methods allow the researcher to create new ideas and quantitative methods are used to test these ideas. In applied linguistics, an inductive approach helps to elicit patterns, rules or meaning from certain texts (Ivankova & Creswell, 2009). In this research, after eliciting general patterns and noticing certain politeness differences in relation to gender, culture, and power distance, some quantitative or deductive testing was required. Ivankova and Creswell (2009) point out that deductive reasoning tests or generates predictions about certain phenomena.

4.2.2 Inductive and deductive approaches

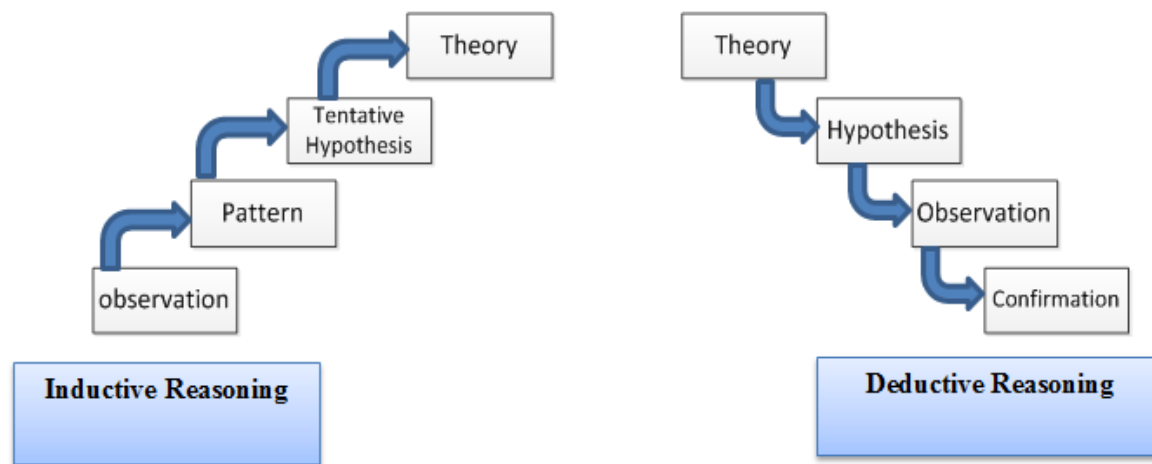


Figure 4.1 Inductive and deductive reasoning

As Figure 4.1 illustrates, the inductive approach starts with specific observations and measures to detect patterns and norms, formulate tentative hypotheses that may be explored, and develop general conclusions or theories. It often provides a systematic set of procedures for analysing qualitative data that can produce reliable and valid findings (Thomas-Tate et al., 2017). This mixed methods research is concerned with describing and explaining the linguistic features and the cultural norms of each group, providing guidelines for the adjustment one needs to be a culturally-sensitive player in our globalised world. Pragmatism functions as a flexible approach, using both qualitative and quantitative inquiries to understand the nature of intercultural email negotiation from the data enriched by the viewpoint of the participants themselves. Deductive reasoning starts where inductive reasoning has concluded. It generates predictions or ways to analyse the data quantitatively, then observes the new results and confirms them.

The adoption of both quantitative and qualitative methods assists in understanding the intercultural and gender differences in email messages at a deep level. Primary data generated via pragmatist studies can be associated with a high level of validity, as data in such studies tend to be trustworthy and honest (Dudovskiy, 2019). Pragmatism suggests that “new paradigms create new sets of beliefs that guide new kinds of actions” (Morgan, 2014, p. 2). That being said, a major limitation associated with pragmatism is that many researchers have overemphasised its

practicality without providing an in-depth analysis of its philosophical system (Morgan, 2007). Such practicality may lead to a subjective nature of this approach, allowing greater room for bias and limiting the generalisability of results. It can be argued that most studies in the social sciences require the researchers' own perspective while analysing data. "By selecting your paradigm you are being subjectively oriented towards one way of doing research", meaning that a researcher might be subjective at the very beginning of the project when choosing the research paradigm (Mack, 2010, p. 8). I will address the subjective nature of this research by employing different theoretical lenses and quantitative elements to both minimise bias and foster reliability and validity in the research results.

4.3 Data interpretation methods

There has been increasing interest in mixed methods research in both linguistics and pragmatic studies (Das & Herring, 2016; Mills, 2003). This project is a mixture of approaches, as its ultimate goal is to provide both a qualitative explanation of the persuasive discourse and systematic steps for academics to conduct professional negotiations. This was achieved by first identifying the themes that characterise each move, which consequently led to understanding the structure of how the discourse was organised via the genre analysis method.

4.3.1 Approaching the data quantitatively

The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics by measuring the frequency of all negotiation moves in the emails in general and moves used under each persuasive appeal in particular. 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, 2014, p. 314). It also helps interpret the data without attempting "to answer questions (make inferences) about the larger populations from which the samples are drawn" (Johnson, 2014, p. 288). The reason for employing descriptive — not inferential — statistics is twofold. The aim of the research study was exploratory, making the use of descriptive statistics efficient without having to apply inferential statistics (Johnson, 2014). The sample size was also relatively small, which, according to Johnson (2014, p. 288), can make it unnecessary to use statistics; instead, this is substituted with an inspection and discussion of "every observation or data point". Thus, the

quantitative data were analysed and normalised to the level of using frequencies, percentages, and significance levels, providing a clear picture in terms of similarities and differences.

Four types of data analysis were conducted. The first involved computing descriptive statistics concerning the frequency and positioning of moves and persuasive appeals. The second was thematic (using NVivo nodes), categorising the participants' explanations of what they thought was important to be mentioned in emails to prospective supervisors, obtained via a questionnaire online format. Various themes emerged from this data set. The third was a word tree in the NVivo program of the questionnaire data, emphasising words used most frequently by participants. The fourth concerned running SPSS significance tests to elicit prominent similarities or differences in the data; gender, overall calculations of certain moves, and the appeals of both cultural and gender groups were compared.

4.3.2 Approaching the data qualitatively

Qualitative research aims to examine naturalistic data, attempting to make sense of its subject matter or phenomena in relation to the meaning that people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Thus, qualitative researchers need to be curious, open-minded, flexible, and emphatic to understand their participants' data and experiences, and identify some contextual variables or cultural norms (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2020). In this study, qualitative methods provided an in-depth analysis of how language is used for negotiation and how both parties incorporated their cultural and gender backgrounds to deal with power imbalance when approaching prospective PhD supervisors. The data sources selected are as outlined by Hennink et al. (2020) and include questionnaire, texts, and content analysis. Email data and the researcher's observations are also seen in qualitative sources in the field of linguistics (Martínez, 2020). Qualitative analysis is also used in corpus linguistics to identify pragmatic functions of forms in discourse contexts (Staples & Fernández, 2019).

In the current thesis, qualitative methods were effective in identifying generic options (negotiation moves), and analysing questionnaire data (content analysis), communicative norms, pragmatic functions and patterns, along with underlying politeness conventions. They also helped to provide a rich and complex understanding of the participants' cultural background and other relevant factors, such as their views on what constitutes a good email and how this was embodied in their naturalistic email data, to come up with some original observations. Politeness strategies

used under each negotiation move were analysed and compared or contrasted with those from a different gender or cultural group. Some dominant linguistic features were identified, such as the absence or presence of pronouns (*I, you*) that constitute hearer-oriented and speaker-oriented language. This is explained further in Chapter Seven. There were also other requestive features, such as conditional clauses starting with *if*, which shed light on Saudi gender differences. All these observations were possible through qualitative data analysis and, where applicable, the quantification of prominent linguistic features to see if there were any significant differences between them.

Despite its advantages, some scholars caution that qualitative research is largely subjective, as it does not abide by an obvious set of methods or practices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). As such, the study design can be biased, and the generalisability driven from the selected sample size may not be representative of the larger population (Harry & Lipsky, 2014, cited in Rahman, 2017). Recently, there has been a tendency for educational institutions and policymakers, particularly in the US, to draw on quantitative orientations for decision making due to the observed low credibility produced by qualitative results (Rvitch, 2010, as cited in Rahman, 2017). To foster more credibility for this study, the qualitative aspect has been blended with quantitative aspects to avoid possible bias and to demonstrate that some linguistic phenomena simply cannot be quantified, as discussed in Chapter Seven. Other strategies, such as the use of a questionnaire and e-clarification checks (member checking), assisted in establishing credibility. Further, the qualitative aspect of research may be valid to the researcher but not others due to different worldviews, which create multiple realities. It is incumbent on the readers to determine the credibility of the qualitative aspect for themselves, based on their understanding of how the data have been interpreted. Overall, since the mixed-methods paradigm is widely contested in linguistic research, researchers may assert diversity in styles and worldviews rather than “aligning their work with the quantitative and qualitative paradigm respectively” (Angouri, 2018, p.30). Hence, in line with Angouri (2018), this research takes a pragmatist’s approach, viewing methodologies as a set of techniques, as opposed to a purist’s approach that perceives quantitative and qualitative methods as incompatible.

4.3.3 Thematic/content analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) was applied to the qualitative data from the open-ended questions in the questionnaire survey. TA is a widely used qualitative analysis method resembling content analysis

and has been used in recent linguistics studies (Al-Zahrani, 2020; Alotaibi, 2020; Banegas, 2020). It is one of a cluster of methods that focuses on identifying patterned meaning across a dataset, such as interviews or questionnaires. In this research, it was used to elicit themes from the data of those who participated in the questionnaire; these patterned perceptions/themes were then compared according to culture and gender. NVivo was further used to identify key words in the text of these participants. NVivo calculates word counts, identifies key words and common phrases where the key words are found.

4.3.4 The researcher analysis

As the current researcher, I have an adequate knowledge of both Saudi Arabian and Australian cultures. I am a native Arabic speaker and Saudi citizen, and have prior experience in dealing with Saudi student emails; in my role as a Saudi media representative at the Melbourne Saudi Association, working under the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission (SACM) from 2010 to 2016, I edited emails and helped to mediate matters with Australian universities. I have lived and studied in Australia since 2008 and have held different roles as part of student associations; most recently, I became a Higher Degree Research (HDR) representative for both local and international students. From all these experiences, I have proven knowledge that was beneficial in interpreting participant emails and cultures, allowing me to better identify patterns. I was able to respect cultural sensitivities, reducing barriers in approaching and inviting these students to participate. The researchers' knowledge and experiences, which help participants to understand and interpret the phenomenon under examination, are crucial in making sense of the data and enrich the results (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017). A 'cultural insider' has many advantages, including guarding against bias (Davis, 1995). On the other hand, the 'outsider' view of research that concerns researchers from another culture — in this instance, my analysis of Australian data — can often provide a more insightful analysis for the context, identify cultural patterns, and generate new knowledge (Davis, 1995; Dhillon & Thomas, 2019). Thus, both insider and outsider views of research can help to achieve credibility (Davis, 1995).

4.4 Empirical Methods

4.4.1 Ethical considerations

The research had approval from the RMIT DSC Portfolio Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee and was classified Level 3 (more than low risk) on 20th February 2017. Informed-consent forms (see Appendix A) were sent to all participants before data were gathered. Informed consent is defined as a process that enables participants to discuss, document, and decide on their commitment to a research project (Page, Barton, Unger, & Zappavigna, 2014). A brief overview of the purpose and nature of the research study was provided, as well as the role that participants would be taking. Participants were informed that their involvement was optional and about their right to withdraw at any time. Names and all private information were removed or replaced by pseudonyms to guarantee anonymity. A copy of the ethics letter is provided in Appendix G.

4.4.2 Overall research design: Data collection and analysis processes

As displayed in Figure 4.2, the research design was comprised of three data sources, with a data set consisting of 120 emails and 57 questionnaire participants. The core data of this study was the Saudi email corpus, whereas the Australian email data (see Table 5.1) served as a representative (complementary) sample to better illustrate how Saudi students deviate from Anglo-Australian norms and expectations. This data set also helped in furthering the understanding of Australian academic negotiation norms, which have not been adequately researched to date.

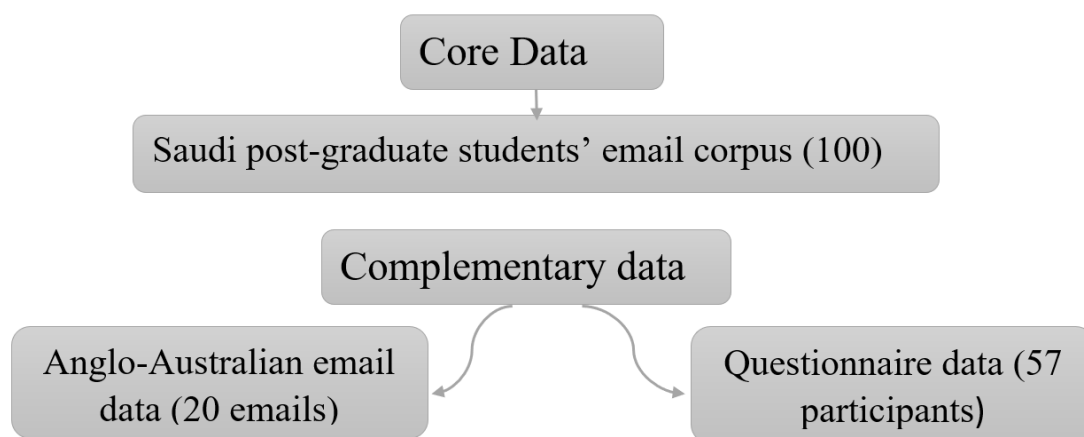


Figure 4.2 Research phases and data collection

Including the Australian data furthers our understanding of Saudis' intercultural competence in the Australian context. As the aim of this research was to examine whether Saudi students' understanding of Australian culture is reflected in the rhetorical and politeness strategies in their emails, an equal number of participants from both cultural backgrounds was not needed, unlike what is observed in with most genre analysis.

Table 4.1 Australian academics by name and gender

Gender	Anglo names	Not mentioned	Others
Male	25	14	11
Female	20	10	20
Total	45	24	31

Table 4.1 shows that the majority of the potential supervisors approached had names which could be considered Anglo-Australian (45%), although this in itself does not confirm the origins of the academic; however, 55% is divided into unknown names and 'Others', the latter representing academics with non-Anglo names. The Saudi students often sent one email to several academics, regardless of the prospective supervisor's gender or background. When this was discovered, it was decided that only one email sample per participant would be used to ensure unbiased representation of the data. Despite the uncertainty of how often prospective Saudi students targeted Anglo-Australian academics, this thesis aims to assess Saudi approaches against Anglo-Australian values and expectations since there are 1) high chances that some Saudi students would be communicating with Anglo-Australians and 2) Australia as a country is governed by Anglo-Australians. The next section discusses how the email corpus was collected and analysed, including the objective, rationale, participant recruitment strategy and data analysis procedure. This is followed by the questionnaire data process.

4.5 Email corpus

The email corpus consisted of authentic single email messages initiated by both Saudi and Australian postgraduate students when trying to find a prospective PhD supervisor in Australia. There are 120 authentic emails composed by 120 students (100 Saudis and 20 Australians).

4.5.1 Objective

The main objective of this first data collection was to identify the communication patterns, persuasive and linguistic strategies of both cultural groups when approaching a potential supervisor. It allowed for the assessment of the most dominant linguistic features and other underlying characteristics of e-negotiation that Saudi postgraduate students have or lack in comparison to their Australian counterparts. This data highlights the influence of sociolinguistic factors, such as power and gender, on the initiation of negotiation by analysing the emails and comparing them with details gathered from the students' background information questionnaires, including open-ended questions.

4.5.2 Rationale

The initiation of good email negotiation should trigger effective feedback and a positive outcome. The purpose of this data collection was to identify cultural differences in an initial negotiation event. It clarifies the differences and similarities between Saudi and Australian students' approaches to finding a PhD supervisor. The choice of Anglo-Australian students was made as a comparison because the Saudi students approached Australian supervisors.

4.5.3 Recruitment method

The recruitment process began in February 2017 and was conducted over a duration of three years. An invitation to participate was sent to prospective PhD students each year. Participants were asked to search for the first email they sent to their supervisors before acceptance and send it to the researcher. A total of 100 Saudi participants' emails were collected (50 male and 50 female) and a total of 20 Australian participants' emails were collected and analysed (15 female and five male)⁹. These students were asked if they would like to complete a questionnaire via email, with a link to the questionnaire included. If they agreed and sent the required emails, they simply clicked on the link provided in their emails and filled out the questionnaire, which included providing their

⁹ Important limitations in regard to the difficulty of balancing gender of Australian participants and the difficulty of collecting emails that included more than one correspondence are discussed in Section 8.6.

consent (see Appendix A). A total of 57 students agreed to participate in the questionnaire (17 Australians and 40 Saudis).

Saudi recruitment

After gaining ethics approval in February 2017, Saudi postgraduate students were first approached via social media platforms. However, as there was very little uptake, the researcher contacted the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission (SACM), asking for assistance with recruitment. SACM agreed and forwarded a call for participation to all Saudi-sponsored students in Australia. The call for participation included a description of the study, its aims and an explanation of the participation criteria, which targeted only postgraduate students who had sent an email to a prospective research supervisor. The announcement also included an ethics statement that participation would be voluntary, and data would be reported anonymously. Those who met the selection criteria and were interested in taking part in the study contacted the researcher, who asked them to contribute samples of the first email messages they had sent to prospective Australian supervisors. The researcher asked the participants to replace anything they did not feel comfortable sharing in their email messages using codes or deletions. A subsequent invitation was sent in February 2018 to SACM to achieve gender balance, as there were only 29 females and 42 males. With SACM's help, the numbers were balanced at 50 males and 50 females.

Australian recruitment

Postgraduate Australian students at RMIT University were approached both face-to-face and via email. The email invitation was sent to all postgraduate students at RMIT University via the School of Graduate Research. However, only twenty Anglo-Australian students participated (five males and 15 females) from 2017 to 2019. Invitations to other Australian universities were sent with no fruitful results. It appeared that most Anglo-Australian students did not rely on emails to find prospective supervisors, instead using other direct communication means such as face-to-face or telephone communication. A few Australians sent follow-up emails, reminding their supervisors about their identity and wishing to carry on their plans; these were included due to the paucity of Australian data.

Participants' backgrounds

Participation in the questionnaire was voluntary. Forty Saudi students participated: 52% were aged between 23 and 32 years, and 47.5% were aged between 33 and 42 years. On average, participants had spent 4.84 years in Australia (SD = 2.69, N = 40), with the length of stay ranging from 0.5 to 10 years. Participants had been using emails to communicate with people from different cultures for an average of 8.61 years (SD = 2.91, N = 31). Sixty-five % of participants (collected from the questionnaire) were studying science majors—including medical-related specialisations, IT, and business—while 35% majored in arts and humanities. All Saudi participants used Arabic for speaking and writing in their first language.

On the other hand, 17 of the 20 Australian participants (85%) participated in the questionnaire: 56.3% were aged between 23 and 34 years, with 18.8% aged between 33 and 42 years and 25% aged 43 and over. On average, participants had lived in Australia for 24.59 years (SD = 15.46, N = 11), with periods ranging between 3.5 and 57 years. Participants had been using emails to communicate with people from different cultures for an average of 10.36 years (SD = 5.47, N = 14), with scores ranging from zero to 20 years. All self-identified as Anglo-Saxon Australians from Australian or New Zealand backgrounds and all majors but one, who specialised in maths, related to social sciences.

4.5.4 Email analysis

The negotiation moves (see Table 4.2) and politeness strategies of each cultural group were identified and analysed. Some dominant linguistic features are discussed below. The moves in this study were informed by genre analysis literature and the guidelines of some universities, as previously stated. Twenty-seven moves were identified in total, but not necessarily all were used in every email. The dominant moves include *opening*, *self-introduction*, *research interest*, *proposal*, *research justification*, *CV information*, *change/choose topic*, *request for acceptance*, *promote further contact* and *closing*. The frequency of each move in both groups was calculated and analysed quantitatively. For the qualitative analysis, politeness strategies were examined under each of these moves, adopting Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness model and the new wave of discursive politeness. The moves were, in most cases, independent clauses—clauses that stand

by themselves as simple sentences—in line with Swales’ (1990) description of moves. Below is an example of how emails were classified under specific moves with independent clauses:

My name is First and I’m an international student <**Self-introduction**> sponsored by the Ministry of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia <**Fund**>. I just finished my Master’s degree in Information Systems at the University of XXXX <**Major**>. I am planning to start my PhD Program in the fall of 2016 <**Timeframe**>

However, there were several instances where students collapsed two or three moves into one clause. Below is an example of how some students naturally collapse more than one move into one clause:

I am writing in relation to potential supervision of my PhD project <**Proposal**>, to commence in 2012 <**Timeframe**>, in the Faculty of Education <**Major**>.

Therefore, a workable definition is required to justify these instances of combined moves. A move in this study is defined as a discoursal text performing a certain communicative function within a complete phrase or as part of the phrase in the email message.

Identification of moves

The identification of the boundaries of the individual rhetorical moves was based on semantic or content criteria. It is difficult to base genre analysis on only three or four basic moves, as designed by Swales (1990), because this study aims to identify all possible moves; these may vary in size and could be realised by one sentence or more, as they can be variable in length or occur multiple times in a single text (Biber, Connor, & Upton, 2007). Swales (1990) also provides a good definition of a move as a functional semantic unit, where length depends on the writer’s purpose and the move performs a communicative function that can be realised through certain linguistic content. Therefore, a move strategy understanding of genre was used in this thesis, whereby the coding system used identified the major rhetorical moves of the negotiation genre (Bhatia, 2014).

In this thesis, each portion of a text has at least one function, in line with Biesenbach-Lucas and Weasenforth (2002) and Al-Ali and Sahawneh (2008). It was necessary “to add other communicative moves in order to articulate new rhetorical functions specific to the communicative

needs” (Al-Ali & Sahawneh, 2008, p. 46) of these particular email negotiation messages. However, it is acknowledged that move structure identification involves “a degree of subjectivity that is perhaps unavoidable” (Holmes 1997, p. 325). To validate the current analysis of strategic moves adopted by senders to bolster their email messages, an inter-coder reliability test was conducted (see Section 4.5.5). The reason why some moves were identified and classified separately, even if several occurred within a single clause, stems from either their frequent existence in most students’ emails or their importance. The importance was measured by finding some of these moves in the guidelines of some universities such as the University of Edinburgh and a research article by Jafree, Whitehurst, and Rajmohan (2016), who highlighted the most important points that one should mention when approaching a prospective PhD supervisor via email. These guidelines expect students to mention certain information, such as the ‘timeframe’ or the time when the students expect to start their PhD program. Hence, some compound sentences could collapse more than two moves according to the content of the message, as the following example demonstrates.

<p>I am a lecturer at X University <CV info> and I have a full scholarship from my University <Fund> and I am interested to pursue my doctorate degree <Proposal> in your reputed university <Program/Uni interest></p>

When the students used the same move in different clauses — for example, when they requested an acceptance from their supervisors in different places in their emails —, they were coded according to the number of times they had used them. Under the requestive move (recorded in an Excel spreadsheet), there were three lines of three different requests. Therefore, the number of requests each student used contributed to an increased number of requests used by each gender or cultural group overall. This helped to see how much students focused on certain moves according to gender and culture. Table 4.2 provides a description of each move adopted in this study.

The data analysis was limited to the 27 moves mentioned in the table (pp. 78–81); there were only five instances that did not fall under any of these labels and were therefore excluded. These instances existed in a few emails written by existing PhD students thinking of beginning their PhD elsewhere. The coding system was informed by different genre literature regarding email communication (Biesenbach-Lucas & Weasenforth, 2002; Hayati, Shokouhi, & Hadadi, 2011; Mehrpour & Mehrzad, 2013; Pinto dos Santos, 2002). The researcher coded the entire data set

(120 emails) three times over different periods to ensure that coding was consistent, resulting in some revisions to the labelling of moves and clarifications to the definitions of each. By the third instance of data coding, the system was able to fit all moves with clearer criteria. After gathering all moves, the data was analysed based on frequency.

Table 4.2 Description of negotiation moves

Negotiation moves		Definitions
1	Opening	The opening move is how people start their emails, which usually includes a ‘salutation + name’ (Huang, 2016). (i.e. job titles, terms of endearment such as <i>dear</i> , greeting words such as <i>Hi</i> , <i>Hello</i> , personal names)
2	Self-introduction	When students introduce themselves by their names. Alternatively, in a few examples, students did not mention their name but instead said things like: ‘I want to tell you just a bit about myself’ ‘I am a student from...’ ‘Let me introduce myself’
3	Research interest	When students specify the area they are interested in researching in their thesis
4	PhD/Masters Topic	Providing the title of their projects (either Masters or PhD).
5	Major	When students first mention their educational major/background, which may not necessarily reflect what they want to do in their thesis. This is often accompanied by the name of their former university.
6	Greetings	When the students hope that the addressee is in good health or use other forms of greetings, like <i>good morning</i> or <i>good day</i> (e.g. ‘I hope my email finds you well’). There are a few exceptions when students write, for example, ‘Greetings!’, or when they delay their greetings wishes to the end (e.g. ‘Have a good evening’).
7	Proposal	When the students first state the purpose of their email, such as ‘I am writing to you as I have recently applied for a PhD program’.
8	GPA	When students specify their level of achievements, such as ‘I graduated with excellence’, or when they mention their grade as 80% GPA. GPA refers to grade point average, the measure used for academic achievement.
9	Timeframe	When the students indicate when exactly they plan to start their PhD, either directly such as next semester, or indirectly, when they say ‘I will finish my <u>Master this semester</u> ; I hope I can continue my PhD afterwards’.

10	CV info	<p>Any statement about a student's work or educational background in a general sense, such as doing two Masters degrees in two different fields, or information on academic achievements such as publications or conferences.</p> <p>Sometimes, CV info conflicts with the major, where a student indicates their educational background. This was solved by only selecting the first educational background with the students' intended major for their PhD studies. The other educational background was coded under CV info. Some rare examples referring to recommendations were coded as CV, as in the example below:</p> <p>'People who will attest to my skill and capacity are Professor...'</p>
11	Attachments	<p>When referring to any attached document, often a CV or a research proposal.</p>
12	Research plans	<p>Providing information about what exactly they want to do in their future PhD project.</p>
13	Research experience	<p>Indicating their experience in the proposed research topic by conducting similar research, observing some phenomena in the workplace that they believe to be relevant to their research, or by providing some information about publication and research experience. (Misleading research experience includes stressing an academic job title as evidence of research experience.)</p>
14	Change/choose topic	<p>Any expression of willingness to change or choose a topic for a PhD project. Different terms have been used to express such willingness, such as 'Change/review the research proposal/consider any comments ...etc.'. Some Australian students ask their supervisor about available projects that they might be able to join.</p>
15	Context	<p>Providing personal background about either meeting the prospective supervisor in the past or hearing about them from someone.</p>
16	Self-promotion	<p>When praising a student's own abilities and achievements, indicating how their PhD will give them access to a better future, or even how the ranking of the university will influence their future career.</p>
17	Research justification	<p>Providing reasons why they chose their research topic; these can be personal, institutional (needs), or a research gap. It sometimes conflicts with CV info, due to contextual reasons (e.g. '<u>I worked in XXXX University labs</u> and I became interested to do my PhD in **** University'). The researcher made a decision whether some of the moves were best fitting under-research-justification or CV info according to the context.</p>
18	Program/Uni interest	<p>Expressing interest in the program itself, in the university ranking or complimenting the prospective university, which can be called</p>

		<i>glorifying the institution</i> under adversary glorification (Bhatia, 2014).
19	Fund	When students either indicate that they are funded by the government or they are in the process of applying for a scholarship.
20	Focus on Supervisor	By mentioning anything relating to the supervisor's area of research, publication, knowledge, or by other complimenting reasons directed to the supervisor.
21	Request for acceptance	When the students ask whether the supervisors are going to be available to supervise their topic. It sometimes conflicts with the 'proposal move' (e.g. 'I am writing this email because I am looking for a supervisor for my PhD'). If the student asked twice whether the supervisor is available, the first move will be coded as a proposal and the second as a request for acceptance.
22	Gratitude	A statement of gratitude at the end of the email (e.g. 'Thank you for taking the time to read my email').
23	Options	When the student mentions anything related to the supervisory arrangement, such as asking the supervisor to suggest another one if they are unavailable, or lets the supervisor know that they have contacted other supervisors.
24	Promoting further contact	Either explicitly indicating they look forward to hearing from the addressee soon or implicitly showing willingness to answer any questions, asking for a meeting/further documents, or asking for a fast reply to their request. Typical examples from the current data: 'I look forward to hearing from you soon.' Exceptional examples from the current data: 'I'd be grateful if you allow me to put your name as a supervisor so that I can submit my application, <u>the earlier, the better.</u> ' 'What are the papers....or other must submit to you?'[sic]
25	Closing	Farewell formulae such as <i>Regards</i> , <i>Best wishes</i> , <i>Sincerely yours</i> , or the more informal <i>See ya</i> .
26	Sign-off	Refers to the names of the participants at the end of each email.
27	Business-card signature	Refers to the contact details and job title of the participant under their name.

4.5.5 Coding reliability

Although coding the current emails for their genre moves and persuasive appeals was at an adequate reliability level (since the researcher recoded them three times during the period of data collection), some communication scholars argue that a representative sample of 10% from the full

data should be re-analysed independently to further assess reliability (Allen, 2017). This sample must be selected strategically using a justifiable procedure (Allen, 2017). It was opted that stratified random sampling would provide such a justifiable procedure, as it is often used to bring a good representative sample of data for specific research purposes; in this instance, to check the reliability of the coding system. In stratified random sampling, the corpus data is “divided into mutually exclusive subgroups called *strata*, and sample within these subgroups, making sure that all subgroups of the population are represented proportionately within the sampling frame” (Buchstaller & Khattab, 2014, p. 78). According to Buchstaller and Khattab (2014), this technique has been widely used for sampling in the field of linguistics and is called sometimes judgement sampling. Hence, four emails were chosen from Saudi males, four from Saudi females, three from Australian females and two from Australian males, totaling 12 emails or 10% of the full email data. At the same time, the email strata from each subgroup (gender and culture) were chosen somewhere from the beginning, middle, and end to truly represent the data. This also prevents any inaccuracies that could have occurred when coding at the first, middle, or end stages.

The email data was coded by two independent raters. Both raters are linguistics lecturers in Saudi Arabia and current PhD students in Australia. Hence, both have prior experience in conducting research and data coding. Both received training in data coding in both micro-level moves and macro-level persuasive appeals a week prior to the meeting. They were presented with a handout, defining each negotiation move and persuasive appeal, which were both explained to the raters in detail. The raters were first asked to conduct a move-identification in each email from a set of 27 moves (see Table 4.2). They were then asked to analyse each email based on its persuasive appeals classification, using three coloured markers. There were multiple challenges facing the two raters: there were 39 moves in total found in the 12 emails, and an average of two and a half hours was needed to code each of them. After finishing the moves, the raters needed to highlight the emails for their persuasive appeals (see Appendix B); this was a difficult task, given that each rater coded more than 4 emails with a list of 27 different moves, and then had to recode the emails for persuasive appeals.

These emails were not selected based on random size, but carefully studied. That is to say, each email was selected from a certain cultural group and a certain level. For example, an email from somewhere in the beginning of a word document was chosen, another email from another cultural or gender group was chosen from somewhere in the middle and vice versa from the end.

This was to ensure consistency and reliability of original coding throughout. The choice of this strategic technique was based on the requirements of this specific context and after consulting relevant literature and experts. It has been pointed out that a researcher can choose a specific sample size from their entire data set to examine reliability (Shields, 2014). Contemporary linguistic research relies on the principle that a sample needs to be representative for certain purposes; therefore, each email of the four data sets in this thesis is called a stratum and serves as a representative sample from each subgroup (Buchstaller & Khattab, 2014).

After the two raters finished coding the strata, their agreements and differences were counted. The percentage of agreement was measured using a basic percentage formula: “percent agreement, calculated as the number of agreement scores divided by the total number of scores” (McHugh, 2012, p. 276). Hence, the following formula was adopted:

$$\text{No. agreements} / (\text{Total number of moves/appeals}) \times 100$$

Table 4.3 Rater’s coding agreement percentage

Classification of moves	Classification of persuasive appeals
132/139 x 100	103/113 x 100
= 95%	= 91%

This formula has been widely used to calculate intercoder reliability in most content analysis studies (Neuendorf, 2016) and move-classification studies (Al-Qahtani, 2006). According to Neuendorf (2016), the minimum agreement percentage is 80%; 90% or greater would be accepted. This meant that there was no need to conduct a meeting between the two raters to discuss and negotiate differences. It is to be noted that some move disagreements were due to categories overlapping, and that some persuasive appeals can be debatable. However, both raters worked in individual settings and were not with each other on the day. When the researcher discussed the disagreement afterwards, there were prompt agreements that the researcher coding was at times more accurate than the initial judgement of each coder. This is not surprising, given the researcher’s expertise in labelling these moves and persuasive appeals. Tiredness may also have affected their judgement as the task was conducted over two hours without a break.

4.6 Identification of persuasive appeals

The literature dealing with persuasive appeals was discussed in the previous chapter, along with definitions. However, for the purpose of this study, some workable definitions had to be developed to help classify each email in terms of its persuasive appeals. All email data was coded according to the body of the email without including opening moves such as ‘Dear Dr. First name’ or closing moves, which include *Best wishes*. These are discussed in the first analysis chapter (Chapter Five). There was a sharp focus on how the body of emails, being the main discussion body, were evaluated in terms of persuasion; this revealed the kind of generic options or moves appearing under each persuasive appeal. These were then compared between Saudi gender groups and, to a limited extent, cultural groups (Saudis and Australians).

After clarifying the definitions of persuasive appeals, some moves were found to rely largely on certain forms of appeals, but rarely appeared in others. These were called *obligatory moves*; those that can appear in different persuasive appeals were called *optional moves* (see Appendix D for further justifications). The labelling of obligatory and optional moves has been discussed in the literature, but for different labelling purposes. More specifically, obligatory moves refer to those used mostly in certain genres, whereas optional moves refer to those least frequent in some genres (Al-Ali, 2004). In the current thesis, obligatory moves under each persuasive appeal are the moves that most frequently appear in that appeal’s category, whereas optional moves are those that can reappear in different appeals. Appendix D shows specific definitions for each of those moves, which tend to have different definitions fitting each move. Their definitions were judged by their politeness formulae; for example, the promoting further contact move can be assessed as a rational appeal when used formally, such as ‘I look forward to hearing from you soon’. However, when positive politeness formulae are used—such as ‘I know you are very busy so I appreciate any time you can give me’—this can be classified as an affective appeal.

There were a few overlapping instances where the classifications of moves were capable of being distributed under either rational or credible appeals or under affective or credible appeals. This was also shown in other studies, which found that some appeals can fall between two appeals (Abbad, Mansur, & Ypsilandis, 2019; Al-Ali, 2004). However, there were no overlapping moves that could be classified as either rational or affective, as there were clear distinctions between the two. The SPSS statistical package was employed to calculate descriptive statistics between both

gender and cultural groups where appropriate. Statistical significance tests (t-test, z-test and Chi square) were applied to determine whether there were some statistical differences among gender or frequencies of moves among both cultural groups. The Chi-square (χ^2) statistic with a confidence level of 95% or $\alpha=0.05$ was applied mainly to test whether the use of moves under persuasive appeals among gender or culture were significantly different.

Table 4.4 Workable definition of affective appeals

Category	Definition	Example
<u>Affective appeal</u> Generic moves of this appeal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Obligatory: Greetings/gratitude/context/choose topic/program interests - Optional: Promoting further contact (PFC)/request for acceptance/focus on supervisor 	Engaging the prospective supervisor's feelings by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complimenting work or mentioning personal matters (family, financial issues, etc.) - Expressing gratitude, greetings or positive feeling statements such as 'I would love, great pleasure' - Using informal expressions or showing a weaker position by asking the supervisor to find them a topic for their PhD. 	I don't have a ready proposal yet, but I need to ask if you have a project for me. It is with great pleasure that I submit my request for PhD supervision in mathematics to you.
<u>Rational Appeal</u> Generic moves of this appeal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Obligatory Proposal/major/timeframe/research topic/research interest/option/self-introduction - Optional - Self-introduction/PFC/request/ focus on supervisor. 	Focusing on the PhD project as the main subject matter and explain why it is worthwhile, with some compelling and valid reasons that directly link the evidence to the claim. Ineffective use of rational appeals entails inappropriate or irrelevant evidence for the claim.	I am interested in the area of video games and their role in English language acquisition and learning I am hoping you can supervise my proposal for my research
<u>Credibility Appeal</u> Generic moves of this appeal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Obligatory CV info/GPA/fund/self-promotion/attachment - Optional Self-introduction 	Presenting character and/or qualifications, scholarship awards in a manner that positively impacts on the prospective supervisor to facilitate persuasion. It generally has a competitive nature in this thesis.	Fortunately, I have been granted a scholarship from the Saudi Ministry ... to cover all of my tuition. I am a Saudi national lecturer at the University of X.

4.6.1 Identification of requestive moves

Requestive moves are the generic moves that precede or follow requestive behaviour. In Chapter Seven, the requestive behaviour is analysed with a data-driven approach, describing the distinctive features of the current data and matching these with Trosborg's (1995) categories. Her classifications assisted in quantifying the differences among gender and culture using the SPSS statistical package to calculate descriptive and inferential statistics. The qualitative aspect of the requestive behaviour relied mostly on the work of politeness theorists and data observations, as some emails were partially copied from an online source (see Chapter Seven).

4.7 Background information questionnaire

Strategies in this complementary data set support both the Saudi emails being core data and Australian data being complementary data by providing information and explanations for emerging phenomena, such as when students include unexpected information like religion or information about their children. Participants were asked to provide some essential background information (see Appendix A) and tick their consent for participation before proceeding to answering the questionnaire.

4.7.1 E-clarification checks and questionnaire

For efficiency and convenience for both parties, the researcher emailed participants to ask about specific things in the participant's email; the participant could choose to answer the query by email. Rather than merely confirming the participants' views, this served to clarify why certain content appeared in their emails. The questionnaire included both background information questions and two open-ended questions that assisted the researcher in understanding the participants' perceptions and views. Answers to the open-ended questions provided insight into the participants' perceptions about what advice should be given to produce successful email proposals and why they thought they were accepted/rejected by their supervisor (see Appendix A).

4.7.2 Objectives

The questionnaire and e-clarification checks helped the researcher to further explore the students' views of certain aspects in their emails. It gave more context, including variables such as the

participants' length of stay in Australia, age, educational major, and familiarity and length of time using emails. All of these provided an understanding of the students' expertise when interpreting their email data.

4.7.3 Rationale of choice

Both e-clarification checks and questionnaire strategies were employed to clarify issues arising in the participants' email correspondence. The e-clarification checks were used to clarify issues or ask participants about unexpected details mentioned in an email proposal; for example, the statement 'religion: Islam' below a female participant's signature. The questionnaire helped to understand the core perceptions of each cultural group, specifically information about their familiarity with email, their specialisation and the points they thought should be in a negotiation email. Therefore, the focus was on what they believed to be persuasive, regardless of whether they included this in their emails. This insight helped to better interpret each participant's email, clarifying some cultural expectations and how these emails were perceived.

4.7.4 Recruitment method

In terms of the e-clarification checks, participants were given the freedom to answer some of the researchers' queries sent to them via email. The questionnaire was sent to participants who originally participated in this study when the researcher had further questions about the data. It was sent to all participants via an email link and they were given the freedom to participate. A total of 40 Saudi participants and 13 Australian participants answered the questionnaire.

4.7.5 Terms used in this thesis

There are some specific terms used in this thesis to reflect defined participants or genders. For example, with the exception of five prospective Masters students, all participants were prospective PhD students; hence, the participants are generally referred to as 'prospective PhD students', acknowledging the five prospective Masters students' participation by referring to them where relevant. Recent research in qualitative methods suggests that the use of interchangeable terms constitutes a challenge for researchers and may cause confusion for readers (Khajeheian, 2019).

Table 4.5 Terms used in the thesis

Original terms	Alternative terms
Anglo-Australian prospective research students	Australian students/Australians/Australian participants/English-speaking students/Australian postgraduate students.
Saudi prospective research students	Saudi students/Saudis/Saudi participants/Saudi postgraduate students.
Males and Females of each group	Men and women.
Prospective PhD students	Includes all participants of this study, with the exception of five students who were looking for Masters supervisors. Therefore, they were not meant by PhD students, who are the majority of this study.
Negotiation moves	Generic options/choices (see Section 3.3.1), moves, genre, strategic options/moves.

Based on this argument, Table 4.5 above clarifies what might be mistakenly considered as interchangeable use of some terms. In fact, ‘alternative terms’ is used to emphasise that they are not based on ambiguity as claimed by Khajeheian (2019). Nevertheless, when referring to the same participants or movements, the expression *alternative words* was intentionally employed to avoid repetition.

4.8 Chapter summary

This chapter outlined the interpretive methods of this study, including the research paradigm and ways of approaching the data qualitatively and quantitatively. The second part related to empirical methods, such as research design, data sources, data collection, participants, data credibility issues, and the procedure of data analysis and recruitment. The chapter concluded with a clarification of how the researcher’s use of terms is used interchangeably throughout the thesis. The next chapter is the first findings chapter, which details the similarities and differences in negotiation styles between prospective Saudi and Australian PhD students.

Chapter 5: E-negotiation Differences Between Saudi and Australian Data

5.1 Introduction

The primary purpose of this study is to understand politeness conventions in negotiation discourse and academic email negotiation strategies across cultures and genders. This chapter provides an overview of Saudi and Australian students' discursive and rhetorical email strategies when trying to gain admission to a PhD program in Australia. In total, 50 Saudi males, 50 Saudi females, five Australian males and 15 Australian females participated in this first stage of data collection. This chapter focuses on the first research question of this thesis:

- 1) What are the norms of Saudi students' negotiation strategies, as revealed by their choice of generic options (moves) and rhetorical construction, in comparison with their Australian peers when approaching a potential PhD supervisor via email?**
 - a) What are the dominant linguistic features that Saudi students use in comparison with Australian students? What (if any) are the gender differences among them?
 - b) How does a participant's perception of the appropriateness of negotiation influence their linguistic behaviour?

In this chapter, there is an analysis and discussion of empirical results obtained from two main sources: the email data and the questionnaire. The chapter will start with a review of relevant literature, then a presentation of the results — particularly the communication patterns observed in each group — and interpretations for such discourse organisation. Finally, the perceptions of the students are discussed and linked to their email data and cultural norms.

5.2 Review of related literature

Most research to date focuses on different aspects of email negotiations in a business context (Ebner, Bhappu, Brown, & Kovach, 2009; Geiger & Parlamis, 2014). Biesenbach-Lucas & Weasenforth (2002) claimed that less research had been conducted with email negotiations in academia among students and academic staff, a statement that remains true to date. CMC brings a

new type of written negotiation; a single email message can be considered a full negotiation event if it includes an introduction, opening and closing (Sokolova, 2006). In a more recent study, the structure of an academic email was outlined; the negotiation of a request is often organised with a self-identification, main message and expression of gratitude (Huang, 2016). However, the discourse organisation of an email negotiation is often dependent on cultural background, with the organisation of moves often determined “by local cultural values and national academic traditions” (Swales & Feak, 1994, p. 229). Therefore, understanding the rhetorical structure as identified by move organisation adds an extra dimension of genre analysis. This dimension provides a substantial description to the investigation of non-linguistic aspects, such as culture, driving members of a discourse community (Bhatia, 2014).

Kim (1996) argues that many studies support the notion of favoured discourse patterns governed by respective cultural backgrounds. There seems to be a consensus that culture influences the way people use language, especially in terms of writing habits; writing “clearly is a cultural object existing only in the social world of humans, as a product of social activities” (Mauranen, 1993, p. 4). These views first emerged from the contrastive rhetoric approach: the study of how a person’s native language and culture influence writing in a second language. The term was first coined in 1966 by applied linguist Robert Kaplan to denote eclecticism and subsequent growth of collective knowledge in certain languages. Kaplan (1972), an American, posits that many foreign students who seem to have good English language skills fail to organise their ideas and paragraphs as they write. The production of these discourse patterns is influenced by one’s cultural background: English speakers write in a direct and linear organisation, Asians (being indirect) write in circles, and people of Semitic languages (such as Arabic speakers) tend to show elaborate parallelism or zigzag patterns, due to the fact that Arabic has a fairly large inventory of devices (Kaplan, 1967). The flow of ideas in English prose occurs linearly; there is nothing in a paragraph that does not belong to the central idea. Kaplan (1966) believes that the English writing style is characterised by directness and deductive reasoning, while languages such as Arabic favour indirectness and inductive reasoning. However, Kaplan’s approach neglects many other rhetorical components and limits itself to textual and paragraph-level organisation (Connor & Connor, 1996; Scollon, 1997). Only in realising the complex relationship between channels, genres and discourse can we achieve a better understanding of human interactions (Mulholland, 2003).

Since the bulk of research on genre analysis focuses on non-interactive aspects, such as research articles and abstracts, little is known about social letters that should elicit a specific response from their readers (Bhatia, 2014). The aim of this chapter is to focus on the communicative nature of academic email proposals and to evaluate its negotiative genre across gender and language. Therefore, the literature on job applications and graduate statement of purpose letters can be seen as relevant studies. Al-Ali (2006) investigated 60 job application letters: 30 written by Jordanian Arabic speakers and 30 written by American English speakers. The findings revealed that the writer's cultural background influenced rhetorical move preferences when expressing the same communicative purpose. For example, Arabic applicants used strategic moves such as 'glorifying the institution of the prospective employer' and 'invoking compassion' that did not exist in the English letters. Native English speaking letters were extensive in nature and included supportive discussions to promote their positions. Therefore, Al-Ali's (2006) study concluded that different strategies are effective within their own cultural zone, but might be irrelevant when used in a different culture. Connor, Davis and De Rycker (1995) pointed out that English letters written by American applicants provided more supportive arguments than Flemish letters; both included benefits for the employer, but members in the latter group were more indirect in their request for an interview.

Similar to a job application, writing an email to a prospective PhD supervisor is a task that Bhatia (2014) argues heavily relies on creativity, given its goal to *inform* and *persuade*. There are two important dimensions working side by side in any email negotiation: politeness and persuasion. Relying on politeness alone does not ensure the efficacy of an email message (Li & Chen, 2016). The latter authors compared two email samples, one focusing on form and the other on content. They found that only 23% of professors focused on form, while 69% focused on the effectiveness or persuasive nature of the emails when deciding to grant a given academic request. The professors demanded that students should provide convincing explanations and address possible solutions in their attempt to gain approval to their requests. Providing detailed explanations and creating potential solutions by generating possible courses of actions were found to be effective negotiation strategies in academic emails (Alsharif & Alyousef, 2017).

In a study similar to the current thesis, Sii (2004, as cited in Yang, 2013) compared Statement of Purpose (SoP) letters submitted for an entry to a Masters program at a British university written by British and Chinese students. She confirmed some cross-cultural variations

in the data. For instance, in the moves of explaining reasons by indicating and detailing values of the candidature, British applicants tended to evaluate their candidature in detail, whereas Chinese writers focused on explaining the reasons. The Chinese applicants, mainly from China, depended far more than their counterparts on self-glorification, self-degradation and adversary glorification strategies to present their positive self. Based on her analysis, Sii (2004) suggested that Chinese applicants should be explicitly taught the writing processes, procedures, and strategies of English. Brown (2004) investigated SoP letters submitted to a PhD program in clinical psychology, determining that successful applicants focused more on research experience and their future research endeavours, demonstrating their commitments to scientific epistemology rather than practical experience. After their study of SoP letters submitted to four medical residency programs, Barton, Ariail, and Smith (2004) established that the successful construction of a personal self is evaluated more favourably than the construction of the accomplished self. Samraj and Monk (2008) aimed to explore how SoP letters differed from those produced within three other disciplines: linguistics, business, and engineering; they concluded that, although disciplines tend to share similar moves, they differ in how prospective applicants utilise these moves. In her study of SoP letters, Işık-Taş (2020) supported future applicants with feedback and genre-based instruction obtained from academics in their fields, raising their awareness of linguistic devices and helping them create their discursive identity. Her study was motivated by both the lack of instruction in the genre of SoP letters and the fact that such genres are occluded, or not publicly available due to their confidential nature (Swales, 1996). Likewise, authentic academic email proposals directed to prospective PhD supervisors are difficult to obtain, meaning that there are very few examples for students to use as models.

Some studies suggest broad guidelines on the production of an effective email, such as a keep-it-short-and-simple model (Taylor, 2004), without linking them to a certain topic or context. Observing certain academic email requests could provide essential steps and politeness tactics necessary for this particular academic negotiation. Arguably, sending an email inquiry to a prospective PhD supervisor is one of the most important steps in the entire application process. Like SoP letters, writers of these emails try to portray themselves as capable individuals “that fit identities favourable in their disciplinary discourse communities” (Işık-Taş, 2020, p. 177). There have been some cultural concerns in respect of the appropriateness of email communications that have not been proportionally reflected in the studies investigating academics’ perceptions of non-

native students (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Bolkan & Holmgren, 2012; Economidou-Koetsidis, 2011). Overall, there seems to be a consensus that non-native speakers' production of speech acts, such as requests, are evaluated as significantly less polite than those of native speakers (Krulatz, 2015). Some academics may also question students' personality attributes based on their linguistic behaviour (Hendriks, 2010). Little is known about how students' perceptions influence their linguistic choices and generic options, which could provide a better interpretation of their cultural and linguistic behaviour.

There is a lack of research on the links between academic negotiation styles and perception of the negotiation task. For example, negotiation studies suggest that negotiators have two orientations they are likely to pursue or be somewhere in between: cooperative or competitive. Cooperative negotiators ensure the shared interests of all the negotiation parties have been met (Yiu, Cheung, & Siu, 2012), maximising mutual goals (Richards, Guerrero, & Fischbach, 2020). Competitive negotiators' concerns, however, will be for self-gain, which may necessitate holding back some information (Parlami, Badawy, Haber, & Brouer, 2020). The decision to cooperate or compete can be affected by situational aspects of the negotiation context (Thompson, 2006). For example, competitive negotiators might adopt competitive tactics due to feelings of 'competency pressure' (Parlami et al., 2020). While current negotiation studies center around either business or pedagogical implications about how to teach negotiation tactics, academic negotiation in the sense of negotiating academic matters with staff is largely unexplored. In one Master thesis, the researcher investigated grade negotiation between students and their professors and found that most students adopt a competitive style in their academic negotiations (Kazoun, 2013). Since email communications among university students with different cultural backgrounds has become widespread, investigating students' perceptions and negotiation orientations will foster more understanding of intercultural differences and awareness. The questionnaire used in this study has been designed to link applicants' real data, their beliefs of what needs to be addressed in such emails and why they thought they were accepted into the PhD program. Half of this chapter discusses students' perceptions in this regard.

Generally, the task of writing a supervision email request poses a challenge to most applicants due to uncertainty around supervisors' expectations, genre conventions, and its discourse community. In the current study, 93% of emails were successful in gaining admission (obtained from the questionnaire data). Therefore, it seems that both cultural groups were using

their best strategies to be accepted. Although Saudis and Australians used similar moves, their rhetorical and linguistic behaviour differed. In other words, each cultural group seemed to use certain moves more than others. The dominant moves were counted in terms of their high frequency (40% or above) in line with Bou-Franch (2011). The next section details the overall pattern of each cultural group.

5.3 Dominant discourse patterns

Out of the 27 moves found in student emails, dominant moves were found in each cultural group (see Table 5.1). Saudi students tended to have preferred discourse patterns containing a few varieties of negotiation moves a student is expected to use when contacting a prospective PhD supervisor. The following are the dominant moves or discourse patterns found in each group.

As shown in Table 5.1, 9.47% of all the negotiation moves made by Saudi Arabians were requests for acceptance. 7.69% of all component moves made by Australians were focused on the supervisor. Both cultural groups made a high number of requests for acceptance, opening moves, and sign-off moves. However, Australians focused on supervisors and research plans at a higher rate than Saudi Arabians, who focused more on closing moves, funding and research interests. The moves least utilised by Australians were program funding and self-promotion; for Saudi Arabians, this was research experience, context, and option moves. A two-sample z-test was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference in the number of component moves included in the two group's academic email proposals (Appendix E). However, no significant differences were found ($p > 0.5$).

Saudi students' pattern (in order of implementation)

Opening, self-introduction, research interests, major, proposal, CV information, fund, focus on supervisor, request for acceptance, promoting further contact, closing, sign off.

Australian students' pattern (in order of implementation)

Opening, self-introduction, research interest, research topic, major, timeframe, CV information, attachment, research plans, focus on supervisor, request for acceptance, closing, sign off, business card signature.

Table 5.1 Saudi Arabian and Australian negotiation moves

Saudi Females (F) and Males (M) (=100)								Australian Females (F) and Males (M) (=20)					
Negotiation moves		(F) N	(F) %	(M) N	(M) %	Total N	Total %	(F) N	(F) %	(M) N	(M) %	Total N	Total %
1	Opening	50	50.00	50	50.00	100	7.76	15	75.00	5	25.00	20	6.69
2	Self-introduction	37	56.06	29	43.94	66	5.12	6	66.67	3	33.33	9	3.01
3	Research interests	28	38.89	44	61.11	72	5.59	8	72.73	3	27.27	11	3.68
4	Research topic	16	80.00	4	20.00	20	1.55	8	100.00	0	0.00	8	2.68
5	Major	33	53.23	29	46.77	62	4.81	7	58.33	5	41.67	12	4.01
6	Greetings	11	42.31	15	57.69	26	2.02	4	100.00	0	0.00	4	1.34
7	Proposal	21	36.84	36	63.16	57	4.43	8	66.67	4	33.33	12	4.01
8	GPA	18	51.43	17	48.57	35	2.72	5	100.00	0	0.00	5	1.67
9	Timeframe	13	44.83	16	55.17	29	2.25	8	100.00	0	0.00	8	2.68
10	CV information	41	58.57	29	41.43	70	5.43	12	66.67	6	33.33	18	6.02
11	Attachment	44	59.46	30	40.54	74	5.75	9	50.00	9	50.00	18	6.02
12	Research plans	16	59.26	11	40.74	27	2.10	8	50.00	8	50.00	16	5.35
13	Research experience	4	100.00	0	0.00	4	0.31	4	50.00	4	50.00	8	2.68
14	Change/choose topic	10	34.48	19	65.52	29	2.25	4	50.00	4	50.00	8	2.68
15	Context	1	25.00	3	75.00	4	0.31	6	85.71	1	14.29	7	2.34
16	Self-promotion	14	66.67	7	33.33	21	1.63	2	100.00	0	0.00	2	0.67
17	Research Justification	7	33.33	8	66.67	15	1.63	9	63.64	4	36.36	13	3.68
18	Option	2	40.00	4	80.00	5	0.39	6	75.00	2	25.00	8	2.68
19	Program	4	36.36	7	63.64	11	0.85	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
20	Fund	38	55.88	30	44.12	68	5.28	2	100.00	0	0.00	2	0.67
21	Focus on supervisor	21	42.86	28	57.14	49	3.80	16	69.57	7	30.43	23	7.69
22	Request for acceptance	54	44.26	68	55.74	122	9.47	17	77.27	5	22.73	22	7.36
23	Gratitude	20	57.14	15	42.86	35	2.72	5	71.43	2	28.57	7	2.34
24	Promoting further contact	44	61.97	27	38.03	71	5.51	12	66.67	6	33.33	18	6.02
25	Closing	48	50.53	47	49.47	95	7.38	8	66.67	4	33.33	12	4.01
26	Sign off	50	50.00	50	50.00	100	7.76	15	75.00	5	25.00	20	6.69
27	Business card	6	40.00	9	60.00	15	1.16	6	60.00	4	40.00	10	3.34

Not only did Australian student emails contain more frequent and longer moves (i.e. research topic, research plans, timeframe), but they also provided more detail when they explained their proposed project and research plans. These moves were not organised in any particular order, except for the opening and closing, as each student had their own discourse organisation. Saudi students seemed to take shorter steps in less detail while Australians provided more in-depth explanations, especially when describing their proposed project (Move 12) and the justification for their research (Move 17). Since Saudi students were all sponsored students, they focused on the fund move to enable acceptance (Move 20). For Australians, however, the fund move was not used as a persuasive tool; though they were applying for scholarships, they had not been granted one yet. While approximately 15% of Saudis used a business card signature under their names, 50% of Australians included their professional profile under their names (Move 27). This reflects the aim to appear professional (see Section 5.4); for example, one Australian student said that she used her staff email when sending emails to prospective supervisors.

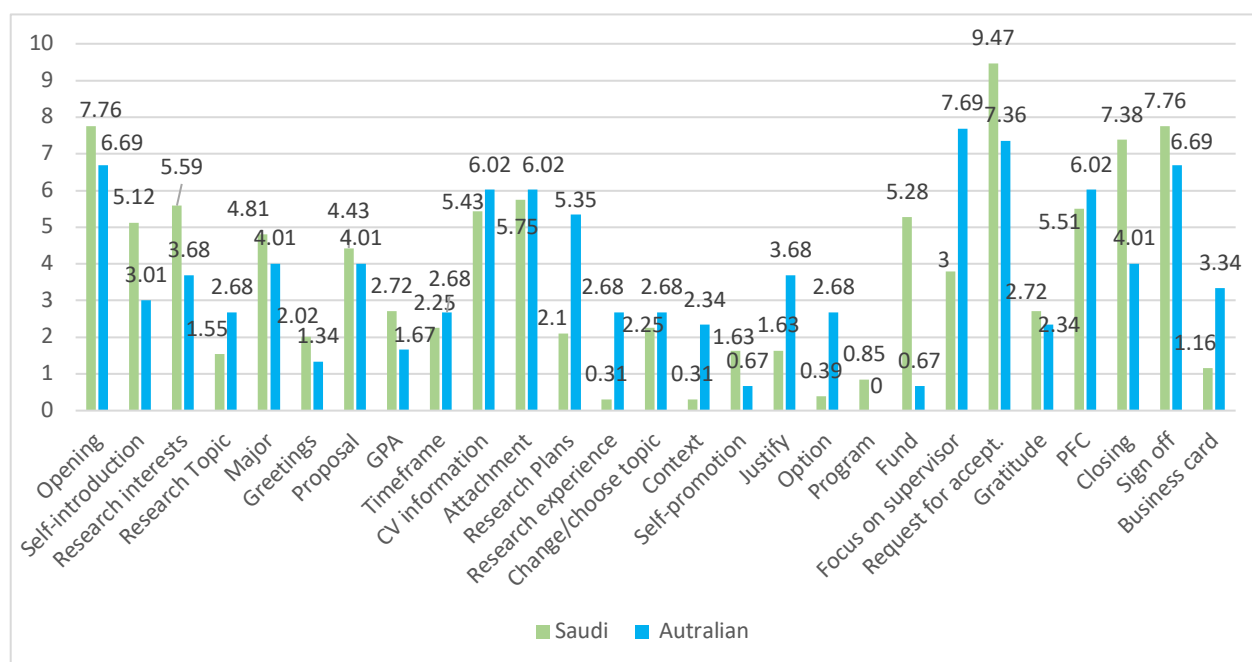


Figure 5.1 Saudi and Australian patterns of negotiations

Figure 5.1 is taken from Table 5.1, illustrating some of the prominent differences between the two cultural groups. Taken into consideration that the sample size of Saudi students largely outnumbered the Australian one, a focus on some prominent patterning features is discussed in

this section. Firstly, Saudis made more self-introductions and more reference to having funds and scholarships; overall, they made more requests and more closings. Australians made more reference to research plans and experiences, focused on context and informal small talk with the potential supervisor to situate themselves, promoted further contact and focused on their business card signature at the end of their emails. At a qualitative level, Australian emails generally provided more detail in each move of their proposal, and often had lengthier emails; Saudi students used these moves in an inconsistent manner, providing fewer details and producing shorter emails. However, the repetitions of moves, such as requesting twice in their emails, contributed to the overall number of moves they had.

5.3.1 Email subject line

The 27 moves identified in this thesis were those existing in the body of the emails themselves. However, the subject line should also be considered as an integral part of the opening ritual. Waldvogel (2007) argues that a clear and concise subject line is essential to draw the attention of the receiver. Most pragmatic studies focusing on email language tend to disregard the subject line, despite its importance. According to Crystal (2011), the subject line signals the content of the message and plays a significant role in motivating the recipient to either check or ignore the email. In the current data, 51% of the Saudi participants (26 females and 25 males) initially shared the subject lines of their emails; the remainder sent only the core message with its opening, body and closing, despite being sent an email reminder individually requesting their subject lines. Interestingly, the majority of the Australian participants (17 out of 20) shared their subject lines unprompted. There was a commonality that cropped up in many of the subject lines: 36 out of 51 Saudi participants included the term ‘PhD’, and 13 out of 17 of Australian subject lines included ‘PhD.’ The three others included ‘Masters,’ as they were Masters students; in total, this study included only five students looking for Masters research opportunities. One fixed subject line that six Australian students — both female and male — used is ‘PhD supervision’ (Table 5.2). Other Australian students used similar subject lines, such as ‘PhD application’ or ‘PhD supervision enquiry.’

The examples in Table 5.2 have been selected to highlight some main features of the subject lines that were found in the different participant groups. Some Saudi students used a form of simple sentence, rather than a proper subject. These sentences may include want or need statements, such

as in the second example under Saudi females (Table 5.2). The fourth female Saudi example, asking for help, was in the context of most deadlines for the university's PhD acceptance being closed. Some ambiguity was found in the subject lines of female applicants; in the first example, 'Urgent-PhD advice' was used, despite the fact the student was instead writing a direct request for supervision. In the third example, the student titled her email as 'Good morning'; when asked why she did this, she indicated that, after different attempts with a clear subject line, she failed to receive any replies. When she tried 'Good morning', she started hearing back. This may be relevant as supervisors with a full student load might ignore emails with a clear title; an ambiguous subject line has the potential to invite the receiver to know what the email is about. This strategy seemed to work for the student and reflects the fact that even the subject line serves to attract and persuade at times. Two Saudi females used need and want statements as part of their subject lines, such as in the second example, which has two individual subject lines. Some subject lines tended to be long in both cultural and gender groups, as in the last example.

Table 5.2 Examples of subject lines from both gender and cultural groups				
No	Saudi females	Saudi males	Aus. females	Aus. males
1	Urgent - PhD advice	Chance to do PhD research	PhD supervision	PhD supervision
2	I want supervisor for my PhD / Need a PhD Supervisor	my supervisor	PhD research proposal	Potential PHD candidate
3	Good morning	Future PhD Candidature	PhD candidate re T*****, social media and a*****	Enquiry about PhD
4	Is it possible for you to help me please	PHD	PhD app	Masters 2018
5	Interested in your research	looking for PhD position	An introduction and a request for supervision	-
6	Prospective PhD student seeking to study linguistics	Mohamad, a Saudi Arabian student seeking for a PhD supervisor	PhD Scholarship in messaging for th***** s***** co*****	Master of Science (Zoology) Research Supervisor Query

In the fourth example, both a Saudi male and an Australian female had the shortest titles, with the Saudi being 'PHD' and the Australian 'PhD app'. The abbreviation 'app' is a short form of the word 'application', reflecting the Australian — or Aussie — tendency to shorten words. It might

not be appropriate for a subject line in this instance to be hinting or informal. A more formal subject line needs to be used. For example, ‘PhD supervision’ used by six Australian students is concise, formal and has a direct clear purpose. Interestingly, there are two examples in Saudi data that have compliments in the subject line either directly or indirectly; one from a Saudi female, (‘interested in your research’) and the other a Saudi male (‘my supervisor’). The latter assumes that the prospective PhD supervisor has already accepted the student and is now his supervisor, while the former is direct flattery.

5.3.2 Opening

The opening move is the one used to start an email, usually including ‘salutation + name’ (Huang, 2016). The Saudi male data contained more informal openings (nine) than the female data (three); however, all Australian openings were informal, which could be attributed to them either already knowing the supervisors personally (as suggested by the content of some of the emails) or the general informality and egalitarianism in Australian culture (Peeters, 2004a).

Table 5.3 Opening move in both cultural groups

Opening move	Saudi data		Australian data	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Terms of address formula</i>				
<i>Dear+ Title + Last Name</i>	1	1%	5	25%
<i>Hello</i>	6	6%	1	5%
<i>Hi + First name</i>	0	0	10	50%
<i>Dear + Title + First + Last names</i>	27	27%	2	10%
<i>Dear + Title + First name</i>	33	33%	2	10%
<i>Dear + First name</i>	1	1%	0	0
<i>Dear + Last name</i>	1	1%	0	0
<i>Dear + Sir/Madam</i>	2	2%	0	0
<i>Dear + Others/Unknown</i>	29	29%	0	0

The most prevalent term of address formula in the Saudi data is ‘Dear Dr. First name’; for Australian students, ‘Hi’ is the dominant salutation. The latter is sometimes accompanied by the person’s nickname (Jenni, Chris, Ronnie) due to the common use of first names in Australian culture (Aldhulaaee, 2017), which many other cultures find inappropriate in formal correspondence. In the ‘Hello’ examples, the Saudi students used either ‘Hello + Title + First + Last names’ or simply ‘Hello + First name’; one Saudi male used ‘Hello’ without mentioning the name. One

interesting example in the Saudi female data is ‘Hello dear Philip’, which has a level of informality and potential intimacy. Due to privacy issues — and because students were given freedom to delete parts they did not want to share — 19 Saudi students opted not to write anything after the word ‘Dear’, while 10 used other formulae. It is likely that, of those 19, a high percentage would use ‘Dear + Title + First name’.

Interestingly, while 25% of Australian students used the last name of the prospective supervisor, only 1% of Saudis adopted this strategy. This strategy is rarely used in Saudi culture; alternatively, a person’s titles are stressed in a formal setting, which may be accompanied by the first name or first and last name as a pair. If the person’s last name is stressed, the gender of that person will be unknown, meaning there is some avoidance to adopt this term of address in Saudi society. It is an important politeness strategy for Saudi culture to acknowledge the hearer’s status as high because of a strong sense of hierarchy (Davies & Bentahila, 2012; Hofstede, 2001), whereas ‘Title + Last name’ is considered to be a common English pattern in formal settings (Huang, 2016). The majority of participants employed appropriate terms of address specific to their cultures, as shown in Table 5.3. However, two female participants chose to use ‘Dear Sir/Madam’ when addressing the prospective supervisor. This term of address is inappropriate for this purpose as it suggests that the email was sent to several different people, which might not be well-received by the prospective supervisor. It seems that using titles in email interaction is uncommon in the Australian data in this context. Unlike previous studies, which suggested that openings were not used frequently in CMC due to the informality of online communication (Herring, 1996), the findings of this study suggest that the opening move is an essential discursive feature in this specific type of academic negotiation. The importance of including an opening move is supported by the recommendations of email etiquette manuals (Furgang, 2017).

5.3.3 Self-introduction

Tailoring a negotiated topic with the right status-congruent tone requires high pragmatic competence and cultural awareness of politeness conventions and email etiquette (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007). Communication accommodation theorist Howard Giles suggested that people attempt to accommodate their linguistic choices in a given social event to gain approval from the receiver or a larger audience. In such attempts, people choose to reduce or emphasise social differences between themselves and their interlocutors. The self-introduction move in an academic

setting was found to be used in unequal encounters in comparison to other settings (Bou-Franch, 2011). In the current Saudi data, there was a total of 66 self-introduction moves (Table 5.1). Most Saudi participants who introduced themselves by name focused on their first and last names, except for the four who only mentioned their first. Some variations in language use were found in their self-introduction move, such as ‘I am X’, ‘This is X’, or ‘My name is X’. Australians, however, exclusively used the latter formulae. Eight per cent of Saudi students (four females and four males) introduced themselves using their job titles, the most common formula being ‘I am a lecturer’. Additionally, 20% chose to introduce themselves either in terms of nationality—‘Saudi’—or student status, such as ‘international student’ or ‘graduate student’. One male student said ‘I am an MA holder’ as a form of creative introduction in terms of qualifications; from his email, it did not appear that he had a job.

Although, statistically, both cultural groups have a similar percentage of profiles in self-introduction, a qualitative analysis revealed that no Australian student identified themselves by their job title. This may reflect a boasting attitude, undesirable in Australian culture, but more appreciated in other cultures. For Saudi Arabians, introducing oneself through one’s job title is interpreted as a self-proving act; people would think that you did not introduce yourself sufficiently if you did not reveal your reputable job title. Ebner (2019) postulates that adapting to the other party’s communication style is at the core of effective negotiation, which Saudi students seemed to miss in this instance. Some Australians revealed their jobs strategically while talking about their PhD plans, as detailed in Chapter Six. Therefore, avoiding introducing the self in terms of job title is important, as Barton et al. (2004) indicated that the accomplished self is evaluated less favourably by academics. This form of presenting the self might be similar to what Bhatia (2014) calls self-glorification, deemed negatively in his study. However, Saudi students are still able to strategically relate their job title or CV as part of their research experience/plans or place it underneath their email signature as Australians do.

5.3.4 Greetings as speech acts

The speech act of greetings has been classified as phatic communication and a positive politeness gesture (Shleykina, 2019). Greetings in the present study are perceived as a discursive formulae part of a negotiation protocol to achieve positive outcomes. This is consistent with Alharbi and Al-Ajmi (2008, p. 116), who viewed greetings as a “discourse value, within a culturally ritualized

use”. Greetings in Saudi culture are important for preparing the ground before negotiation so as to achieve a positive outcome. Brown and Levinson (1987) regard greetings as face-saving acts; however, in Saudi Arabian culture, greetings better fit Brown and Levinson’s (1987) ‘common ground’ notion, which relates more to claiming shared interests to show positive politeness. In other words, greetings in certain contexts establish an atmosphere of sociability (Schleicher, 1997). The following example shows how a Saudi male thought that asking about the supervisor’s health was important to implicitly ‘manage rapport’ (Spencer-Oatey, 2005):

Saudi male data (Greeting)

1 *First, I hope you are so well when you receive this text.*

This indicates priority. Greetings in Saudi Arabian negotiations are an essential strategy to prepare ground; much time can be spent in spoken discourse before one makes an actual request. Greetings in Arabic, especially in terms of hoping that other people are well, come in a specific formula. Health and wellbeing are often paired in greetings; hence, الله يعطيك الصحة والعافية (‘May God grant you health and wellbeing’). Some students made this pragmatic transfer when performing greetings. Both male and female students tried to pair some utterances to perform a similar linguistic ritual:

Saudi male data (Greeting)

1 *I hope you are in a good health and spirit.*

Saudi female data (Greeting)

1 *I hope you are fine and in good health.*

Some studies suggest that email is a difficult media to transmit attitudes because it is considered a form of written communication (Tylor, 2009). A more recent study argues that it is possible to set an appropriate ‘tone of voice’ in greetings and other aspects of email, especially opening and closing (Li & Chen, 2016). In this study, there was not a big difference between Saudi males and females when making greetings (see Table 5.1). However, Saudi women’s greetings were slightly more effusive in tone:

Saudi female data (Greetings)

1 *It is my pleasure to write to you.*

2 *A very good day to you.*

3 *Hoping you are well and gaining more success in your works.*

This reflects a Saudi negotiation style called *Mayanah*, where people approach the other party using a more affable style to lessen the impact of power on the discussion. *Mayanah* sets out to establish a friendly relationship between the two parties; in comparison, the opposite notion of *Kalafah* takes a more formal approach and acknowledges power differentials or *Takaluf* (تكلف) that limit the exchange. It is about ‘the level of access’ to other people’s space. *Mayanah* is a middle ground approach to social distance and power; in other words, it allows the speakers to even the playing field for negotiation.

Saudi male data (Greetings)

- 1 *I hope you are well.*
- 2 *I hope you are doing well.*
- 3 *I hope this email finds you well.*
- 4 *I hope you doing very well.*

Saudi male students used more formal and succinct greetings, as seen above. This demonstrates the concept of *Kalafah*, where people approach people in power more formally. The Australian representative sample included only four greetings, all used by females (Table 5.1). There were no greetings from the five male participants. One greeting made by an Australian female student was also similar to the *Mayanah* style found in Saudi female data: ‘I hope that life as a staff member at **** is treating you kindly so far’. This could also be due to the fact that women generally tend to be more expressive in online communication than men (Fox, Bukatko, Hallahan, & Crawford, 2007). Informality tends to be a wide-spread feature in the Australian emails. In an informal setting when Australians leave one another, they may wish each other ‘a wonderful day/evening’. This was reflected in one email where the greeting part was delayed till the end: ‘I hope you have a wonderful evening’ (see Table 4.2 for definitions of greetings in this study). Despite the presence of informal language and greetings in both the opening and closing moves, this was not meant to lessen the politeness or the professional tone of the overall email; all messages were professionally articulated and written.

5.3.5 CV information

The CV information move is one of the most frequent moves in the Saudi data (70), as shown in Table 5.1. The educational aspects of their professional backgrounds were generally stressed in the students’ email proposals. This emphasis on professional background was also embedded in

other moves, such as the self-introduction and attachment. Applying for a PhD seems to overlap somewhat with applying for a job, where applicants highlight their strengths. It was found that the Saudi students seemed very competitive, in the sense that they stressed their professional information without necessarily linking this to their area of research for their PhD. On the contrary, all the Australian students seemed to focus only on the elements of their practical and educational background that had a direct link to their PhD plans. Below are some examples of how a member of each cultural group presented their CV information.

Saudi male data (CV info)

1 *I am an international student who works as a lecturer at *** University in Saudi Arabia.*

Australian female data (CV info)

1 *For my PhD I would like to look into the **** of a **** city. My interest in **** and **** has arisen out of my current work which is ****.*

It can be seen from the examples above that the Saudi male student introduces himself in terms of being an international student, then links his self-introduction with his job title. Culpeper (2011b) argues that identity is associated with the notion of face. Spencer-Oatey (2007) also believes face and identity are closely linked to the idea of self-image; thus, face is “associated with positively evaluated attributes that the claimant wants others to acknowledge” (Spencer-Oatey, 2007, p. 10). Therefore, it is possible that the Saudi students mention something from their CV as a way to show that they are important as individuals, whereas the Australian students mention their work as a justification for their PhD plans. It is important to note that almost all the Australian students in this study have work experience or were current employees, as evidenced by their attachments and business card signatures. However, Australian participants did not highlight their professional experience as a discussion topic in their emails. Demonstrating knowledge about their PhD project seemed to be the main concern for the Australian students, whereas the Saudi participants presented their general CV information as proof of their personal importance and achievements. Brown (2004) confirms that research experience in a Statement of Purpose letter is valued by academics more than practical experience. Based on Brown’s (2004) conclusion, Australian students in the current study are meeting academics’ expectation more than their Saudi counterparts.

5.3.6 Option and context moves

In terms of the option move (supervisory arrangements), 40% of Australian students wrote about their supervision arrangements freely, discussing whether they had contacted other supervisors or the possibility of adding a specific second supervisor to their project. Although this might demonstrate professional independency and honesty for Australians, it may be perceived as a face threat by Saudi students. Context is important; most Australian students were applying for a scholarship and needed to complete a form in which it was not clear whether they needed to put the names of both supervisors. Although most Saudi students contacted several potential PhD supervisors, there was no mention of any other supervisors in their emails because, in their view, this was a threat to the supervisor's face. This is also due to power differentials, as Saudis believe that supervisors are more informed than them and are therefore more capable of making this decision. From a different perspective, suggesting another supervisor might inflict imposition on the hearer's freedom or, worse, threaten the main supervisor's face (Brown & Levinson, 1987), in case they would prefer not to work with that person. Although Australian academics expect students to inform them if they have already spoken with a colleague about the possibility of supervision, Saudis find it confronting due to cultural norms and are nearly incapable of doing so. The five Saudi students who employed the option move were asking the supervisor if they would like to suggest another supervisor.

The context move, on the other hand, reveals another important difference between Australian and Saudi participants. Seven out of 20 Australians (35%) started their emails by reminding the supervisor about themselves (about who they were, or how they got to know them), with this serving as a dominant move to prepare the ground for negotiation for this particular context. This move barely existed in Saudi email data (4%) and, when it did, was more about someone else recommending the supervisor to them. The following examples demonstrate the importance of knowing the supervisor as a strategy to manage rapport before starting their negotiated topic (Spencer-Oatey, 2000).

Australian data (Context-move)

- 1 *I met you ever so briefly at last night's presentation.*
- 2 *I was at X's PhD completion seminar last Thursday and heard you speak there.*
- 3 *I'm a friend of X. X mentioned you are looking for a PhD candidate to write about communication, media and culture.*
- 4 *We met recently when Rose X was in Melbourne.*

The third example in particular reveals the important cultural aspect of networking in Australian culture.

5.3.7 Research plan and justifications

When students discussed their PhD plans, they gave information about what they intended to do. Only 11% of the Saudi male students wrote about their research plans, compared to 60% of the Australian male students; sixteen per cent of the Saudi females and 53% of the Australian females did the same. Generally, it seemed that the Australian students had a clearer idea of what they intended to do for their PhD. In terms of research justification, the Saudi students justified their research in terms of personal preference, personal knowledge, or family reasons (i.e. family business, e.g. ‘my family owns one of the biggest banks in the Middle East, The **** Bank. Therefore, I need to improve myself by pursuing a PhD’). The research justification in Australian data typically referred to addressing some global issue or research gap. The question of why a student wants to do a PhD is not necessarily significant. Rather, from the Australian data, it was noticed that a student’s core focus was on their PhD topic as a major shared interest between themselves and their prospective supervisor. This allowed them to adopt a more cooperative negotiation style. Richards et al. (2020, p. 1) assert that “cooperative skills are needed in the value-creation process”; therefore, prospective students are more likely to be evaluated on the basis of their cooperative tactics when focusing on a topic of shared interest between themselves and their prospective supervisors.

5.3.8 Changing/choosing topic

Since the general goal for PhD applicants is to gain the supervisor’s acceptance, all students in the current study used their best negotiation strategies to get their request approved. One of the most dominant moves used was showing willingness to change or let the supervisor choose a topic for their PhD project. The way this was expressed differed according to the students’ culture and gender; how each gender altered their language according to power distance was interesting to observe. As power differential influences face-to-face interaction, it also influences the way men and women use their language online (Madini, 2012). Studies offer conflicting views regarding how both genders differ online, which could be due to unanalysed factors such as who they talk to and which topic they discuss. Though it is generally assumed that women use more tentative

language online, recent studies suggest that women displayed lower politeness and formality when writing to female faculty members, rather than male (Thomas-Tate et al., 2017). If the focus is not limited to a certain email scenario, the findings could be misleading. It is of particular interest to examine the perceptions of power reflected in both male and female Saudi participants' language.

When analysing the change-topic move, Saudi male students preferred to give the supervisor full freedom to change their entire PhD project. Their subordinate-superior kind of *Kalafah* language is stressed in their use of the hearer-oriented language, which stresses the pronoun *you* (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). This can be seen in the following examples.

Saudi male data (Hearer-oriented language)

- 1 *perhaps **you** could suggest changes that would make it more suitable*
- 2 *If **you** think it is better to make some changes to my proposed topic*
- 3 *However, I'm willing to work in any project **you** have*
- 4 *Therefore, I am emailing to ask whether I can work with **you** in **your** department.*

While Saudi male participants employed hearer-oriented language in at least 12 change moves, they used other strategies reflecting *Kalafah* language. Only five Saudi women used hearer-oriented language within this move; instead, they used other strategies, including speaker-oriented language. Their use of both the first personal pronoun *I* and the possessive pronoun *my* reflected a sense of ownership of their PhD project. It was interesting to observe this consistently in their data:

Saudi female data

- 1 *I do not mind if **I** do some changing in **my** topic.*
- 2 *I am quite flexible about **my** topic.*
- 3 *I will happily change **my** topic upon his/her recommendation.*

Saudi students in general lacked clarity about their PhD plans and were therefore open and willing for any changes. This move has two sides: one that is competitive by showing willingness to change to meet the supervisor's wishes; and another one that is pleading, and focuses more on asking the supervisor to choose a topic for them. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

5.3.9 Request for acceptance (Speech act)

Most requests for acceptance were indirect. Brown and Levinson (1987) believe that indirect politeness strategies are oriented towards the hearer's negative face and emphasise avoiding

imposition. Most students in this study titled their emails in a way that made it clear what they were asking, for example, ‘Looking for a PhD supervisor (proposal attached)’. Therefore, most students did not request directly, as it was clear from the context. Searle (1975, pp. 60-61) offers a more accurate definition of indirectness; he believes that, in an indirect speech act, “the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he actually says by way of relying on their mutually shared background information” (pp. 60–61). For example, one Saudi male student, whose request was included in the focus on supervisor move, used the expression ‘Experienced professors just like you are my mentors to reach my goal to succeed’. He did not request directly, but this was implied within the complimenting behaviour. There seems to be a general consensus in the literature that speakers of different languages tend to use certain strategies when performing speech acts: “previous research on politeness tends to examine the inadequacy of non-native speakers’ pragmatic knowledge” (Kim & Lee, 2017, p. 207). The focus of these studies has been limited to certain speech acts, examining certain pragmatic knowledge of non-native speakers. In this thesis, the focus is expanded to include the influence of cultural values and politeness strategies embedded within persuasive discourse, which will be further elaborated on in Chapter Seven.

5.3.10 Speech act of compliments embedded in negotiation moves

Compliments are often used to lubricate interpersonal relationships. They boost the addressee’s positive face when used appropriately within pragmatic conventions. Similar to CV information, which was embedded in different moves, compliments were frequently used by the Saudi students within different moves as per Saudi cultural norms; people use compliments strategically to appeal to the other party (Suchan, 2014). The following examples typically represent a pragmatic transfer from the students’ first language:

Saudi data (Compliments)

- 1 *I thank you for your scholarly contribution.*
- 2 *the supervision of the scholar like you who has developed an international reputation in the field.*
- 3 *I will be honored if I were accepted by a supervisor like you that have intelligence, cooperation and great manners.*

Al-Khateeb (2009) argues that the speech act of thanking can be employed by Arabic speakers as a way to make a compliment, reflected in the first example (‘I thank you for your scholarly

contribution’). Thomas (1983) asserts that pragmalinguistic failure occurs when the pragmatic force mapped by the speaker onto a given utterance is systematically different from the force most frequently assigned by native speakers or when speech act strategies are inappropriately transferred to the second language. Other moves were found in female students’ data, where they praised their own abilities as part of a self-promotion move to show confidence and highlight their intelligence:

Saudi female data (Self-promotion)

- 1 *I bring a unique mix of strong academic background, relevant work experience and passion which will certainly motivate me to excel and contribute to your cohort.*
- 2 *I will also add a new perspective and a new voice that both my professors and colleagues will benefit from.*
- 3 *The PhD Degree will prepare me to take on more senior roles as a professor and lead researcher in the area of entrepreneurship.*

These statements do not address any general criteria for accepting a PhD student. It is generally irrelevant for a supervisor to know how the candidate is going to add some personal benefits to the institution. The self-promotion move was also found in the Australian female data:

Australian female data (Self-promotion)

- 1 *am keen to pursue study at a higher level. So I have a strong background in research here in X*
- 2 *this is highly relevant to my long-term aspirations ..., as well as my determination to expand upon my data analytics and visualisation skills.*

The move was more emphasised in the Saudi female data (14 females vs. seven males), and only appeared in the Australian female data. A few discursive features appeared in the emails of Saudi students that were inconsistent with the usual expectations of email genre for this purpose, clearly reflecting the influence of Saudi culture. Among these is the use of metaphors, such as describing the research life as ‘a world I would love to dive in again’, as well as mention of family members: ‘I have two gorgeous children’. These irrelevant statements were not limited to Saudi data; one Australian student commented on his father’s educational background:

Australian male data (Mention of family members)

- 1 *(My dad also has a PhD from the University of *****, but in quite a different discipline! I was born in **** around the time he started his PhD, and grew up there until a job at **** University in ***** brought our family to **, where my mum is from).*

However, choosing to put them between brackets shows that the student realised this kind of information is off topic. At first, these moves were categorised under ‘Others’; however, as there were only five instances, the researcher chose to eliminate them from the move list altogether. They have been mentioned here because the researcher believes that these peculiarities reveal some hidden cultural norms that deserved exploration in this section.

5.3.11 Closing and sign-off

Email opening and closing has attracted a large number of scholars to date (Bou-Franch, 2011; Codina-Espurz & Salazar-Campillo, 2019; Waldvogel, 2007). The style of opening and closing helps determine the level of formality that the email requires or the person has. The way emails are closed leaves the last impression for the receiver; Crystal (2011) argues that closing functions as a boundary marker. For example, when a Saudi student closed his email by saying ‘see ya’, the prospective supervisor was left frustrated and commented on this particular closing (see Section 7.5). A more formal closing is required for this specific academic proposal purpose, as seen in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4 Closing move in both cultural groups

Closing move	Saudi data		Australian data	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Regards</i>	0	0%	4	20%
<i>Kind regards</i>	18	18%	5	25%
<i>Best regards</i>	18	18%	0	0%
<i>Warm regards</i>	4	4%	2	10%
<i>Sincerely,</i>	20	20%	2	10%
<i>Yours faithfully</i>	2	2%	0	0%
<i>None</i>	5	5 %	6	35%
<i>Thanks</i>	9	9%	1	5%
<i>Other</i>	22	22%	0	0%

While no Saudi students used the closing ‘Regards’, 20% of Australians used it. A commonly used closing remark is ‘Kind regards’—one of the most common closing remarks in Australian formal communication. Although ‘Sincerely’ is common between both cultural groups, ‘Yours faithfully’ tended to be an outdated closing rarely found in Australian correspondences. Interestingly, 27% of Saudi students used ‘Thanks’ as a means of closing; this was also relevant in the Australian data. A good percentage of Australians opted not to use closings (35% Australians vs. 2% Saudis),

instead using an implied closing in their last statements that promoted further contact; this often also includes statements of gratitude and appreciation. The five Saudi participants who did not use a closing were either using auto-signatures with their business card details or assumed that their gratitude move at the end of the email was a substitute for the closing move. This was also applicable to three Australian males who relied on their auto-signature to do the job of closing for them. The 'Other' category included all closings not mentioned in this list. However, most of the creative closings were done by Saudi female participants, who used different closings like 'Good regards', 'My regards', 'Respectfully' and 'With sincere thanks'. Despite the fact that Crystal (2011) believes that openings and closings are optional in email interactions, the majority of Saudi participants still used them as part of their familiarity with the email genre. However, 35% of Australian students did not, which could be due to a more laid-back attitude in terms of using emails.

5.4 Understanding students' perceptions and their linguistic behaviour

This section examines the perceptions of Saudi Arabian students (40 in total) and prospective Anglo-Australian students (17 in total) when approaching prospective PhD supervisors via email. The perception data was collected through an online questionnaire¹⁰ that students were invited to participate in immediately after the initial negotiation emails were collected. Two major questions were asked: 'Why do you think your proposal was accepted/rejected?' and 'In dot points, what are the important points you think should be mentioned in your email to a prospective supervisor? Why?' Prospective students' perceptions provide explanations for their choice of moves and politeness strategies. To this end, this cross-cultural analysis of Saudi and Anglo-Australian data aims to unpack the following factors: 1) students' underlying assumptions of negotiation with a prospective PhD supervisor; 2) similarities and differences of each cultural groups' views; 3) the most important strategies they believe should be included; and 4) the extent to which their views represent their data. Content analysis was adopted to understand the emerging themes of the questionnaire data.

¹⁰ The questionnaire data totalled 2008 words in length as a result of each participant using a few lines to address the two questions listed above.

The Saudi students participating in this questionnaire (13 women and 27 men) presented some formula and strategies to facilitate negotiation. However, despite their focus on communicative style in terms of politeness, their real-life data suggested a different conceptualisation. For Saudi students, politeness took the form of compliments and deferential language, whereas politeness for Australian students stemmed from using tentative language and indicating appreciation for the potential supervisor's time and consideration.

5.4.1 Reasons for acceptance/rejection from PhD supervisor

When prospective students of both cultures were asked to provide possible reasons for their acceptance or rejection, most (43/57) provided definite answers. Only three Saudi male participants and one Australian female participant said they had no idea why they had been accepted or rejected; the rest used more tentative language. This was interesting, because only supervisors knew why they accepted or rejected students. Participants declaring that they were accepted 'because of this reason' without using tentative language or hedges (e.g. 'I think' or 'it could be') raised the subject of how their perception or views were centered around specific things they believed motivated their supervisor to accept them. For example, a Saudi male student confidently said, 'Because I mentioned in the start of the proposal that I have a scholarship from the Saudi government'; while this might not be the only reason the supervisor accepted him, this was certainly the case in the mind of that student. Most of the students who participated in this questionnaire (53/57) were accepted by the supervisor they reached out to, with the exception of one Saudi woman, two Saudi men and one Australian woman.

Table 5.5 Saudi students' reasons behind acceptance/rejection

Answers	Male (N=25)	Percentage	Female (N=14)	Percentage
Clarity	4	16.00	4	26.67
Aligning interest	10	40.00	2	13.33
Communication style	3	11.11	1	6.67
Interesting idea/topic	4	14.81	3	20.00
Scholarship	4	14.81	3	20.00
Self-praise	5	18.52	5	33.33

Some common themes have been identified in Table 5.5. Clarity was a theme that covered different aspects, such as a student's clear introduction to who they were and what their research proposal focused on. For example, a female student believed she was accepted because of the 'clarity of whom I was and what I was interested to work on, I tried to convey in the email that I did my research.. etc.'. However, most participants focused on clarity in relation to the proposed topic, with 26% of the female participants believing that clarity was the reason behind their acceptance. The Saudi males thought that aligning their interest with the supervisor's was another contributing factor. Some attributed their communication style as playing a part in their acceptance, while others thought that their proposed topic itself was interesting and original. Having a scholarship was also among the reasons. Although not explicit (see below), the theme of self-praising emerged, indicating that some students thought they deserved to be accepted.

Saudi female data (Self-praise)

- 1 *I have ... shown some academic competence*
- 2 *I tried to show interest and readiness for the PhD*
- 3 *My GPA is high in the masters that I got from USA*

Saudi male data (Self-praise)

- 1 *They accepted me because they need a student who has a good experience...*
- 2 *Because it showed my strength*

Despite the fact that some Saudi participants seemed certain of why they had been accepted, a small portion expressed tentative language, using the hedge 'I think'. Two out of thirteen female participants used this term, as well as 'قد يكون...أو قد يكون' ('it could be'). Two Saudi male students (N=25) used 'I think' and three recorded that they had no idea; no Saudi female students stated that they had no idea about their acceptance/rejection. Two Saudi females (10%) attributed their acceptance to aligning interests with the supervisor's:

Saudi female data (Reasons for acceptance)

- 1 *It was in the same area of interest.*
- 2 *Accepted because my interests match his*

However, a much higher percentage (40%) of Saudi men thought that aligning interests contributed to their acceptance, as shown in Table 5.3. Some males linked a good PhD topic with acceptance, which also involved some self-admiration; no hedging was used in their language, indicating confidence:

Saudi male data (Reasons for acceptance)

- 1 *My topic was catching their attention*
- 2 *Bcz [sic] It was novel topic.*

This trend was also found with the Australian male students' perceptions, who seemed certain about why they were accepted:

Australian male data (Reasons for acceptance)

- 1 *Because I did a lot of research to choose a question that would be accepted*
- 2 *I showed promise as a researcher, the project was mostly completed*
- 3 *It was well written and researched*

Interestingly, the above perceptions in the mind of these Australian males were not directly reflected in their emails, which did not show any boasting attitude or over-confidence. Their emails were mostly formal in terms of describing their research plans, with slight informality in a few instances such as in the address terms and the context moves. This may reflect an aspect of the Australian communicative style: what they believe in does not always translate precisely into their academic communication, in which they make sure to be as neutral and professional as possible. In terms of communication skills, there seemed to be a major difference in the way Saudi and Australian students viewed the employment of communication skills (see Section 5.4.1).

Both cultural groups shared the theme of 'good communication skills' behind their acceptance. Although vaguely said, a few responses from both cultural groups elaborated what they exactly meant by it. An example taken from a Saudi female participant has defined the notion of good communication skills as being directly linked to her qualifications: 'I have a good written communication skills, I....told him about my qualifications and experience'. Australian female participants, on the other hand, talked about good communication skills in terms of communicating their PhD topic well ('I have good written communication skills. I explained what I wanted to do'; 'I outlined my interest and experience in a way that made sense for the project'). Hence, the researcher was able to elicit some responses that deeply interpreted these participants' approaches to what aspects were necessary in an email to a potential supervisor.

5.4.2 Saudi word frequency analysis

Running a text analysis word frequency method in NVivo helped to clarify the reasons students from each gender and cultural group believed they were accepted. This is elaborated on in Tables 5.6 and 5.7, both of which were produced by NVivo.

Table 5.6 Word frequency in Saudi female reasons for acceptance

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage
interest	8	9	8.26%
research	8	5	4.59%
supervisor	10	4	3.67%
accepted	8	3	2.75%
academic	8	2	1.83%
contact	7	2	1.83%
email	5	2	1.83%
idea	4	2	1.83%

The main theme for the Saudi female participants revolved around research interests and the clarity of ideas associated with the research interest. Again, the emerging theme of clarity seems to be apparent in the Saudi females' data:

Saudi female data (Interest)

- 1 *I think because I have **clarified** my research **interests***
- 2 ***Clarity** of whom I was and what I was **interested** to work on*
- 3 *I tried to show **interest** and readiness for the PhD.*
- 4 *Many factors including topic, research **interest**, availability...etc*

The word 'supervisor' seems to dominate the Saudi men's theme in answering this question, which could have played some part in their perception of power differentials between them and their potential supervisor.

Table 5.7 Word frequency in Saudi male reasons for acceptance

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage
supervisor	10	12	9.23%
interest	8	8	6.15%
topic	5	5	3.85%
accepted	8	5	3.85%
idea	4	4	3.08%
good	4	4	3.08%
research	8	4	3.08%
clear	5	3	2.31%

- 1 *[it] met the **supervisor** interest*
- 2 *it showed my strengths ... in which the **supervisor** is also interested in*
- 3 *it was one of the main interests of my **supervisor***
- 4 *it matches my **supervisor** research interests.*
- 5 *It was relative to the **supervisor's** field*

5.4.3 Australian word frequency analysis



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data. This may reflect a sense of confidence that such grades contributed to the success of his application. Only one male Australian participant (N=5) thought he was accepted because of timing; his supervisor had just moved back to Australia and was interested in accepting PhD proposals in certain areas.



Figure 5.3 Australian female word frequency

Like the Saudi women, the Australian women's main theme revolved around 'research': either research interest, in the case of Saudi females, or research topic for the Australian females. This was a useful similarity to draw on in terms of comparing cultural groups (see Figure 5.3). They also indicated reasons like 'I was genuinely interested in the research', or 'Because I did a lot of research to choose a question that would be accepted and met informally with my potential supervisors prior to submitting officially'. The latter reason associated the acceptance with both good research and having already met the supervisor informally, reflecting the importance of networking in this context.

5.4.4 The participants' advice

The questionnaire asks: ‘In dot points, what are the important points you think should be mentioned in your email to a prospective supervisor? Why? (you can write them in Arabic too)’. Not only were the participants’ responses grouped into nodes that classified their themes, but word frequencies were compared using NVivo. One interesting finding was the use of the word ‘enthusiasm’ by both Saudi and Australian participants, which could add further interpretation to why Saudi females used the term ‘excited’ in their email data.

Australian female data (Use of 'enthusiasm')

1 *Enthusiasm for the proposed research*

Saudi female data (Use of ‘enthusiasm’)

1 *Trying to show enthusiasm. Sometimes, why I am looking for him to be my supervisor.*

2 *ويجب التوضيح في الإيميل المرسل للمشرف رغبتني وحماسي لأكون أحد طلابه
(Clarify to the supervisor my desire and enthusiasm to be one of his students).*

Although females from both cultural groups focused on expressing ‘enthusiasm’, such enthusiasm had a certain focus. Australian females focused on expressing enthusiasm towards the PhD topic, while Saudi females emphasised their desire to work with a specific supervisor. Regardless, both evaluated enthusiasm as an important aspect in writing to a prospective supervisor. This was not found in the men’s data in either cultural group.

Table 5.8 Saudi data on advice question

Formula	Male (N = 25)	%	Female (N=14)	%
CV info	11	40.74	6	40.00
Communication style	4	11.11	3	26.67
Proposal/topic	5	18.52	7	46.67
Fund	6	22.22	2	13.33
Supervisor	12	44.44	5	33.33
Grades/GPA	1	3.70	0	0.00

As illustrated in Table 5.8, 40% of participants in each Saudi group expressed that CV information was important. However, the most important aspects to highlight in an email to a prospective supervisor differed between the genders, with 46% of women believing that the topic was the most important and men arguing that focus on the supervisor was key. Many participants believed they should show the potential supervisor that they are important, as seen in the following examples.

Saudi male data (Focus on the supervisor)

1 *Show how this prospective **supervisor** is important to you*

2 *That **you checked his profile** and you found it interested*

3 *Show that I read the potential **supervisor’s** academic web page*

4 *I should tell him **I’m keen to work with him***

5 *Why you want him/her to be your **supervisor***

Participants thought that one should show that they were keen to work with that supervisor in particular. In terms of reading the supervisor’s publications, the participant in the third example of the Saudi male data said that one should show that they had read the web page of the supervisor,

instead of suggesting that one should pick a certain publication and prove they had read it. Most Saudi participants made a vague reference to the supervisor's work by merely complimenting it. The theme of supervisor was stressed in the Saudi female data in terms of showing shared research interests and expressing enthusiasm to work together, as in the examples below:

Saudi female data (Focus on the supervisor)

- 1 *Mention the **common interest** that I have with the **supervisor***
- 2 ***Supervisor's** research that I like in order to show her/him that we have the **same area of interest**.*
- 3 *Clarify to the **supervisor** my desire and enthusiasm to be one of his students*

In terms of a CV, some women focused on 'previous knowledge' and 'publication,' mentioning 'What skills and academic achievements I had'. With the Saudi men, the actual term 'CV' was stressed more, such as showing the prospective supervisor 'a good CV'. In relation to communicative style, some examples have been used to highlight the differences in descriptions between genders:

Saudi male data (Communicative style)

- 1 *Ask politely*
- 2 *Start with greeting*
- 3 *Avoid begging because it is a low self-esteem sign.*

Saudi female data (Communicative style)

- 1 *Openings like (hello, good morning), the title (use appropriate title for the addressee.*
- 2 **a clear style of writing**
- 3 *Good writing without mistakes*

Some of the Saudi participants focused on communicating and writing strategies when addressing the prospective supervisor. Although the women were more concerned with an effective writing style, the males focused more on how to show politeness. This raises the question of what politeness means for them, and how each gender group adjusts their understanding of politeness in their discursive features. The final example in the male data above — 'avoid begging' — may reflect that there was some sort of expectation to avoid showing the prospective supervisor that one is desperate to get their approval. Politeness for most Saudi students is linked to either over-politeness or complimentary language, as shown in their naturalistic email data. Both groups stressed that one should mention if they were a sponsored student.

Table 5.9 Australian students' advice questionnaire

Formula	Frequency (Male N = 5)	%	Frequency (Female N =7)	%
CV info	3	60	4	57.14
Communication style	1	20	2	28.57
Proposal/topic	3	60	7	100
Fund	0	0	1	14.29
Knowledge of the supervisor	4	80	5	71.43
Grades/GPA	1	20	0	0

The notion of CV information covers aspects such as research experience, training, job title, and work experience. While most of the Australian students focused on their CV in terms of research experience, the Saudi students used it to display achievements and publications. Table 5.9 shows the differences between Anglo-Australian students by gender. The idea of networking and having a good knowledge of the supervisor dominated the Australian students' data. Most male students (four out of five) thought that their knowledge of the supervisor was the reason for their acceptance. The idea of networking and knowing the supervisor beforehand was not only reflected in Australian emails, but also in their questionnaire responses.

Australian female data

- 1** *I had met at a conference earlier but the email helped to lay out how we would work well as a team and the links between my work and theirs.*
- 2** *My supervisor and I got on well and both thought I was a good match for the project.*

Unlike international Saudi students, local Australian participants may find it easier to communicate with their potential supervisors before they get accepted, possibly due to English language proficiency, being in their own home country, and the ease of sharing the same culture or being part of the dominant culture. In the second example above, there is also implied self-praise where the Australian female said 'both thought I was a good match'. In terms of communicative style, two Australian females stressed politeness aspects, such as being respectful and showing gratitude. One suggested the email should not be too long, seen in the following middle example:

Australian female data (Communicative style)

- 1** *be respectful and polite*
- 2** *Not too long so the supervisors will read it*
- 3** *show gratitude.(thanks for your consideration)*

Australian male data (Communicative style)

- 1 *Clear, competent and confident communication in email, good grades and academic background communicated.*

The idea of competent and confident communication mentioned above is not very clear and is subject to cultural interpretation. Although this Australian male focused on the communicative style of the email, he was indirectly praising his ability because he believed that this was the main reason he had been accepted. The perceptions of the unsuccessful applicants varied. Most thought they were not accepted due to the supervisor's unavailability or lack of interest. An Australian student thought it was due to lack of funding or unavailability. Many participants used the word 'show' as an indicator that one should 'impress' their future supervisors.

Saudi female data (Use of 'show')

- 1 *Show willingness and interests.*
- 2 *Show how knowledgeable you are*
- 3 *Show interest and readiness for the PhD*

Saudi male data (Use of 'show')

- 1 *Show how fixable you will be to make any necessary changes*
- 2 *This makes you look critical and makes your project critical*
- 3 *show that you do not need fund*

Australian male data (Use of 'show')

- 1 *and shown some academic competence*
- 2 *Show you have read their work*

In the examples above, there were some differences in employing the word *show*. While the Saudi female participants focused on showing aspects of competence such as knowledge, interest and readiness, Saudi males stressed that one should show concessions, such as flexibility to change the topic or not needing funding. Australian males were more interested in showing academic competence and evidence of familiarity with the supervisor's work.

5.5 Discussion of negotiation tactics

Generally, the questionnaire data unveiled why prospective students used specific strategies in their emails. It showed that how students viewed the task of sending the email influenced the language they produced. For example, it seems that Saudi students perceived sending a PhD

enquiry email as a competitive task; as a result, there was a competitive orientation to their negotiations. This perception influences their language in terms of 1) exaggerating their abilities, 2) showing willingness to change their PhD project, 3) finding techniques to attract the supervisor's attention (e.g. using an attractive subject line), and 4) holding back some information, which has been found to be a competitive negotiation strategy (Parlami et al., 2020). These tactics are illustrated in the following examples.

Saudi female data (Negotiation tactics)

- 1 *I tried to convey in the email. that I picked my supervisor based on certain things and not randomly picking list of supervisors...*
- 2 *I made it more personal by mentioning her name*
- 3 *Sometimes I title my emails 'Good morning!' just to attract the supervisors to read it.*

Saudi male data (Negotiation tactics)

- 1 *Do not send your CV, or too much info. Let the receiver ask for more info*
- 2 *إغراء الطرف الآخر بوجود منحة دراسية (Translates as: Enticing the other party by mentioning the scholarship)*
- 3 *...it's easy money and a win-win for the supervisors..... I believe this is the most attracting thing to any potential supervisor*

These tactics were used by the students deliberately to bolster acceptance. Most of these students had time pressures and needed to find a supervisor to complete their PhD application, pushing them to get creative. In the third example of the female data above, the student believed that if she had a subject line showing the reason for the email, some supervisors might not even open it because they were not interested in taking on more students. On the other hand, the 'good morning' title is ambiguous and might sound positive enough for the prospective supervisor to check it. The first example in the male data also shows that some students deliberately hid information to promote further contact with the supervisor, as they thought that the chance for acceptance might grow when both parties are involved in the email exchange. When asked about the most important things one should mention in an email proposal, Australian participants emphasised two points: explaining the proposed topic and providing reasons for choosing the supervisor. This is shown in the following response.

Australian data (Negotiation tactics)

- 1 *I felt it was a big thing I was asking of someone who was already probably overloaded. I felt it was important to outline my project in a succinct way as well as to indicate why I had contacted her in particular.*

The differences between these two perceptions influenced the respective politeness strategies, especially in terms of directness. Australian students used negative politeness strategies and tentative language because, in their view, they were ‘asking a huge favour’, to use the words from a female Australian student’s email. These direct and indirect strategies stemming from the students’ data will be further discussed in Chapter Seven. There was also an emphasis on professionalism in the Australian data when expressing opinions about how to approach a prospective supervisor that was not echoed by their Saudi counterparts; providing ‘competent and confident communication’ was not mentioned in Saudi data. That being said, neither the term ‘confidence’ nor the self-praise aspects stressed by a few of the Australian participants in the questionnaire were reflected in their naturalistic email data, at least in terms of an attitude of arrogance or entitlement. Martín-Martín (2005) argues the choice of certain rhetorical options to convey claims or information varies across dimensions such as language and culture. These rhetorical and generic options were also different across Saudi gender groups; men tended to have a caveat style of dos and don’ts when giving advice, which was not found in Saudi female or Australian data. This was also an added benefit of the questionnaire data, unpacking cultural aspects such as ‘professionalism’ in the Australian context and gender differences in the Saudi data, such as the caveat and giving advice style that Saudi males used.

5.6 Chapter summary

This chapter investigated Saudi and Australian email communicative patterns in the first email inquiry sent to a prospective PhD supervisor and explored, in part, the reasons behind some of the negotiation and polite discourse used within their cultural conventions. It revealed 27 negotiation moves in the first email proposal. There was an analysis of the various politeness strategies used for negotiation protocols, such as greetings and compliments in the Saudi data. Saudi students relied heavily on CV information, which revealed their competitive orientation towards this negotiation task. Australian students, on the other hand, proposed a good knowledge of both their topic and prospective supervisors as their main negotiation strategies; as a result, they took a more cooperative approach in their negotiation. Classifying cultural differences in negotiation styles according to a specific negotiation task has rarely been discussed in the literature to date.

Both groups' perceptions confirmed the interpretation of their data. There are some commonalities between the genders of each cultural group in terms of their answers to the questionnaire; while females focused on enthusiasm, males used the language of self-praise and confidence. One major difference between the Saudi and Australian males was observed in the reasons given for why they were accepted, though both were regarding the PhD topic. Saudi students thought their proposed topic pleased the supervisor, while Australian males believed that their topics addressed an important gap or questions, regardless of whether it pleased the supervisor. Generally, there were two major underlying strategies behind each cultural group's negotiation/politeness discourse: one was concerned with portraying the self as important, in the case of the Saudi students; and the other relates to showing a professional face and networking, in the case of the Australian students. The most striking finding was that even though each cultural group had a similar opinion in terms of what should be included in their emails, the way that this was implemented in the naturalistic email data differed and was influenced by cultural background.

Chapter 6: (Im)politeness and persuasion

6.1 Introduction

After discussing general patterns found in both Saudi and Australian emails and exploring some distinctive features, this chapter aims to provide a more fine-grained analysis of the moves that played a major role under each persuasive appeal: affective, rational, and credibility. The Australian data was employed to give insight into how Saudi data compares with Australian communicative norms in terms of persuasive appeals. To this end, the chapter analyses and compares 100 Saudi students' data in detail, juxtaposing this with the 20 Australian emails. This chapter aims to answer the second research question:

2) How do Saudi students employ persuasive appeals and (im)politeness strategies in their negotiations?

- a) How do their persuasive appeals compare to Australian cultural expectations?
- b) How do Saudi students employ persuasive appeals to form (im)polite negotiation moves?

The moves of each persuasive appeal were quantified and categorised by their politeness/linguistic formulae and content. While rational appeals were mostly concerned with the PhD topic, the credibility appeal was evaluated according to the content of the emails, including CV information; affective (emotional) appeals depended heavily on the way they were expressed. The frequency of persuasive appeals did not predict the participant's gender/cultural background based on their overall rhetorical performance, as most tended to use more rational appeals rather than affective or credibility appeals. However, interesting differences in the inclusion of certain moves under these appeals shed light on cultural and gender differences that will be discussed in detail in this chapter.

The bulk of studies focusing on cross-cultural variations in persuasive appeals examine letters or newspaper articles (Al-Ali 2006; Alhudhaif, 2005; Bhatia, 2014; Connor et al., 1995; Ismail, 2010). It is rare for a study to examine persuasive appeals within intercultural settings via email communication for academic proposal purposes. Typical findings of these cross-cultural studies suggest that non-native English speakers do not use rational appeals as frequently as native

speakers and focus more on affective appeals. However, these studies did not base their judgements on interactive communications and the cross-cultural comparison of newspapers or political texts is hardly comparable. This chapter explores the differences in persuasive appeals in detail by gender (for Saudis), drawing on cultural differences where relevant by using comparable email data written by both cultural groups (i.e. Australians and Saudis). Both focused on rational appeals, using far fewer credible and affective appeals. However, there were significant differences in the way both cultures utilised these appeals. In the affective appeals, Saudi men made more compliments and used more emotional and (im)polite requests than Saudi females. With the credibility appeals, Saudi women made more self-promotional moves than men, portraying the self as competent and distinguished.

6.2 Background of similar studies

Some studies support the notion that the written discourse structures of each language exhibit a certain cultural uniqueness (Kubota, 1997). Perhaps one of the best ways to look into these structures is by identifying their genre and specific moves. Some genre studies have focused on identifying professional writing in various settings such as legal discourse, business settings and — most relevantly — academic research writing. As mentioned in Chapter Five, Bhatia (2014) emphasised that the communicative purpose of a genre has an important impact on genre identification. For example, Bhatia (2014) compared sales promotional letters and job applications; although different, they are closely related in the sense that their purpose is to sell services or skills to a potential employer. They tend to have a similar persuasive function and therefore employ similar moves: establishing credentials, offering incentives, enclosing documents, using ‘pressure tactics’, and ending politely (Bhatia, 2014).

Pressure tactics constituted an appropriate area for investigation in the current study. Bhatia collected 200 applications for both jobs and scholarships from different South Asian countries, including India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh. To demonstrate how the South Asian model was unique, Bhatia compared them to the Western model; although both letters included the same general moves, the way these moves were connected to the specifications of the job was different. Generally, the Western application letter highlighted qualifications and experiences relevant to the job: a strategy known as self-appraisal. Many applicants from South Asia used the cover letter

to enclose their CV, without offering self-appraisal to increase their chances of acceptance. They offered other strategies: self-glorification, or even self-degradation, target-glorification and adversary-glorification. Although Bhatia (2014) did not use the persuasion framework, he made reference to it and deemed the latter strategies as emotional in the eyes of Western employers, who expect self-appraisal in a logical manner. To be persuasive and achieve credibility, individuals need to add tactical emotions to their writing that arouses an appropriate emotional response (Bhatia, 2014). Bhatia (2014) refers to this sort of letter as ‘negotiation’ or job negotiation, which is relevant to the initial negotiation emails sent to prospective PhD supervisors in the current thesis. He also acknowledges that there may be different move structures in different contexts and cultures. Hence, the next section will be dedicated to relevant studies; although none employed all the dimensions described in this chapter — genre, persuasion, and politeness — some did merge one or two aspects into a single framework.

There is research evidence that genre analysis is subject to cultural specificities. For example, many of the genre analysis studies described below that applied Bhatia’s (2014) proposed moves found different tendencies for specific moves, even creating new moves that did not exist in his original work. As such, the close analysis of student emails in the current study may reveal the underlying cultural values and practices that are embedded within them. While Bhatia (2014) encouraged the notion of self-appraisal over self-glorification, one Hungarian study found that self-appraisal was not valued in Hungarian culture; it was instead deemed self-glorification (Furka, 2008). In contrast, a Pakistani study found that establishing credentials was a central move for applicants’ success (Khan & Tin, 2012). Hence, the applicants’ failure was determined by their inability to present themselves as candidates with unique abilities and achievements (Khan & Tin, 2012). A Malaysian study suggested that applicants avoided soliciting a response from their prospective employer because they preferred to end politely; their letters also lacked pressuring tactics, reflecting Malaysian cultural norms (Maasum, Darus, Stapa, & Mustaffa, 2007). Despite this, Maasum et al. (2007) concluded that Malaysian graduates’ communicative norms need to meet the communicative purpose of the promotional genre as proposed by Bhatia (2014). This not only assumes that Bhatia’s (2014) model is perfect, but also dismisses the possibility of the applicants’ moves being well situated within Malaysian cultural expectations. Another variation found in a Filipino study revealed new moves, including how applicants showed feelings for the position or dealt with possible rejection (Miciano, 2014). An Arabic study using Bhatia’s model

was conducted on job application letters written by 90 Arabic applicants, discovering the prevalence of the institution-glorification move; promoting candidature was the most dominant move in this sample (Al-Ali 2006). Connor et al. (1995) explored cross-cultural differences and similarities between Flemish and US letters for job applications, concluding that the latter applicants had more 'enriched content', which the authors defined as exhibiting a larger degree of information and functional transparency.

Previous research on internet discourse has identified a number of persuasive strategies used for specific purposes. Ho (2014) examined email discourse, focusing on the justification for the request, and found that evaluative language could appeal to recipients' emotions (pathos); its inclusion would enhance rapport and increase the persuasiveness of the message. Pathos was found to be the most important appeal in YouTube health-ad video clips, while credibility appeals (ethos) were mostly used in YouTube political talks (English, Sweetser, & Ancu, 2011). Other studies compared persuasive appeals in TV advertisements in English and Arabic and found that pathos was mainly used, albeit in an implied fashion (Rabab'ah & Khawaldeh, 2016).

There remains a wide gap in knowledge regarding the persuasive appeals used in postgraduate emails seeking a PhD opportunity. Hence, there was a need to combine both online and offline studies, which draw on different persuasive appeals depending on culture and situation. An offline cross-cultural study compared the persuasion used by both a Jordanian and US organisation when attempting to form a service partnership (Suchan, 2014). The author found that Arabic persuasion strategies differed in fundamental ways to those used by Americans. Arabic persuasion was characterised by metaphoric and emotional norms when using both Arabic and English language, attributed to social and political hierarchies that shape Arabic interaction (Suchan, 2014). Al-Momani (2014) examined letters of complaint written by Jordanian university students, noting that pathos was more prevalent in these letters than the other two persuasion types. Studies that compare cross-cultural persuasive texts or advertisements among native and non-native English speakers generally conclude that non-native English speakers use more emotional or affective appeals, whereas native English speakers focus more on rational appeals (Ismail, 2010; Zhu, 2017; Zhu, 2013). However, methodological concerns emerge from the results of these studies, as they compare each culture within its comfort zone and among texts that have slightly different purposes. It would be more accurate methodologically to compare the persuasive appeals of two cultures or genders by using similar tasks, context and language, such as in this thesis.

A few studies combining genre analysis and politeness suggest that the ambiguity of moves can be further clarified by the interpretation of their politeness dimensions (Flowerdew & Dudley-Evans, 2002; Wang, 2005). There are three studies that combine genre analysis, politeness, and persuasive appeals in their methodology. The first was initiated by James, Scholfield, and Ypsiladis (1992), who investigated role-play scholarship applications written in English by eight native Greek-speaking students whose English was at an advanced level. These letters were then evaluated by native English-speaking students studying at the same university in the UK. The study also incorporated the Gricean maxims of politeness and looked at how students used the language within politeness maxims expectations. They found that there was a link between directness and persuasion; direct strategies were deemed rational and credible appeals, while indirect strategies were linked to the emotional side of the recipient. Complementary behaviours like thanking were characterised as affective appeals. The authors found that the language employed by the applicants was considered by native speakers to be egocentric, emotionally charged and over-colloquial in places—all of which are considered to be a violation of the Gricean maxims. In the same vein, Farnia et al. (2019) collected 96 role-play scholarship letters written by Iranian participants, half of whom wrote in Persian and the other half in English. Although both groups relied on rational and affective appeals, they differed significantly in how they utilised moves such as openings, greetings, closings, and self-presentations. Direct strategies were mainly used in English, while impersonalised indirect strategies came through in Persian. One aspect that can be garnered from this study is that the rules of English language necessitate some direct strategies. For example, in English, self-introductions rely on personal pronouns ('My name is X'); in Persian, they rely mostly on impersonal pronouns ('This is X'). The authors claim that their participants showed knowledge in terms of differentiating between the two languages; this does not necessarily equate to cultural awareness.

Al Abbad et al. (2019), following the design of James et al. (1992), conducted their study on 76 first-year Saudi female students to explore persuasive strategies used in academia. Students were asked to engage in a role-play letter writing for a fictitious scholarship application in an authentic academic environment. The letters were directed to Saudi Arabian providers of scholarships, so the students used their English strategically to meet Saudi expectations. The authors analysed these letters within the persuasive appeals framework using a mixed-method approach. Apart from the extensive use of religious references, a number of other global persuasive

strategies were employed by applicants, which were then grouped according to the Aristotelian Logos, Ethos and Pathos framework. The authors found that most letters employed logical arguments by focusing on personal achievements and performance scores, deemed as such because they met the core scholarship criteria. Personal achievements in Saudi culture are considered part of the norms or “socially agreed-upon rituals” (Tannen, 2009, p. 300) for almost every formal — and, at times, informal — occasion. In this situation, it is difficult to conclude exactly how Saudi students appeared rational as the lines between the appeals are blurred; though personal achievements are typically categorised as credibility appeals (Connor & Gladkov, 2004), they are included in the core criteria for acceptance, meaning that they can be considered rational appeals. At the end of the study, Al Abbad et al. (2019) postulated that their findings were in partial contrast to earlier studies exploring Arabic persuasion. They attributed this to the fact that Saudi Arabians’ persuasion is different to persuasion in other Arabic countries. However, their conclusion is not generalisable as it had potentially biased criteria in terms of the study design, treating credible appeals as core rational appeals, and its entirely female-based data, which may differ from male. Single-gender data cannot represent an entire country.

Although these studies provided great insights into both genre politeness and persuasion, the literature that combines the three dimensions of genre, politeness, and persuasion is still limited. There are two major areas to consider: 1) the relationship between modern (im)politeness and persuasive tactics and 2) the distribution of moves under each persuasive appeal that participants from specific cultural groups utilise to meet expectations in an intercultural setting. When students seek academic approval from a potential supervisor, they not only “produce arguments to support their case but also undergo a process of identity construction to present themselves as morally positive, virtuous, and trustworthy members of a community” (Al Abbad et al., 2019, p. 40). Persuasive appeals filter the moves in a way that clarifies their function and reveals the relationship between certain moves and the overarching persuasive unit. This helps to both provide bottom-up and top-down investigation and explore meaningful patterns across gender and culture. These patterns unpack some aspects of gender identity construction, “increas[ing] our understanding of how politeness and impoliteness impact the creation of identity and the management of rapport” (Graham, 2007, p. 743) within Saudi culture. It is important to stress that politeness and impoliteness here do not only refer to polite discursive behaviour, but “the process of defining relationships in interaction” (Locher, 2008, p. 510); in other words, how each gender

adjusts their language to different speech act events to meet their prospective supervisor's expectations. Part of the purpose of such a process is to reveal how each gender perceives power imbalance and reacts to it. This also provides insight into other underlying dimensions about historical traditions that have contributed to such linguistic behaviour. To sum up, it is important to investigate how impoliteness and face are negotiated in online interaction, which is still under-researched (Locher, 2010a).

6.3 The three persuasive appeals

Table 6.1 Total number of appeals by Saudi gender

	Rational	Affective	Credibility	Total
Saudi Male	216	131	129	476
Saudi Female	243	88	166	497
Total	459	219	295	973

The next sections of this chapter are each dedicated to exploring the three persuasive appeals— affective, rational, and credibility—introduced in Section 6.1. There is no specific percentage recommended for each appeal in an academic email proposal. As shown in Table 6.1, there are two main differences between Saudi males and females concerning the use of credible and affective appeals. In total, women made slightly more appeals. The central difference is in the affective appeal; while women used 88 affective moves, men used 131 (Table 6.1). Quantitative analysis cannot tell the full story without the help of qualitative analysis, which will be detailed further in each section devoted to these appeals.

As Figure 6.1 suggests, both cultural groups relied more on rational appeals; however, the Australian sample used far more rational appeals, with notably fewer affective appeals and credibility appeals. As for the Saudi sample, an average of 4.59 emails used rational appeals, while 2.95 focused on CV information and qualifications (credibility appeal). Only 2.19 concentrated on affective appeals: compliments and greetings, among others, as described in Section 6.5.

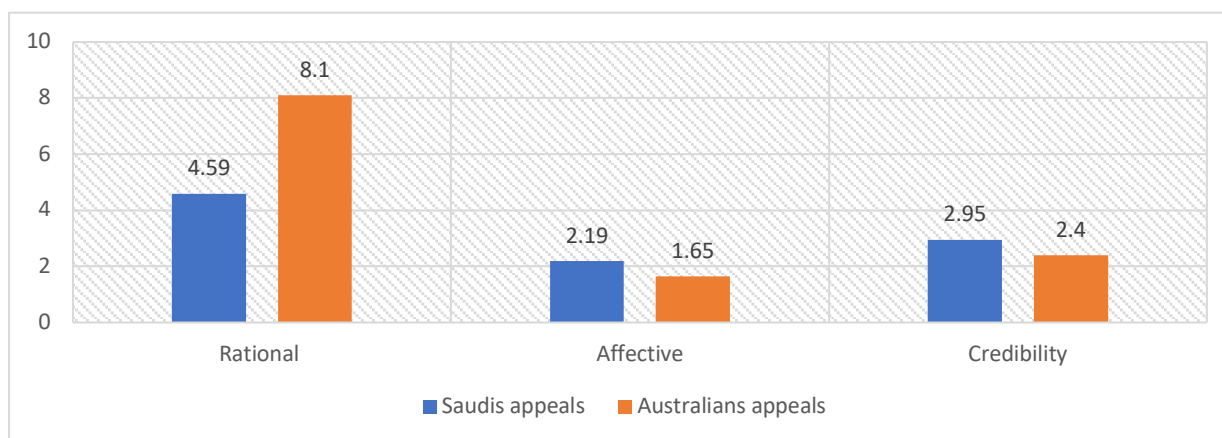


Figure 6.1 The average number of appeals by culture

The way moves are made under appeals has not been researched to date; as such, this was a focus for this thesis. Table 6.2 illustrates the exact number of moves used by each cultural group under these appeals. Each group seemed to know the appeals needed to persuade; however, the way this was implemented differed. The strategic moves used under each persuasive appeal were also different. For example, the fund move is used as a credibility appeal in Saudi data to show that the student had been awarded a scholarship; for Australian students, this was a rational appeal, indicating their desire to apply for a scholarship at the university of the prospective supervisor.

Table 6.2 Total number of persuasive appeals by culture

	Rational	Av.	Affective	Av.	Credibility	Av.
Saudi data	459	4.59	219	2.19	295	2.95
Australian data	162	8.1	33	1.65	48	2.4
Total	621	-	252	-	343	-

6.4 Rational Appeals

Rational appeals address both the logical and sensible side of the intended audience's mind (Connor & Upton, 2004). Brown and Levinson (1987) recognised rationality as a key to politeness. They argued that competent adults have face (public self-image) and rationality, or "the application of a specific mode of reasoning" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 64). For someone to be rational, they need to choose a rational reasoning that most satisfies their desired goals. A notable gap in the modern discursive approach to (im)politeness is that it does not consider rationality as a

dimension of politeness due to the excessive focus on contextual variables impacting the judgement of any politic behaviour. Locher (2010a, p. 3) also argues that when investigating CMC, one needs to understand “what constitutes im/politeness in a particular practice and what factors might play a role in assessing it”.

Rational appeals in the current data were generally about logical statements (see Section 3.4.1); some core rational appeals were targeted towards subject matter, which centred around the PhD topic. Unlike other persuasive appeals, rational appeals seemed to be key in academic settings (Hyland, 2018), complemented by credible and affective appeals. This is evident in Australian culture, where credibility appeals or praising one’s self and/or achievements should not be the focus (cf. the tall poppy syndrome discussion in Section 2.2.5). However, in other cultures or in certain contexts, credibility appeals might be the central strategy and rational or affective appeals would be considered supplementary. It is more relevant in this specific context for Australian participants to focus on rational appeals and highlight their capability of comprehensive research, rather than focusing on the self or the prospective supervisor’s achievements.

Table 6.3 Chi-Square results of rational appeals

	Moves	Saudi Male (50)	Saudi Female (50)	Sig Chi2	Interpretation
1	Self-intro	23	33	0.05	Sig difference
2	Interests	44	28	0.00	Sig difference
3	Options	4	2	0.39	No sig difference
4	Justify	3	4	0.69	No sig difference
5	Major	29	33	0.4	No sig difference
6	Request	23	44	0.00	Sig difference
7	Proposal	36	21	0.00	Sig difference
8	Focus	6	10	0.27	No sig difference
9	PFC	17	21	0.4	No sig difference
10	Plans	11	16	0.26	No sig difference
11	Topic	4	16	0.00	Sig difference
12	Time	16	13	0.5	No sig difference
13	Experience	0	2	0.15	No sig difference
	Total	216	243	-	-

As demonstrated by Table 6.3, 13 types of negotiation moves were employed under the rational category by Saudi students. The women made a total of 243 moves, while the men made a total of 216 moves under the rational appeal. Therefore, there is little difference between Saudi males and females in the number of rational appeals employed. The dominant types of moves in the female data were ‘request’ (44 moves), ‘self-introduction’ (33 moves), ‘major’ (33 moves), and ‘research interest’ (28 moves). One of the main differences found in both gender groups was in requests (women made 44 moves compared to men, who made 23 moves) and research interests (men made 44 moves compared to the 28 made by women). It is surprising that only 20 out of 100 Saudis seemed to mention their PhD topic inside their emails; the others expressed a general area of research that they would be interested in, but had no concrete vision for their project. This could be due to the fact that the majority of the participants (74 out of 100; see Table 5.1) relied heavily on attachments, which mostly included the proposed topic, without discussing it explicitly in their emails.

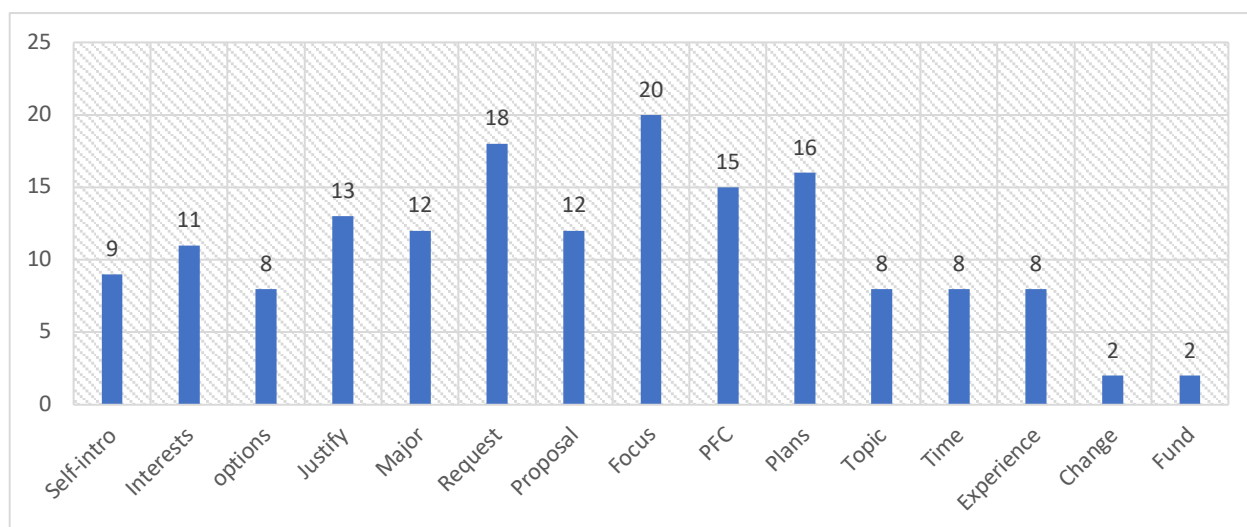


Figure 6.2 Rational appeals by Australians (20 students)

Australian students utilised more negotiation moves (15) under the general category of rational appeal (Figure 6.2), compared to Saudis, who made 13 negotiation moves (Table 6.3). Despite the small Australian sample size, the description of the data provides more insight into how both cultural groups compared or differed. For example, although both groups used the option move by suggesting a different supervisory arrangement, Australians would mention names of any *additional* supervisors they wanted to approach (or already had) to join the supervisory team;

Saudis would only ask for the supervisor's assistance to find an *alternative* supervisor if they were unable to supervise them. It could be that some Australian students wanted to know both supervisors in advance as part of their personal decision. Saudi female students made more rational requests than males, forming their requests with an appropriate tone devoid of emotions or pleading. Out of the 20 Australian participants, 18 rational requests were made out of a total of 22 (Table 5.1). The focus on supervisor move seemed to be essential in both groups; although dominant in the Australian group, only 16 Saudi participants used this move (see Appendix D). This is because most Saudi participants complimented the supervisor's knowledge or scholarship vaguely without presenting evidence of familiarity with their work; as a result, the move did not qualify as rational in the Saudi data. Australian students often implemented this move by mentioning specific papers or aspects of the supervisor's work. Although both cultural groups used similar moves, the way these were put into practice differed. Some core rational appeals made by both cultural groups differed significantly, as will be discussed next.

Table 6.4 Core rational appeals

Core rational moves	Topic	%	Plans	%	Justification	%	Experience	%
Saudi data (100)	20	20	27	27	15	15	4	4
Australian data (20)	8	40	16	12	13	65	8	40

One of the most distinctive characteristics of an academic email proposal is the sender's concern with presenting a favourable and relevant description of how one can conduct a substantial piece of research. Therefore, the discussion of a student's PhD research — topics, research plans, justifications, and research experience — comes across as the main source of persuasion, or the core rational appeal. The core rational appeal moves, illustrated in¹¹, substantiated the applicant's capacity for conducting PhD research as they each revolved around the PhD topic. First, prospective students presented their exact PhD project title (1- Topic). Secondly, they detailed their plans in terms of how to approach their research goal (2- Plans). Next, some students provided justifications about why their research was worthwhile (3- Justification). Lastly, as presented in

¹¹ Most moves of the current thesis were calculated in total, regardless of the number of participants, as some students implemented certain moves (like requests) more than once in their emails. However, Figure 6.3 and Table 6.4 were calculated by the number of the participants as each participant used these moves once in their email. Therefore, the use of percentage is relevant here, but not in other tables.

Table 6.4, a few students (four Saudi females and eight Australian females) linked their previous academic experience with their research topic in terms of relevance; in other words, how such experiences had either led them to choose their research topic or made them more knowledgeable in terms of the subject matter (4- Experience). These four moves were the dominant rational appeals that not only demonstrated the candidate's capability of conducting PhD research, but also how both cultural groups differ significantly.

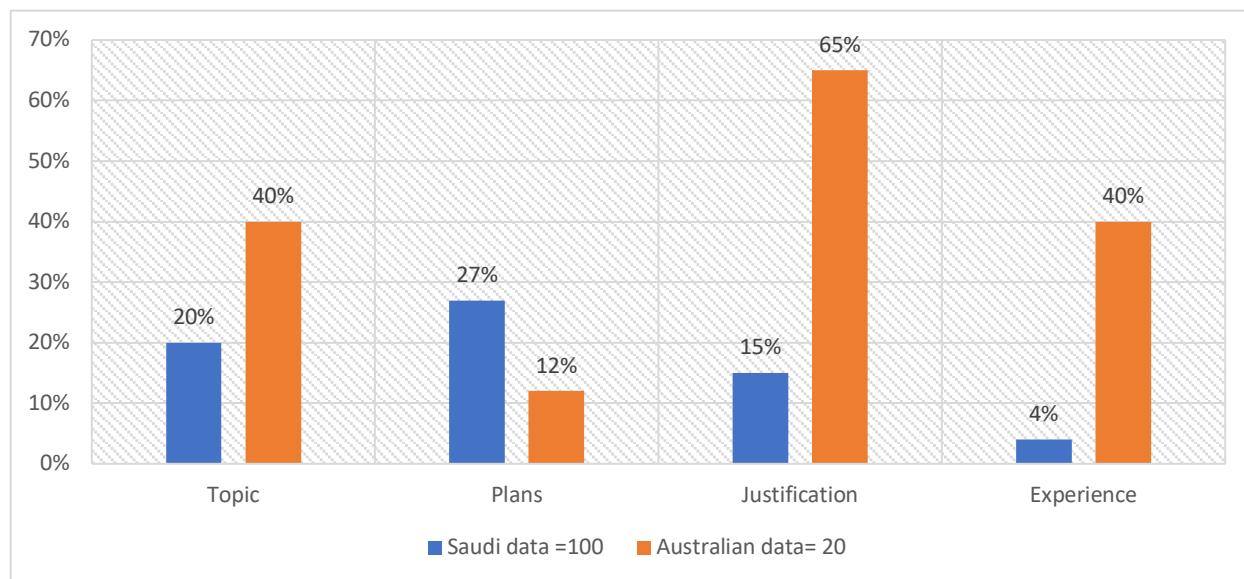


Figure 6.3 Core rational appeals

Figure 6.3 shows the percentages of both the Saudi and Australian groups in terms of implementing these core rational appeals. The major difference was in the research justification move; while 65% of Australians provided a good justification for choosing their topic, only 15% of Saudi data focused on that move. Another prominent difference was the plans move; 60% of Australian participants focused on detailing their PhD project plans and their feasibility, in comparison to 27% of Saudis. As shown in Figure 6.3, an important difference was whether the student knew exactly what they intended to research and demonstrated this by outlining the topic of their project (40% Australians vs. 20% Saudi). Interestingly, the research experience move was only employed by women from both cultural groups and was never used by the male subjects in this study.

Overall, as Table 6.5 suggests, both cultural groups differed significantly in terms of utilising rational appeals more than other types of persuasive appeal. Australian participants relied on rational appeals 73% more than Saudis. Further, Table 6.5 highlights that the prominent difference between Saudis and Australians was the way both groups focused on rational appeals

by depending on certain negotiation moves. Although both cultures relied heavily on rational appeals, Australian emails focused more on core rational issues with more ‘enriched content’, a term coined by Connor et al. (1995) that refers to the provision of core informative content with more elaboration and clarity in the message. This brings us back to the first argument in this thesis regarding pragmatic versus strategic (content-oriented) competence. Table 6.5 highlights the significant differences that divide the cultural groups.

Table 6.5 Chi-Square results of rational appeals between Saudis and Australians

No	Moves	Saudi (100)	Australian (20)	Sig Chi2	Interpretation
1	Self-intro	56	9	0.36	No sig difference
2	Interests	72	11	0.13	No sig difference
3	Options	6	8	0.00	Sig difference
4	Justify	7	13	0.00	Sig difference
5	Major	62	12	0.86	No sig difference
6	Request	67	18	0.03	Sig difference
7	Proposal	57	12	0.8	No sig difference
8	Focus	16	20	0.00	Sig difference
9	PFC	38	15	0.00	Sig difference
10	Plans	27	16	0.00	Sig difference
11	Topic	20	8	0.00	Sig difference
12	Time	29	8	0.00	Sig difference
13	Experience	2	8	0.00	Sig difference
14	Change	0	2	0.00	Sig difference
15	Fund	0	2	0.00	Sig difference
Total		459	162	-	-

Since the current investigation is based largely on a pragmatic framework, examining the link between language and persuasive appeals as utilised by the groups could shed light on how different kinds of competences work in tandem within the negotiation process. To have an intercultural negotiation competence in today’s globalised world, one should be judged both on their pragmatic success (or failure) and their ability to adapt to content-specific strategies familiar

to the recipient. Considering that all the moves in Table 6.5 are adequately defined in Appendix D as part of rational appeals, which only focus on mentioning facts, the description of each is not significant here. However, the self-introduction move was found to have some potential gender differences, one of the important variables in this thesis. This is explored further below.

6.4.1 Self-introduction

Most of the self-introduction moves used under rational appeals were formal, with some unique aspects such as revealing gender identity. Both gender groups stressed their Saudi nationality when introducing themselves (10 females and 9 males); apart from this, the country name was also prevalent in both sets of the Saudi data, mentioned largely as part of a student's scholarship details or when describing the location of their work or data collection (46 males and 61 females). The examples below show how Saudi woman revealed their gender identity when introducing themselves:

Saudi female data (Gender identity in self-introduction)

- 1 *This is **Mrs.** First Last from Saudi Arabia*
- 2 *I am a Saudi **woman**...*
- 3 *My name is First Last... I am **female** from Saudi Arabia*
- 4 *My name is First Last, a **female** lecturer from Saudi Arabia*
- 5 *I am First Last, a Saudi **woman** from Saudi Arabia*

A question arises about identity from this. While Saudi women felt they needed to stress the fact that they were women, no Saudi man indicated anything about his gender in his self-introduction. According to Tannen (1999), the best way to compare gender differences is not by linking behaviour to individuals of one gender group, but examining how participants position themselves in a particular situation; this is then used to capture patterns that reflect gender identity. This is relevant to how current Saudi participants presented themselves with direct reference to gender identity. Looking at Australian data, there was nothing mentioned about the gender of applicants, which may be understood from both their names and any prior knowledge or interactions with the potential supervisor. This may reflect the presence of more traditional gender roles and identities still existing in Saudi Arabia, with women feeling obliged to clarify their identity more than men.

Saudi male data (Self-introduction)

- 1 *I am First Last from Saudi Arabia*
- 2 *My name is First from Saudi Arabia*
- 3 *This is First Last, I am from Saudi Arabia*
- 4 *I am First Last from Saudi Arabia*

It can be argued that, while Saudi females stress their nationality to emphasise their Islamic identity, Saudi men used it to place focus on their financial capabilities and scholarships. The fact that both genders have foreign names may explain the reason why Saudi females stressed their gender identity. That being said, none of the Saudi males with either neutral (e.g. Noor) or feminine names (e.g. Talhah) attempted to clarify their gender background. This could be because Saudi males took the understanding of their gender for granted and did not feel the need to clarify their identity. In terms of cultural comparison, only 9 out of 20 (40%) Australian students introduced themselves in their emails, compared to 61 out of 100 Saudi (61%). Overall, each cultural group used rational appeals in a way that was compatible with their cultural understanding and norms.

6.5 Affective Appeals

Affective appeals or emotions can serve as an impulse to take a certain action; however, the audience's state of mind will influence the way they look at the presented case (see Section 3.4.1). In short, affective appeals include any argument that targets the reader's emotions (Goering, Connor, Nagelhout, & Steinberg, 2011). The following discussion presents the affective appeals used in the current academic email proposals to target the emotional dimension of prospective supervisors' minds. Pathos in the Aristotelian view is an affective characteristic aiming to place the audience into a certain frame of mind (see Section 3.4.1). Al Abbad et al. (2019) posit that affective appeals are not only related to feelings, but also to all qualitative changes that include the notion of learning. In this thesis, affective appeals are judged both by certain politeness formula in terms of discursive features and the message content in terms of showing humbleness, pleading for help, or complimenting the addressee. The source of these could be arguably emerging from the emphasis on hierarchy in Arabic culture (Suchan, 2014).

Affective appeals mostly rely on positive politeness, with varying degrees of imposition. Bhatia (2014) called these sorts of impositions pressuring tactics, without referring to politeness theory. These strategies will be discussed in detail over the course of this section. It was generally

found that some moves did not exist in the native-speaking data: glorifying the program, institution or studying in Australia, complimenting the supervisor without presenting evidence of familiarity with their work, and requesting in an emotional and pleading manner. The existence of these emotional appeals would contribute significantly to persuasion if used with certain cultural audiences (Psaltou-Joycey & Ypsilandis, 2001); in this case, a Saudi audience. According to Nydell (2018, p. 89) Arabs “place a high value on the display of emotion, sometimes to the embarrassment or discomfort of foreigners. It is not uncommon to hear westerners label this behaviour as immature, imposing their own values on what they have observed” (p. 89). Culpeper and Haugh (2020) define impoliteness as a language or behaviour that is negatively evaluated by the recipient in a particular context. When linking impoliteness with an ineffective use of affective appeal or pressuring tactic, it could be argued that both may cause a specific emotional reaction that may make the reader resistant to persuasion.

Table 6.6 Chi2 results of affective appeals between Saudis and Australians

No	Moves	Saudi (100)	Australian (20)	Chi2	Interpretation
1	Request	55	4	0.004	Sig difference
2	Gratitude	35	7	1	No sig difference
3	PFC	33	3	0.1	No sig difference
4	Focus	33	3	0.1	No sig difference
5	Greetings	26	4	0.57	No sig difference
6	Program	11	0	0.11	No sig difference
7	Change	17	3	0.82	No sig difference
8	Context	4	7	0.00	Sig difference
9	Self-intro	3	0	0.43	No sig difference
10	Justify	2	2	0.06	No sig difference
Total		219	33	-	-

As shown in Table 6.6, there are two major differences (Moves One and Eight) between Saudi and Australian data in the way they used the request (with a Chi-square significant difference of $p = 0.004 \leq 0.05$) and context moves ($p = 0.00 \leq 0.05$). Generally, it was the use of positive politeness strategies in the Saudi data that caused these differences, apart from the instances of informality found in the Australian data. Australian students used more context moves in which they mentioned personal knowledge of the supervisor. This draws us back to Locher's (2010b)

definition of relational work — the process of negotiating relationships in interaction. Utilising the context move resulted in Australians using more informal and perhaps affective language when providing context in relation to knowing the potential supervisor:

Australian male data (Context)

1 *I met you ever so briefly at last night's presentation and I would like to meet with you for a more serious discussion than appropriate over wine and pies.*

Hence, besides using politeness strategies, the Australian affective appeal also implemented informality in their approach. This comes in sharp contrast with James et al.'s (1992) study, which suggested that affective appeals are linked to indirect politeness strategies. This study made the case that affective appeals can also be linked to positive politeness strategies that are not necessarily indirect or hinted at by the applicants.

Table 6.7 Chi-Square results of affective appeals in Saudi data

No	Moves	Saudi Male (50)	Saudi Female (50)	Sig Chi2	Interpretation
1	Request	45	10	0.00	Sig difference
2	Gratitude	15	20	0.29	No sig difference
3	Promoting further contact	10	23	0.00	Sig difference
4	Focus	22	11	0.01	Sig difference
5	Greetings	15	11	0.36	No sig difference
6	Program	7	4	0.33	No sig difference
7	Change	12	5	0.06	No sig difference
8	Context	3	1	0.3	No sig difference
9	Self-intro	2	1	0.55	No sig difference
10	Justify	0	2	0.15	No sig difference
Total		131	88	-	-

In terms of Saudi gender differences, a Chi-squared test revealed a significant association between Saudi gender and affective appeals, meaning there are significant differences between the Saudi males and females in terms of moves like the request, promoting further contact, and focus on supervisor (as shaded in Table 6.7). The data reveal that Saudi males used more affective language under the requestive move (1) and the focus on supervisor (4) move; Saudi females tended to use more affective language and politeness strategies when promoting further contact (3) (see Appendix D for the definitions of each of the affective appeal moves mentioned above).

6.5.1 Impoliteness and persuasion

Impoliteness is directly linked to face-threatening acts (FTA) (Schnurr, Marra, & Holmes, 2008). There is a lack of research that links the new wave of discursive impoliteness and persuasion literature. For the most part, new wave theorists believe that participants are innocent of the linguistic implications of impoliteness in written communication (Bousfield, 2008; Culpeper, 2011b). Such impolite instances can come into existence during high-stakes instances of negotiating a PhD acceptance by prospective supervisors. The pressuring tactics put forth by Bhatia (2014) resemble politeness strategies with high imposition, or what can be deemed as impoliteness. Although Bhatia did not conduct his study using a politeness framework, the pressuring tactics he analysed could be understood as instances of impoliteness as defined by key scholars (see Section 3.2.2). For Saudi students, the risk of being misinterpreted or construed as being impolite has, in many cases, profound implications for acceptance into a PhD program. For this reason, this section aims to investigate the research gap of this specific genre and endeavours to dig deep into the persuasive rituals embedded in impoliteness strategies. The statistical results highlighted three differences between the Saudi gender groups in their use of affective appeals (see Table 6.7), though there were some other qualitative differences in the way they employed emotions. Both tended to use positive politeness strategies in gender-specific ways, which could trigger what Jenkins and Dragojevic (2013) have termed ‘psychological reactance’ by the prospective supervisor.

According to Jenkins and Dragojevic (2013), the theory of psychological reactance shares the core concept of politeness theory: the need for autonomy and independence. Like politeness theory, imposition/impoliteness or perceived threat to psychological freedom results in reactance arousal or resistance to a persuasive message. Since persuasion indicates an effort to influence action, it has an inherent face-threatening/illocutionary-force nature, according to both politeness and speech act theories. Unlike traditional politeness theory, modern impoliteness theorists suggest that the key for the judgement of impoliteness is dependent on the hearer’s interpretation of the speaker’s intentions (Bousfield, 2010; Culpeper, 2011b). This makes it particularly challenging for second-language speakers, who rely on their cultural background in their persuasive attempts. Thus, their pleading tone or pushy requests — expected within their cultural norms — might be misinterpreted by prospective Australian supervisors.

6.5.2 Imposition tactics

There were three high imposition (or pressuring) tactics used by Saudi prospective PhD students under the affective appeal. These tactics, as defined by Bhatia (2014) in a job application context, aim to promote a response from prospective employers by impelling them to make a decision. While Bhatia (2014) listed pressuring tactics as a separate move, in this study these pressuring/imposition tactics were found to exist within several moves under affective appeals. However, what is labelled here as imposition tactics aim to not only elicit a positive response but to also place some imposition on the supervisor to promote cooperation. One example of this is the Saudi students asking their potential supervisors to choose a topic for their PhD, promoting what they see as collective decision-making. From an Australian viewpoint, however, this can be interpreted as lack of scholarly independence and initiation, which can cause negative reactions from the potential supervisors and possibly lead to rejection (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1990).

Predominantly, students negotiate from a position of weakness; nevertheless, Bhatia (2014) claims that it is not impossible to find some applicants negotiating from a position of strength. This is in stark contrast to Brown and Levinson's model, which shows that power distance is not a reliable predictor of how interactants will respond to power imbalance. Contemporary impoliteness theorists have challenged the notion that power is a predictive factor in how interactants negotiate face, as this involves a degree of complexity (Culpeper, 2008; Locher, 2008). In fact, people with lower status can decide to exercise power with others of higher status (Locher, 2010b). This is relevant in this particular context, where some Saudi students thought that having a fully-funded scholarship could make them a desirable target for supervisors who needed research budgets or simply needed new PhD students. There were other cases in which the language of impoliteness was used to exercise power, simply because these students were writing in a second language and were unaware of how to be pragmatically competent.

Request as an affective appeal

It was striking that Saudi men used 45 affective requests, compared to the 10 affective requests in the female data. Each gender group showed different linguistic behaviour, which will be further elaborated on qualitatively in Chapter Seven. These requests imply varying degrees of imposition that impact negatively on the recipient and do not leave the appropriate space for the supervisor to make an independent decision. Due to their force, they can be considered impolite; this is part of

the pressuring tactics under the affective appeal. Unlike first-wave theorists' evaluations of politeness, Spencer-Oatey (2005) argues that (im)politeness is an evaluative label that people attach to certain behaviour, as a result of their subjective judgments about social appropriateness. In this particular context, it was noticed that some requests were poorly formed and incongruent with students' status (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1990). For example, need statements are used more frequently by high-status speakers (Holmes & Stubbe, 2015); however, a male student in this study used a need statement after requesting acceptance and decided to place this comment beneath his signature with seven exclamation marks:

Saudi male data (Need statement)

1 *I need feedback!!!!!!*

This example illustrates the arguments in the previous section about power and impoliteness, and how some supposedly lower-status students break the boundaries of power, either by flagging their despair or using their assertive tone inappropriately. This example blends affective appeals with impoliteness, but also proposes that affective appeals can come in direct strategies, rather than indirect ways of communication, as claimed by James et al. (1992).

In his study, Al-Ali (2006, p. 128) found that some Arabic participants were invoking compassion in a way that was not found in the English-speaking data; they described this move as when “[t]he writer appeals or asks the prospective employer earnestly for help and support. (e.g. ‘I would be grateful if you take my letter seriously because I am in need for this job.’)” (p. 128). In the current data, most of the affective appeals used by male students invoked compassion to various degrees. This highlights the power-differential language that the Saudi males used in several other moves, such as requesting and promoting further contact. Some instances in the women's data also reflect the complicated relationship between power and status, as it seems that some requests come with an ordering tone. The first example below seems bluntly on record with explicit illocutionary force (Brown & Levinson, 1987). It includes an imperative form, regarded by native English speakers as a “pushy request” (Murphy, 2006, p. 183). The other examples are highly demanding of supervisory acceptance — particularly the second, which uses the forceful language ‘willing to do everything’ to push for approval.

Saudi female data (Requests)

- 1 *I therefore request you to accept me as a PhD candidate.*
- 2 *I am able and willing to do everything to meet your expectations and PhD requirement.*
- 3 *I would be very happy if my interests would inspire you to become an administrator.*

In the last example, the expression ‘would inspire you’ was inappropriately employed; it would be better to say ‘would be of interest to you’. Claiming that the student’s topic would inspire the supervisor to accept supervision indicates arrogance, meaning that the student is not maintaining her lower status or showing native-like competence (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1990). The male students, at times, invoked more compassion and pleaded more for help; this was another form of pressuring/high imposition tactic, which was rarely found in the ten affective requests made by the Saudi females.

Saudi male data (Affective requests)

- 1 *I hope you can **help** me, if you like, to be one of your students in the near future*
- 2 *a) I would be delighted if you could **help** me with this issue
b) At the moment, I am searching for a potential supervisor for the PhD study and I would appreciate it if you could possibly **help** with this.*
- 3 *I would very much like to be supervised by you **at your convenience***
- 4 *I'm hoping you would be **kind enough** to accept me*

In the first two examples above, the male students used a similar linguistic formula that included the word ‘help’, portraying themselves as helpless students in contrast to the expectation supervisors may have for postgraduate students (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2002). The third example showed a student’s willingness to wait for supervision at the supervisor’s ‘convenience’; the fourth seemingly put the supervisor’s kindness to the test. While all the Saudi male affective requests (45) were more pressuring in demanding acceptance, one Australian participant’s request was mitigated to give the supervisor the option of whether he would be ‘open’ to being their supervisor. Due to the significant role of the requestive behaviour in pragmatic studies such as this one — and because this particular move was the most frequent in the students’ email corpus, as it is central in negotiation —, the discussion of requestive behaviour will be presented separately and in more detail in Chapter Seven.

Choose topic

The move of choosing a topic has been classified as one of the most pressuring/imposing tactics. It portrays the student as pleading for guidance and places pressure on the supervisor to help the student choose their PhD topic. These students could risk appearing incompetent and unable to make a decision for themselves (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1990). This move is known as change/choose topic, as occasionally students refer to their willingness to change topics; at other times, they ask the supervisor to choose a topic for them. It is the most ineffective move employed, as PhD students should write to their potential supervisors with a topic in mind. Instead of saying that they are still researching to find a topic themselves, some students asked supervisors to make this decision.

Saudi male data (Choose topic)

- 1 *I will be grateful if you would clear me more on my PhD plans--*
- 2 *if you are available, please share any topic you may be interested in---*
- 3 *I am expecting to do the best in my PhD in a field that would be interesting for both of us*
- 4 *finally, I am happy to get your idea and feedback about my email and I am free to send you any docs if you would like to make sure that you are working with the right person :)*
- 5 *I am happy to do any topic of research that would help us to work together*

The first example — ‘I will be grateful if you would clear me more on my PhD plans’ — has a politeness formula at the surface; however, looking at the context, this implied request may be deemed impolite considering its imposition on the potential supervisor to assign the student a topic, as the student did not suggest any particular PhD plan in his email. The fourth example was the only instance where an emoticon was used in Saudi male data; the only other occurrence was in the Australian female data, where one participant included an emoticon in the P.S section under her signature.

Saudi female data (Choose topic)

- 1 *I have not decided the topic yet as there are many ideas I am thinking about....*
- 2 *I do need your guidance if you can to decide the topic of my proposal*
- 3 *so if you have a hot topic related to these, I will accept.*
- 4 *However, before I start writing the proposal, I'd like to meet a supervisor to discuss it first.*
- 5 *I don't have a ready proposal yet but I need to ask if you have a project for me.*

Similarly, the Saudi women’s data shows hesitation and indecision in terms of specifying a PhD topic. The first, second and fifth examples ask the supervisor to directly decide a topic, while the

rest suggest that the students have some areas of interest but they need a supervisor to confirm their options. The Saudi inclination to ask a supervisor to choose a topic can be attributed to different academic cultures, where students are expected to rely on their supervisor's expertise as a manifestation of politeness. In Australian universities, however, students are supposed to be self-directed. In high power distance cultures, Hofstede et al. (2010) believe that students regard their teachers or supervisors as knowledgeable leaders; hence, they accept the knowledge offered to them without question. The trend of asking for help in choosing a research topic was also found in the Australian data, but it was expressed with slightly different language. The Australians' motivations to employ this move could be attributed to two different kinds of pressures: gaining a scholarship under the desired/offered topic, or increasing the chances of approval. In either case, PhD candidates are expected to show some kind of readiness by specifying areas of interests instead of indirectly or directly asking a supervisor to suggest a topic.

Australian female data (Choose/change topic)

- 1 *Obviously I'm not in the X realm but if you think we may be compatible.*
- 2 *I'm a friend of X. X[he] mentioned you are looking for a PhD candidate to write about X and activism. I was wondering if you had a little more info on thisI am interested.*

Australian male data (Choose/change topic)

- 1 *so given your expertise I thought I would first ask you if you hand any topics which came to mind that would like to research next.....If nothing comes to mind I am happy to suggest some topics of my own to gauge your interest*

In all the Australian female examples above, there was a tendency of prioritising the supervisor's topic suggestions. However, only one Australian male asked the potential supervisor to choose a topic for him; meanwhile, he was still taking some initiative to do the work himself if the topic was not provided. Making suggestions and generating options is essential in negotiation so as to not leave the addressee with a single choice they may be opposed to and reject outright (Biesenbach-Lucas & Weasenforth, 2002; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). This tendency of making suggestions was present in different moves in the Australian data but not in the Saudi data.

Promoting further contact (PFC)

This tactic was used by both genders, though more commonly by female participants. As Table 6.7 shows, 23 females and 10 males employed this move. Although Saudi females used more

affective appeals to solicit a response, most Saudi males used high pressuring tactics such as those in the following examples.

Saudi male data (PFC)

- 1 *I look forward to a positive response from you.*
- 2 *I would be very grateful for your response.*
- 3 *I know you're very busy so I appreciate any time you can give me. Thank you very much,*
- 4 *Also, if you want to discuss this please feel free to contact me on (tel. no.).*

There was a range of pushy ways to promote further contact, including what Bhatia (2014) called self-degradation, where the sender clearly portrays his status as lower. In the first of the previous examples, the male participant strategically used 'positive response', which is about imposing one's will on others. It is more strategic to use status-preserving strategies, as suggested by Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1990). Expecting a positive response when the supervisor is not available for supervision might come across as highly pressuring because it assumes the supervisor's acceptance is guaranteed. In the third example, the participant acknowledged the supervisor's busy schedule but still pushed for 'any time he can give him', which conveyed a pleading tone. In the last example, the participant directly asked the supervisor to contact him on his phone number if interested, shifting the role of power between the applicant and the prospective supervisor. The statement should ask the supervisor if he is available for a meeting or a phone call; it is then the student's duty to chase up and call the supervisor, not vice versa. Even though Saudi female applicants employed more PFC moves, their data did not contain the pressuring tactics that highlight the language of deference used by Saudi men. Their moves were higher in affective appeal to convey positive feelings as a gesture of friendliness and readiness. Though their data are presented here to reflect their affective PFC moves, it is not considered part of the pressuring tactics.

Saudi female data (PFC)

- 1 *please feel free to ask. And I will be **happy** to answer.*
- 2 ***Happy** to catch up anytime that suits you*
- 3 ***happy** to answer any questions about my research goals and qualifications.*
- 4 *I will be more than **happy** to discuss that further*

Fifteen women encouraged the potential supervisor to ask any questions about the topic to solicit a response; only seven Saudi men did this. One interesting aspect is that the women expressed

being ‘happy’ to receive questions or to be invited for a future meeting, while the men expressed this same feeling when they asked the potential supervisor to suggest different topics, being ‘more than happy to discuss other ideas’. This may reflect each gender’s priorities; while women are happy to meet and discuss, Saudi men are happy to listen to the supervisor’s suggestion and change their PhD topic.

6.5.3 Other moves under the affective appeal

Greetings

Greetings can be used as a positive strategy aimed at showing an emotional appeal to the potential supervisor. It not only portrays the sender as a kind person but contributes to a sense of obligation for the supervisor to accept the student. Positive politeness strategies have been discussed by Brown and Levinson (1987) as something to be avoided, as it deprives the other person of the freedom to decide with so many implied impositions. New wave politeness theorists, on the other hand, suggest that statement is bounded and further elaborated by context. As a result, the greetings made by the Saudi male participants did not simply reflect positive politeness that included ‘implied imposition’ but highlighted an undesired self-degradation tactic in terms of blending greetings with their implied ‘glorification’ to the prospective supervisor. This can be debatable, as some statements seemed a bit more acceptable than others. For example, the first statement below (‘It is my pleasure to be one of your students’) came as the first line of the student’s email, which could reflect a rather pleading tone as these prospective students may already know that some supervisors are unavailable. As shown in Table 6.7, Saudi men made slightly more greetings (15) than women (11). While the majority of male and female examples focused on the usual way of email greetings (‘I hope you are well’), a few students were creative in their greetings:

Saudi male data (Greetings)

- 1** *It is my **pleasure** to be one of your students.*
- 2** *I have had the **pleasure** to browse your web page...*
- 3** *It is my **pleasure** to send you this email ...*

While only 11 women started their emails using greetings, a few more males implemented other politeness greetings, seen in the examples above. They expressed their pleasure to be either future students, to be browsing the supervisor’s work or simply to ‘send you this email’.

Saudi female data (Greetings)

- 1 *Hoping you are well and gaining more success in your works.*
- 2 *It is my pleasure to write to you.*
- 3 *Hello **dear** First name, I hope you are well.*

Instances of informality and creative use of language existed more in the women's data. The first example focused on good wishes of 'gaining more success in your work'. However, instances of direct affection also existed in the female data, as seen in the third example above. This is considered a violation of the social norm in an academic setting (Hallajian & David, 2014).

Gratitude

In terms of gratitude, traditional politeness scholars Brown and Levinson (1987) assert that expressing thanks is intrinsic to all face-threatening acts because it can threaten the addressee's negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In fact, thanking can be face-threatening for both speaker and hearer in some cultures like Tzeltal (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Appropriate use of gratitude has crucial academic value in email communication; however, failure to express it can lead to negative consequences (Ren, 2017). However, in light of a modern politeness perspective, such gratitude can not only threaten the negative-face of the addressee, freedom of action and freedom of imposition, but also have a dual function of affecting how the addressee values the positive face of the student. In their affective appeals, students used some moves such as gratitude with high imposition—or, as Bhatia (2014) called it, pressuring tactics. The example below reflects this notion:

Saudi male data (Pressuring tactic in gratitude)

- 1 *I'd like to thank you so much for accepting me. [before acceptance]*

In negotiation literature, emails have to be wrapped up with the best possible impression for further collaboration (Biesenbach-Lucas & Weasenforth, 2002). Ebner (2011) argues that for some email recipients (especially for prospective PhD supervisors), a greater level of formality will increase rapport and trust. Due to the high negotiation stakes in these emails, prospective Saudi students should use their best strategies to mitigate the imposition of their request by using the gratitude move. However, most male participants used this move with a pleading or pushy tone.

Saudi male data (pressuring tactics in gratitude)

- 1** *Thank you in advance for any help you can provide*
- 2** *I appreciate your kindness cooperation*
- 3** *Thank you for considering my request.*
- 4** *Thank you, Susan and I'm looking forward to hearing from you.*
- 5** *I really appreciate the opportunity of mailing you and looking forward to hearing from you.*

While Brown and Levinson (1987) assert that the language each person uses reflects their power-status, academics may expect to sense individuality and independency in their students' language (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1990). The male examples above have employed the speech act of gratitude, expecting acceptance in advance. In other words, the gratitude acts here were used to indicate acts not yet performed (Aijmer, 2014). While most were thanking the supervisor in advance for an assumed acceptance, the second example was the first line of the student's email after introducing his name, which comes across as a pressuring tactic. The first example stressed an advance gratitude for 'any help' the prospective supervisor might be able to provide. In the fourth example, the use of the first name was an attempt to establish rapport and, at the same time, an implied imposition. In the last example, the male student expressed gratitude for being able to send an email to that potential supervisor, which was an affective instance that was hard to interpret. The first part of this statement was deemed affective gratitude (under affective appeal), while the other was considered a rational appeal for promoting further contact. Using the email medium, one should expect that their email might never be read by the recipient, especially when sending emails to unfamiliar supervisors. This example elaborates a violation of two Gricean maxims of politeness: the maxims of quantity ('do not say more than required') and maxims of quality, where one avoids obscurity and ambiguity.

Saudi female data (Gratitude)

- 1** *Thanks very much.*
Regards,
First Last

Even though the Saudi female students used gratitude more often than the males (20 vs 15), they did not employ it as a pressuring tactic, except for one who said, 'Many thanks in advance'. The gratitude move is often used as a closing signal (Ren, 2017) and this is particularly true for the female data. The above example shows how the gratitude move is used as a closing signal in the females' emails.

Program interest

The prospective Saudi students indicated their appreciation of the target program or university. Only the Arabic native-speakers employed this strategy, while no Australian participants did this. It is quite interesting to realise that the Saudi students employed some communicative components not found in the English data; “motivated by cultural values of the society, Arab writers tend to make use of certain eulogies and formulaic expressions during their social interactions so as to meet particular communicative functions specific to their culture” (Al-Ali 2006, p. 133). Institution glorification, as Bhatia (2014) labelled it, was a move that nine Saudi women used. Interestingly, almost half chose to praise aspects of themselves or of how the program would boost their skills/future career paths straight after praising the program.

Saudi female data (Program interest)

- 1 *I know that by studying at your **fine institution**, I will acquire more knowledge...*
- 2 *I believe that your **program will offer an excellent** next step forward to my academic and professional training*
- 3 *The School of Health Sciences **PhD program offers exactly** what I am looking for in the continuance of my higher education and research*
- 4 *I have particularly chosen to apply to your university **because of the strong feedback I** gathered about the program from previous alumni*
- 5 *I would like to apply for admission to your **prestigious university** for a PhD degree that will serve my family, my community and my country.*

Al Abbad et al. (2019) assert that praising the government, the country and institutions were among the norms in Saudi female letters in their data, which was echoed in the current data. When commenting on the program, the Saudi female participants focused largely on the feedback they were hearing from others (see the second and third examples). They also used adjectives to praise the prospective institution such as ‘fine and prestigious’. One Saudi female praised Australia: ‘I found that Australia is the best choice to do PhD’. This was also found in one study as part of Saudi participants’ negotiations while appealing their academic grades (Alsharif & Alyousef, 2017), and in the examples from this study included below. Interestingly, one Australian male participant did mention a preference to study at Melbourne for family reasons: ‘I am looking to Melbourne as my partner has just started her PhD at X University in Melbourne, so we are planning on living there for the next three years at least’. The difference is that the former stresses a compliment—‘Australia is the best choice’—while the latter is giving a reason as to why he has

chosen Melbourne. However, both are unnecessary details not within the prospective supervisor's interest, though it could have been an attempt to build rapport.

Saudi male data (Program/university interest)

- 1 *These aspects of your program not only stand out, but are **ideal** to me*
- 2 *I have read the school of computing website in detail. I love it because the variety of research area..*
- 3 *I would like to pursue or start my PHD program in you **respected** university*
- 4 *The components of your program that I find most **appealing** consist of.....*
- 5 *I Have visited Queensland 3 times and I found the life style very comfortable there*

The Saudi male participants used different adjectives to express their admiration towards the program: 'ideal, excellent, respected, appealing, reputable, high-ranking'. They also mentioned some aspects of the PhD program they were particularly interested in (see the second and fourth examples above). In the second example, the participant said 'I love it' in reference to the program, which can be considered as charged and informal language. It could be that Saudi men are using such expressions to be more relational in their approach.

Focus-on-supervisor

The Saudi students rarely indicated familiarity with an exact piece of their supervisor's work; most (33 out of 49 students) claimed an admiration for the supervisors' work and expressed their trust that they would help them achieve their dreams. It has been argued that "people resist persuasive messages that make unjustified meta-communicative claims" (Jenkins & Dragojevic, 2013, p. 561). Only one male student, using an affective appeal, brought some evidence that he actually had 'a quick look' at the supervisor's profile and found it interesting that 'the most interesting thing, is your supervision of one student searching in *** which is my area of interest'. Four Saudi male students claimed to have read the supervisor's publications but had no evidence. The rest focused on complimenting the supervisor without claiming knowledge of their work, such as 'how great the staff is, including yourself'.

Saudi men examples (Focus on supervisor)

- 1 *your interests in research are a source of inspiration for me*
- 2 *these astonishing publications have given me a promising topic for my future studies*
- 3 *I went through your profound profile and found that if you take me as one of your PhD students it would be an honour for me.*
- 4 *this aspiration is laced with a passion to be trained under the supervision of the scholar like you who has developed an international reputation in the field.*

The previous examples are a mix of direct compliments such as ‘a source of inspiration for me’, ‘your profound profile’ and ‘international reputation’. The Saudi men were found to glorify their prospective supervisors more than the females.

Saudi women examples (Focus on supervisor)

- 1 *I had the chance to read your publications in incontinence and women's health and I really enjoyed it.*
- 2 *I look at your profile and I'm interested to be one of your students.*
- 3 *and I was very glad to find that you are interested in this field and published studies in it.*
- 4 *After reading your website, I found it is more interested and suitable for my research area*

This general focus on supervisors without referring to specific work was classified as an affective appeal (see Appendix D), as it involved vagueness coated with compliments. There were a few times where students commented on the supervisor’s work using rational appeals (16 instances, as illustrated in Table 6.3).

6.6 Credibility Appeals

Credibility appeals are rhetorically manifested in written texts via the writer’s experiences, abilities, and knowledge, presenting their personality in a manner that positively impacts their audience. Credibility appeals should be based on the unexaggerated representation of the writer’s qualifications of self-presentation and judgment (Connor & Lauer, 1985). In the current data, Australian students strategically utilised their CV information to show their research experience and how their current jobs have contributed to addressing the research problem or inspired them to take on the project. This is seen in Table 6.2, with only an average of 2.4 Australian moves constituting credibility appeals. As the qualifications are tailored to match the job description (Bhatia, 2014) — or, in this case, the PhD project — this strategy was labelled as self-appraisal. When used simply to impress the other party without linking to subject matter, this move was labelled as self-glorification: “an unsupported claim of the writer’s own superiority based simply on feeling or desire rather than on rational judgment” (Bhatia, 2014, p. 70). What Bhatia (2014) suggested about the distinction of self-glorification and self-appraisal can be seen in the following examples.

Saudi male data

- 1 *I am a lecturer in the university and recently won a golden key prize. = self-glorification*

Australian male data

1 *My research topic has emerged from the job I have currently as a medical supervisor = self-appraisal.*

Bhatia's (2014) classification helps to distinguish the type of credibility appeal each cultural group is drawn towards using. When making credibility appeals, the Saudi students appeared competitive by showing willingness to amend or change their topics to gain the supervisor's approval; it is not clear whether this particular email purpose necessitates such strategy. However, there were instances where the Saudi students, as non-native English speakers, did not comprehend the pragmatic weight their statements could carry in their supervisors' mind; they tended to rely mostly on their credits such as CV, scholarships/funds or attachments. The main difference between the Saudi and Australian students is that the former listed qualifications without linking them to their PhD topic. Making direct and extensive reference to one's qualifications for self-presentation is also witnessed in another study on Saudi academic application letters (Abbad et al., 2019).

Broadly, both cultural groups used credibility appeals at a similar range. Table 6.8 shows a significant difference between Saudis' and Australians' implementation of the fund move. Australian students do not use this move as part of their CV or credibility appeal; rather, they only use it in connection with applying for research funds or scholarships. All current Saudi participants had scholarships from their governments and thus included this as part of their awards or CV. The Saudi females used 166 moves under the credibility appeal, while Saudi males used 129 moves. Like all other persuasive appeals, a credibility appeal works as a filtering tool to specify nuances of difference between both Saudi gender groups.

Table 6.8 Chi2 results of credibility appeals in Saudi and Australian data

No	Moves	Saudi (100)	Australian (20)	Sig Chi2	Interpretation
1	Attach	74	18	0.12	No sig difference
2	CV	70	18	0.06	No sig difference
3	Fund	68	0	0.00	Sig difference
4	GPA	35	5	0.38	No sig difference
5	Self-promotion	21	2	0.25	No sig difference
6	Change topic	12	3	0.71	No sig difference
7	Justify	6	0	0.26	No sig difference
8	Self-introduction	7	0	0.22	No sig difference
9	Experience	2	2	0.06	No sig difference
Total		295	48	-	-

Mainly, males stressed their competence, focusing on their qualifications, whereas female participants showed more self-confidence in their approach (see Table 6.9).

Table 6.9 Chi2 results of credibility appeals in Saudi data

No	Moves	Saudi Male (50)	Saudi Female (50)	Sig Chi2	Interpretation
1	Attach	30	44	0.00	Sig difference
2	CV	29	41	0.28	No sig difference
3	Fund	30	38	0.08	No sig difference
4	GPA	17	18	0.83	No sig difference
5	Self-promotion	7	14	0.08	No sig difference
6	Change topic	7	5	0.53	No sig difference
7	Justification	5	1	0.09	No sig difference
8	Self-introduction	4	3	0.69	No sig difference
9	Experience	0	2	0.15	No sig difference
Total		129	166	-	-

Although there were no statistical differences in self-promotion move, this appeal was embedded in other moves in female data, such as the requestive move in the following example:

Saudi female data (Self-promotion embedded in request)

1 *I believe that I am able to produce good research material under your supervision.*

On average, women tended to use more moves under credibility appeals than the men. Although the only statistical difference in this category was related to the number of attachments each gender referred to in their emails, the qualitative description will highlight discursive features that differentiate the way each gender group marketed their abilities. The next section discusses the change-topic move and how it has been employed in credibility appeal.

6.6.1 Change topic

For this move to be classified as a credibility appeal, participants must attempt to appear competitive by convincing their supervisor that they were willing to change their topic to match the supervisor's interests. PhD supervisors expect students to be passionate about their topics to keep them motivated until the end of their research journey; therefore, showing willingness to alter the topic might not be a good start. Below are some examples found in both gender groups' data:

Saudi male data (Change topic)

- 1 ***Be aware** that the research proposal topic is flexible and can be changed or **manipulated**.*
- 2 ***I'm sure we will work together** in an interesting subject for both of us either as I proposed or as **you might see** by improving the idea proposed based on your experience.*

Saudi female data (Change topic)

- 1 *If I do have the chance to Find a supervisor, I will happily change my topic upon his/her recommendation, to start my proposal*
- 2 *if you are willing to accept me.. I am also flexible to discuss different topic you think it is more appealing*

Seven Saudi males and five Saudi females (Table 6.9) showed responsibility by having a PhD project in mind, but still offered to amend or change their topics. With the first example in the male data, the applicant was drawing the supervisor's attention by saying 'be aware' and then stressed that his topic can be 'manipulated', which may indicate a degree of under-the-table agreement. This reflects another facet of competitiveness in male data. The second example highlights a high imposition tactic by saying 'I'm sure we will work together', throwing the ball into the supervisor's court by asking them to improve the participant's proposal as 'you might see', reflecting the hearer-oriented *Kalafah* language that stresses the power of the supervisor. The female data, on the other hand, pinpoints a degree of bartering behaviour conditioned by 'if' ('if I do have the chance to find a supervisor, I will happily change my topic'). In the second example, the female participant started by using hearer-oriented language ('if you are willing to accept me') and then took responsibility 'to discuss different topic you think it is more appealing'. The change topic move can be used in a rational manner where participants strike a fine balance by mediating their interests with the supervisors', such as in this Australian female example: 'I have written a brief proposal and while I am not wedded to this topic, it may give you an idea of the general area of research I am interested in'. Thus, she indicated that she was not committed to that topic while highlighting her interest in that area. Section 5.3.8 in the previous chapter provides further details on the discursive features that differentiated both genders in this move.

6.6.2 CV information

Providing CV information is one of the main moves under credibility appeals as it emphasises the participants' qualifications. This can include a number of strategies, such as mentioning the exact period of their experiences, recommendations, publications, and conferences. Twelve moves (out of 41) used by the Saudi women and four moves (out of 29) used by the Saudi males fit into this

range. However, the CV move in the Saudi data typically focused on just the job title: a trend across all the participants' data regardless of gender.

Saudi male data (CV info)

- 1 *Currently, I am holding the position as a **vice-dean** for eLearning and Distance Education deanship*
- 2 *I am a **lecturer** in the laboratory department in **** college at X university*
- 3 *After graduation, I got a job as a lecturer at the"... " University. Also I got award from one of te largest X companies in the middle east for best iPhone app and the prize was \$50000 for more details visit"....." . And Founder my university iPhone App. [link to app included]*
And I'm:
 - 1- Sun Certified Programmer for the Java Platform, SE 6.
 - 2- Oracle Forms Developer Certified Professional.
 - 3- Oracle XXX Developer Certified Associate.
 - 4- Oracle Database XX Certified Expert.

The last example above was one of four rare cases that talked about the job experience relevant to the research topic, listing the participant's experience in the email and making it appear highly competitive in a way that correlates with a job applicant.

Saudi female data (CV info)

- 1 *I have a wide range of experience in the financial industry as described in details in my attached CV.*
- 2 *I have financial warranty and many **recommendations** from my teachers and Profs, in addition to experience certificate for 5 years in the marketing sector*
- 3 *The attached CV shows my work experience in academic research groups and **conferences** (i.e. Riyadh, Dubai, Kuala Lumpur)*

While four Saudi women referred to recommendation letters and conferences to support their position (see examples Two and Three above), only one Saudi male mentioned this. Three Saudi women also mentioned that they published papers, compared to two Saudi men who mentioned research papers as part of their CV info. It can be argued that most Saudi applicants in this study over-emphasised their CV moves, mentioning every possible experience they could as proof of competence (Bhatia, 2014). Arab candidates often stress their qualifications to reflect their potential value and usefulness to the prospective institution — or, in this case, to the potential supervisor (Al-Ali, 2004).

6.6.3 Justification

Few Saudi men used their research justification as part of their credibility appeal. While more Saudi women used research justification as part of their rational appeal (see Tables 6.3), explaining why their research was worthwhile in terms of addressing a literature gap or real life problem, three Saudi men provided rationales in terms of personal career promotion.

Saudi male data (Justification)

- 1 *therefore, I need to improve myself by pursuing a PhD degree in Business and Marketing to enhance both my students' knowledge and the bank's performance*
- 2 *[I was] in charge of training employees from my university or other jobs. As a result, I am interested in some topics.*

These moves have been called research justification as they tend to provide reasons why participants chose to do a PhD or research in certain areas. Instead of providing rational reasons related to filling certain research gaps, they talked about how such a degree could add to their CV in terms of enhancing future gains.

Saudi female data (Justification)

- 1 *Given these academic interests, I am interested in pursuing the doctoral degree at the University of XXXX to further my research agenda and interest in teaching at the university level*

The previous example stressed doing a PhD to ‘further [their] research agenda to teach at the university level’. All justifications were dedicated to CV information, rather than contributing to knowledge. Overall, this move was rarely used by Saudi participants (see Table 6.9).

6.6.4 Experience

Rather than showing their research experience in terms of publications and other relevant matters, a few students thought that having a good academic position was a sign of research competence. This can be true in other contexts, but most of these students were young academics with few previous research publications or little experience, as evidenced by their emails. Those who have written one or two papers were sure to include this in their emails as part of their accomplishments. Bhatia (2014) argues that, in such instances, the applicant hopes such information will be well-received by the reader as relevant. It is indeed nothing but an account of one’s fictional self, made relevant to the position purposes (Bhatia, 2014). This aspect has been pointed out by Grice’s

maxim of relevance, where a person skilfully disguises the irrelevant self and make it look legitimately relevant.

Saudi female data (Experience)

- 1 *I have also good knowledge and experience about ***[The topic] *** in regard to religious, language and cultural diversity*

However, in the previous example, the female participant did not provide evidence that she had ‘good knowledge and experience’ about the topic that she intended to explore. This contrasts with Grice’s maxim of quality: “do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence” (Grice, 1975, p. 46). Although the amount of credibility appeals seems statistically similar between cultures, they are qualitatively different. In the Australian data, these experiences were more relevant and justified with more details. In general, the Saudi data was characterised by more ambiguity and a lack of supportive details.

6.6.5 Self-introduction

Only a few Saudi participants introduced themselves in terms of their qualification or job title. Tannen (2009) believes that conventions for self-expression can be understood as socially agreed upon rituals. While it might not be relevant in an Australian context for someone to provide their job title as the sole self-introduction, it is a socially agreed upon ritual in Saudi Arabia to introduce oneself by a job title, rather than a name.

Saudi male data (Self-introduction)

- 1 *I am an MA holder in Applied Linguistics*
- 2 *I am a lecturer at X university*

Saudi female data (Self-introduction)

- 1 *I am an education and training officer in X*
- 2 *I am a Saudi woman from Saudi Arabia, a researcher in the field of psychology and a master's degree from a prestigious university in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia X University*

That being said, there were only a few instances (see above) where Saudi students used their job title as the sole self-introduction strategy. For self-representation to be persuasive, it must arouse an appropriate response in the reader; it is a situation in which pathos, logos, and ethos in the true Aristotelian framework may not guarantee potential pragmatic success (Bhatia, 2014). With the

examples above, it is difficult to determine how these statements would be interpreted by Anglo-Australian supervisors; it could slip past unnoticed or it might arouse negative reaction. This again raises the argument of (im)politeness. Although these statements sound rational on a surface level, they could be misinterpreted as having some implied arrogance by people from other cultural backgrounds.

6.6.6 Self-promotion

Instead of using self-appraisal as a main strategy, which is all about tailoring self-achievements to meet the specific needs of the communicative event, 21 Saudi prospective students used a self-glorification strategy as part of the self-promotion move. Al-Ali (2004) believes that to “most people from an Arabic culture, self-appraisal may seem like bragging and is likely to be viewed as a kind of boasting which lacks credibility” (p.16-17). In this move, the applicants highlighted personal abilities and characteristics not necessarily relevant to the research topic. They showed how the PhD qualification will position them in the future, how their personal characteristics/value may be appealing to the prospective supervisor or useful to the prospective university, or how they will obtain personal gains from the overall PhD experience in a way that promotes the self.

Saudi female data (Self-promotion)

- 1 *I am very confident that I would succeed and I would contribute significantly...*
- 2 *I will be working hard to attain this goal of completing a higher degree --.*
- 3 *This will help in my goal to prove that **women in Middle Eastern** countries as Saudi Arabia can create a mark in this particular field.*
- 4 *I am willing to show all the efforts that are needed to demonstrate how suitable I am...*

Saudi male data (Self-promotion)

- 1 *I would feel extremely privileged if given a chance to prove my worth and contribute to the file at the university.*
- 2 *--and also I am open mind and friendly person.*
- 3 *Yet, I am looking for a new level of achievement and future research.*
- 4 *taking up challenges has always served as a source of excitement for me.*

These were classified as credibility appeals because the students believed that these characteristics added to their own credits and portrayed them as ambitious or competent. Women used a stronger tone in emphasising their confidence and uniqueness, evidenced by the way they expressed this move (see examples One and Four in the Saudi female data). The Saudi women wanted to not only

pinpoint their unique abilities but to also correct a misconception about Middle Eastern women, as seen in example Three. This may be due to the fact that women “in the masculine countries [...] are somewhat assertive and competitive, but not as much as the men” (Hofstede, 2011, p. 12). Although Hofstede (2011) argues that women would be less competitive than men in their attempts, this is not always the case; women used this particular move two times more than men (seven men and 14 women). Not only that, but they rarely showed aspects of weakness — what Bhatia (2014) called self-degradation — in this move, seen in the first and second examples of male data: ‘if given a chance to prove my worth’, or ‘I am open mind and friendly person’. While women were self-centred in this move, some men showed how the PhD program would further their future achievements and enable them to overcome future challenges. This is seen in the third and fourth examples above. The above self-promotion statements do not address any general criteria for accepting a PhD student.

Australian female data (Self-promotion)

1 *this is highly relevant to my long-term aspirations [...] as well as my determination to expand upon my data analytics and visualisation skills.*

The self-promotion move was also found in the Australian female data. This move is more so about communicating personal desires and future goals, which has little to do with what a prospective supervisor wishes to know to make their decision. It may show competence in terms of personal ambition and can, to some degree, build rapport between prospective students and supervisors.

6.6.7 Fund

In this move, the students emphasised the fact that they had received a scholarship to influence the potential supervisor’s decision. In some majors, such as medical sciences, some projects need funds; without a scholarship package, the supervisor will not be able to accept students. Saudi students in general preferred to use the term ‘full scholarship’ or ‘fully sponsored’. Sixteen out of 38 women used the term ‘full/fully’ when describing their scholarship, while eight out of 30 Saudi men used this term. The function of adjectives, such as the word *full*, is very important; adjective choices can convey persuasion or “subtle shades of affect” (Hyland, 1998, p. 441).

Saudi female data (Fund)

- 1 *I have been granted a **fully** funded scholarship from my government to do my PhD in Australia.*
- 2 *I will be **fully** funded by my sponsor.*
- 3 *I have been granted with a **full** scholarship from my university experiences including study fees and living allowance. from X University to cover and living expenses of my study.*
- 4 *Finally, I would like to highlight that I have a **secured funding***

Besides using the adjective ‘full’ to describe their scholarship, six Saudi men and three Saudi women went into further detail, mentioning that the scholarship would cover their living allowances, travel tickets, health insurance, or family expenses:

Saudi male data (Fund)

- 1 *This scholarship includes a **monthly salary and health insurance** other than guaranteed payment for the university courses.*
- 2 *I would like also to indicate that my study in university of XXX towards PhD degree will **fully** sponsored (e.g. tuition fees, **living allowances, travel tickets**) by XX.*
- 3 *I have[sic] granted scholarship covers my PhD studies and living expenses for me and my **family**.*
- 4 *I have a full scholarship that covers university tuition fees, study related expenses and Health Insurance.*

Elaborating on how the funds would cover the above-mentioned aspects is irrelevant in this email context. It also goes against Grice’s maxim of manner to be concise, providing unnecessarily details to the prospective supervisor whose only interest is in study-related expenses for the time being. In the last example of the female data, the participant described her scholarship as ‘secured funding’, which may reflect how students feel about such funding rather than communicating this aspect rationally.

6.6.8 GPA and attachment

Mentioning a student’s GPA score was one of the competitive credibility appeals in the Saudi data. However, in the male data, there is a slight degree of ambiguity relating to the exact GPA score; for example, one male participant claimed that he graduated with a very good grade, without mentioning the exact score. This could, however, be attributed to the Saudi educational system, where the term *very good* means B+ and *excellent* means A. Although the female data had

instances of ambiguity in terms of grades, they gave more information on their GPA with both the exact grade and its label according to the institution. This can be seen in the examples below.

Saudi female data (GPA)

- 1 *as I landed several internships and graduated with a first class GPA of **3.86 out of 4***
- 2 *I have completed a Bachelor of Marketing with a **(4.5 / 5)** GPA*
- 3 *I graduated with **4.32 GAP** (pass with distinction) in 2012*
- 4 *I graduated in March 2014 with **(A)** grade in all my subjects (except one subject B+)*

In respect of the attachment move, attachments have been referred to 74 times in Saudi data (see Table 6.8). In general, Saudi women used 44 attachment moves in comparison to the 30 moves made by men. The attachment move has been classified as a credibility appeal because it involves documents substantiating the students' claims. In their attachments, the Saudis usually included their CV, recommendations and research proposals, as indicated in the examples below.

Saudi male data (Attachment)

- 1 *However, I have attached to you my proposal and curriculum vitae.*
- 2 *Also, I have attached for you my PhD proposal and my CV*
- 3 *Please find my resume, cover letter and a research proposal attached*
- 4 *Kindly, find attached herewith a copy of my initial proposal and CV*

Saudi female data (Attachment)

- 1 *My CV and certificates for my previous degrees are attached.*
- 2 *I have enclosed my personal statement which includes a background about my study, relevant work experience and intended research topics*
- 3 *Enclosed is my research proposal and academic CV*
- 4 *Kindly find the attached PDF files of my research proposal, personal statement, and resume*

The reason why there were many references to attachments in the Saudi data could be attributed to a reliance on attachments to tell the story, especially with respect to the students' proposed topic. In the Australian data, as explained in Section 6.4, participants dedicated more time to talking about their proposed topic in the body of their emails. Al-Ali (2004) argues that the lack of details in Arabic applicants' letters is due to a belief that attachments speak for themselves. By relying on attachments, Al-Ali (2004) believes that students lose a potential opportunity to elaborate on their core abilities to convince the prospective reader. This is also consistent with earlier discussion on rational appeals, where the Saudi students relied on the attached PhD proposal rather than discussing it in detail within their emails.

6.7 Further findings: Modes of persuasive genre

Many genre studies suggest that each genre has a role in writing. Therefore, when designing a letter for a specific purpose, recognisable patterns and structures begin to emerge. The genre not only governs the pattern of a specific letter, as an example, but also influences the general mode of writing itself. Hence, there are four modes of writing, as classified by genre and discourse scholars: descriptive, expository, argumentative and narrative (Connor & Connor, 1996). Narrative and expository are the two most commonly encountered genres in the academic environment (Hall-Mills & Apel, 2013). While expository is concerned with sharing basic information, conveying facts and describing procedures, narrative discourse is more about communicating ideas through a storytelling style (Hall-Mills & Apel, 2013).

Table 6.10 Modes of persuasive genre

	Saudi data		Australian data	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Expository style	89	89%	4	20%
Narrative style	11	11%	16	80%
Total	100	100%	20	100%

The above table was created by independently counting the total number of emails from both groups that included either expository style or narrative style. As shown in Table 6.10, 89% of the Saudi email data was classified as using the expository mode of writing to persuade. Although the Australian participants also wrote in expository style, a narrative style emerged in their data when discussing how the PhD was going to be conducted and planned. Thus, 80% of the Australian data consisted of narrative style.

Typically, in the current Saudi data, the expository style in subjects' emails started with pronouns like 'I' or 'my': 'My name is X. My background includes (...). I have undertaken research...(..). I have broad experience. (..). My interests. (..). I am looking at applying. (..). I look forward to hearing from you soon'. (See Appendix F for a complete Saudi male email example). Although the Australian data followed the expository style in the first two or three lines when introducing themselves, there tended to be a paragraph in the middle that broke away from the norm and merged into a more narrative style. This included phrases like 'On further reflection on your presentation...' or 'To this end, I have two main areas of interest...' and 'For my PhD, I

would like to look into the...’ These points emerged when Australian students were highlighting the core rational appeal — talking about their PhD plans — making the email more engaging and oriented towards a narrative style. (See Appendix F for an Australian female full email example). There were two Saudi emails written in a storytelling style, with longer details than a typical email; nine other emails included narrative style in the middle of the message. Three Australian females relied heavily on expository style as they focused more on their CV information. This may also have some resemblance with Saudi female data, presenting their self-promotion and achievement aspects in their communicative style.

These styles may further clarify Kaplan’s (1966) theory about Arabic writing being in a zigzag style; expository style arguably necessitates going from one point to another in a CV-like fashion, whereas narrative style is linear and revolves around a central idea — in this case, the PhD topic. With that being said, expository style may be necessary in other contexts, such as a job application, where a person should write an email listing their achievements and abilities without needing to break into a narrative style. Hence, the expository mode of persuasion is not deemed wrong, but for this specific context applicants are required to dedicate more details about their planned PhD topic as CV info can be included in their attachments. Mentioning the styles of these modes of persuasion was required to realise overarching differences between both cultural groups.

6.8 Chapter summary

This chapter has explored the three types of persuasive appeals: rational, affective and credibility. Although statistical comparisons show similarities and differences in the patterns between both gender and cultural groups, the qualitative analysis revealed subtle nuances that are more specific to each. It can be hard to compare two cultures based on the percentage of how much each persuasive appeal was used, as the way they are employed differs strategically and linguistically. In terms of rational appeals, there were significant statistical differences in the amount of times each cultural group employed specific content of their emails (e.g. options, justifications, PhD topic and PhD plans, etc.), with Australians focusing more on core issues and supplying clearer details. No matter how much rational information was included in the Saudi negotiations, it was often characterised by ambiguity and lack of optionality. Australian participants used relatively fewer credibility and affective appeals than Saudis, although there were a few instances where

some unnecessary strategies used by the Saudi students were also employed by one or two Australian students; these included self-promotion moves and the mention of why they selected a specific city/country in which to pursue higher education. Although most of what has been mentioned in this chapter was data-driven, providing new insights into Saudi gender differences (and partially into cultural differences), some instances confirmed previous genre studies' findings in relation to job application letters. There were unique strategies used by Saudi female students, such as revealing their gender or competing by exaggerating their self-value, which deserve further exploration in the current literature.

Hence, the results of this thesis challenge traditional gender differences in linguistic research in that the Saudi men made more compliments, greetings and used more affective language in communication where there was a power imbalance. This may be due to the hierarchical system existing in high context cultures, which possibly influenced the men's language. While the women used more credibility appeals, such as self-promotion, to position themselves as capable and confident, the men showed competitiveness in the sense that they wanted to be accepted by any means, which might have contributed to the inclusion of compliments and compliance.

At both theoretical and methodological levels, this chapter provided details regarding issues with designing the study and critiques of the old and new waves of politeness. In particular, it identified two major areas to consider: 1) the relationship between modern (im)politeness and persuasive tactics; and 2) the distribution of moves under each persuasive appeal that participants from specific cultural groups utilise to meet expectations in an intercultural setting. This helps to both provide bottom-up and top-down investigation and explore meaningful patterns across gender and culture. Further, it addressed gaps existing in both old and new waves of politeness. In terms of the new waves of politeness, there was a notable gap that rationality was not considered as part of its dimensions. While first-wave theorists believed power-distance was a predictable factor for certain linguistic production, new wave theorists challenge the notion that power is a predictive factor in how interactants negotiate face, as this involves a degree of complexity. While addressing affective appeals, which are traditionally seen as impolite, modern impoliteness theorists suggest that the judgement of impoliteness is instead dependent on the hearer's interpretation of the speaker's intentions.

After providing details on dominant moves under each persuasive appeal, this chapter concluded by briefly describing the persuasive writing styles of each cultural group. While the Australians preferred lengthier emails with a mix of expository and narrative styles, the Saudi students often produced an expository style in their approach.

Chapter 7: Requestive Behaviour and Gender Differences in the Perception of Power

7.1 Introduction

Although emailing prospective supervisors has become common practice for international Saudi students, almost nothing is known about their requestive behaviour in this particular context. Negotiation, regardless of its function or intent, revolves around unresolved requests. Therefore, as proposed by Taleghani-Nikazm (2006), we need to focus on how each participant organised their request to effectively analyse the single email negotiation event. From this perspective, each request was classified according to the preceding and following discourse organisational moves. This is because “every text written within a negotiation is an act with repercussions on the outcome” (Mulholland, 2002, p. xi). Requestive behaviour holds a high stake in the decision-making process; those who write polite requests are perceived as more competent, prompting cooperation on the part of the email recipient (Jessmer & Anderson, 2001). It is widely acknowledged in politeness literature that requests are intrinsically face-threatening acts, as they are intended to threaten the receiver’s negative face (i.e. freedom from imposition) (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This chapter explores the requestive behaviour of Saudi students when writing to prospective PhD supervisors as “authority figures” (Chen, 2006, p. 35). It endeavours to answer the third research question, along with its sub-queries:

3) What requestive behaviour do students employ to gain approval from the prospective supervisor?

- a) How do Saudi males and females differ in terms of their requestive patterns?
- b) What is the impact of power distance on each gender’s requestive language?

While mainstream speech act analysis has been mostly categorical, classifying linguistic expressions as being direct or indirect (Taguchi, 2006), this chapter reports on a more thorough investigation into different linguistic (lexico-syntactic) forms used to make requests. This reflects the participants’ view of their entitlement to make the request (Curl & Drew, 2008). The aim of such analysis is to “investigate what can be learnt from the writer’s choice of linguistic form — why in that form? Why in that position? — especially when that form in that position is a recurrent

systematic feature” (Curl & Drew, 2008, pp. 10-11). Some request strategies provide a justification and explanation to appeal to the hearer “as a rational agent in need of persuasion” (Blum-Kulka, 2005, p. 267). Therefore, a blended top-down approach to the analysis of requestive behaviour is employed in this chapter to unveil cultural and gender influences. It is also used to examine the perception of power among gender groups, highlighted by both their request sequential position and the discursive features of their request forms.

In their analysis, Curl and Drew (2008) found that the words ‘could/would’ are used in ordinary interactions in which a request is made, starting with ‘I wonder if.’ This is commonly used in institutional interactions. Therefore, the design of a request is affected by the writer’s understanding of contingencies surrounding its granting and their entitlement to make a particular request of a particular hearer. Such findings have prompted the current investigation to widen its scope of understanding and design, with this particular email proposal being in an institutional context. According to the discursive approach to politeness, contextual factors should also come into play when evaluating requestive behaviour; otherwise, the investigation of discursive features would be lacking in terms of the judgement of politeness and impoliteness (Mills, 2011). Further, the dimension of culture and gender will be added to determine the pattern of requests, reflecting a person’s orientation to their entitlement to make such requests.

7.2 Background and previous research on requestive behaviour in Saudi discourse

To justify the way the current requests are analysed, it is theoretically significant to refer to what other researchers have done and discovered while analysing the Saudi students’ requests. Due to the lack of studies of Saudi-English requestive behaviour, existing research on both spoken and written requests will be included to further understanding about English requestive features. Al-Ammar (2000) investigated the linguistic strategies and realisation of requestive behaviour among 45 Saudi females majoring in the English language at a Saudi college using a Discourse Completion Test (DCT). The focus of her study was on spoken English and Arabic, with the findings suggesting that female students tend to use indirect strategies when the hearer is higher in status. Again employing DCT, Umar (2004) examined request strategies produced by Saudi and other Arabic students in comparison to those of British students. He found that Arabic students with advanced levels of English were heavily influenced by their cultural background when

formulating requests; they seemed unaware that the appropriate Arabic request scheme in a given situation might not be appropriate in English. Focusing on Saudi female spoken and written requests, Al-Ageel (2016) found that power status, social distance, and the degree of imposition influenced the requestive strategies in a given context, which is consistent with politeness theory. However, she also found that there were culturally specific features related to the communicative and requestive patterns in Saudi culture; females prefer the opting-out strategy and conventional strategies that appear like hedged direct requests, similar to that in the Arabic language. Further, she proposed that there was a link between the Saudi notions of *Kalafah*/*Mayanah* and social distance or power. Saudi females used more *Kalafah* strategies (formality) when interacting with people of higher social distance/power and *Mayanah* (informality) when interacting with their friends. Al-Ageel (2016) called for additional research focusing on the role of gender in Saudi communities, as her data was completely female-oriented.

Some comparative studies examined request strategies used by Saudi English learners and found that they tended to implement more direct strategies in their requests than their counterparts of other cultural backgrounds (Aba-alalaa, 2015; Al-Hamzi, 1999; Umar, 2004). Tawalbeh and Al-Oqaily (2012) discovered that Saudis used more direct strategies than Americans; however, while Americans used conventionally indirect strategies among family and friends, Saudis seemed to use them as their super-strategies when speaking with people of higher power. Yet, there has not been any kind of measurement where female and male data are compared against a similar situation that entails the use of power. Using the Brown and Levinson (1978) framework, Al-Gahtani and Alkahtani (2012) investigated requests produced by Saudi males with both high and low-level English proficiency through audio-taped role-plays, comparing these to the requests from a group of Australian native English speakers. Social power (+/-P) was an important factor that affected the level of directness in the request strategies chosen by the Saudi groups. For example, a mild hint strategy (off-record) increased in use in proportion to the hearer's power (+P), and the 'title' strategy was also overused exclusively when the hearer was the speaker's professor. This, however, was not the case with the Australian participants in their study.

A substantial body of pragmatics research employs Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) classifications as the main methodological approach to analysing requestive behaviour, either through DCTs or naturalistic email data (Al-Marrani, 2018; Krish & Salman, 2018; Najeeb, Maros, & Nor, 2012). However, after testing these classifications, many of the requests in the current data

fell under the category of non-conventional indirect; therefore, little is known about the assessment of requests in regard to the degree of power perception for both genders. While approaches like Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) are useful in providing a potential account of patterns of request, they are inapt as a criterion for judging how each gender responds to power-imbalance situations. This is evident from a PhD thesis that attempted to apply request classifications in Australian naturalistic data; the study found that politeness is not simply a matter of incorporating syntactic and lexical attenuation devices within variants, nor is it inevitably a matter of increasing indirectness of the form (Le Couteur, 1996). Studies analysing Saudi students' requests not only employed DCTs, but also included groups comprised of a single gender (Al-Ageel, 2016; Al-Gahtani & Alkahtani, 2012). It seems that any corpus investigating requestive behaviour for pragmalinguistic purposes triggers ambiguous classifications, and the results of these remain questionable (Van Mulken, 1996). The taxonomy criteria should then stem from the corpus as distinctive features that the researcher could observe and identify, until a well-developed taxonomy "free from normative judgement" exists (Van Mulken 1996, p. 692). Observing naturally-occurring speech acts is strongly advocated by many linguists (Béal, 1994; Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Wolfson, 1989), as it provides an internal validity of any linguistic phenomena under investigation (Qari, 2017).

There is a growing interest in Saudi email investigation, which has provided important results concerning the pragmatic features of email language. Bulut and Rababah (2007) investigated the pragmatics of email communication in English between Saudi female students and male professors. They found that the discursive features and politeness strategies of the females were similar to Biesenbach-Lucas (2005) native English American participants. They also found that students usually preferred positive politeness strategies in their requests to their professors, while they mostly had negative politeness-oriented address terms when starting their messages. Hariri (2017) investigated emails written in Arabic in Saudi Arabia within academic settings. She found that some patterns correlated to whether the writer/receiver of an email was a woman or man—and/or a lecturer or student—and that there is a relationship between the choice of politeness strategy and identity construction. For example, her findings showed that women were more likely to employ thanking or closing features at the end of their emails; men used more openings, requests and apologies. A more relevant discovery in relation to this thesis was that

discursive choices made by the Saudi males in her study mostly represented expected hierarchical standards, whereas Saudi females acted against expected hierarchical norms.

Linguistic research links language use in high power distance with the specific cultural backgrounds of the participants. Although challenged by new wave politeness theorists, it is generally assumed that social distance or power increases the use of politeness strategies as a universal phenomenon (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Hofstede (2001) argues that high power distance has been associated with compliant behaviour, as these cultures tend to be more authoritarian and stress conformity and submissiveness. Therefore, when people from high power distance contexts negotiate with others in power, they tend to engage in obedient communication strategies by using either compromise or collaborative styles (Galín & Avraham, 2009). Only a few studies have investigated gender variations in politeness in both hierarchical and one-sided communication in a high context institutional setting. Hobbs (2003) analysed voicemail messages in a legal setting, finding that positive politeness strategies such as joking, complimenting and claiming reciprocity were used almost exclusively by male speakers. This may be attributed to the one-sided nature of voicemail communications; callers may use politeness strategies to bridge communicative gaps created by the lack of interactive exchange. Lips (1991) points out that the way one can understand how men and women deal with power is largely dependent on the social context. In this thesis' social context, the data of both gender groups' approach to contacting a prospective PhD supervisor was examined, providing a clearer means of comparison, especially in terms of power-distance orientation. The first findings in this chapter, detailed in the next section, concern 11 requests that were identical in terms of the requestive behaviour used.

7.3 Copying requests from online resources

This chapter explores requests for supervision in the current participants' emails. While analysing these requests, it was discovered that students from both of the Saudi gender groups imitated native-speaking requests found in a sample email from an online blog where an American professor suggested a 'good' way to approach a prospective supervisor. The aim of this blog was to help international students approach a supervisor using the best possible strategies to convince

them to accept the student—according to this American professor, at least.¹² The students who mimicked this email (seven Saudi females and four Saudi males) were unaware of differing strategies between American and Australian culture. Competitiveness is encouraged in American culture, where individuals focus on certain self-enhancement attributes such as success, talents and uniqueness (Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997). However, in Australian culture, negative politeness is encouraged without an emphasis on the self and its uniqueness; this is best demonstrated by the notion of Tall Poppy Syndrome (Peeters, 2004b). If we read the whole message from the blog, the professor suggested that students talk about their GPA and how they enjoyed reading some articles by the prospective supervisor. What she seemed to miss, however, was a focus on the student's future project and what exactly they planned to do. All of the students in the examples below followed the professor's requestive behaviour, making a few edits. The underlined sentences highlight some characteristics discussed in the following section.

Table 7.1 Saudi students copying their requests from an online source

No	Saudi Males
1	<i>I hope you don't mind my getting in touch, but I'd like to inquire whether you are currently accepting graduate students. <u>If you are, then I would appreciate it if you would accept to be my supervisor.</u> However, I have...</i>
2	<i>I hope you do not mind me being in touch with you, but I would love to inquire whether you are currently accepting international PhD candidates.</i>
3	<i>I hope you don't mind my getting in touch, but I'd like to inquire whether you are currently accepting graduate students. <u>If you are, would you be willing to talk to me a bit more, by email,</u> about my graduate school plans? I have explored your department's graduate school website in detail, <u>and it seems like an excellent fit for me.</u></i>
4	<i>I had the chance to read the project outline at X uni website. I really enjoyed it, and it gave me many ideas for my future research. I hope you don't mind my getting in touch, but I'd like to inquire whether you are currently accepting graduate students. If you are, <u>would you willing</u> to talk to me a bit more, by email or on the phone?</i>

¹² The original message blog written below from a website called the professor is in at <https://theprofessorisin.com/2011/07/25/how-to-write-an-email-to-a-potential-ph-d-advisor/>. Retrieved June 22, 2017.

I hope you don't mind my getting in touch, but I'd like to inquire whether you are currently accepting graduate students. If you are, would you willing to talk to me a bit more, by email or on the phone, or in person if I can arrange a campus visit, about my graduate school plans? I have explored your department's graduate school website in detail, and it seems like an excellent fit for me because of its emphasis on xx and xx, but I still have a few specific questions about xx and xxx that I'd like to talk to you about. I know you're very busy so I appreciate any time you can give me. Thanks very much.

No	Saudi Females
1	<p><i>I'd like to inquire whether you are currently accepting PhD students. <u>If so, would you willing to supervise me during my PhD.</u></i></p> <p>Also if you are into my subject I am willing to take another subject based on your suggestion and my interest.</p>
2	<p><i>please let me know if you are interested in the topic and <i>whether you are currently accepting PhD students</i>. If you are, <u>would you willing to discuss a bit more, by email or in person.</u> I appreciate any time you can give me.</i></p>
3	<p><i>I hope you don't mind my getting in touch, but I'd like to inquire whether you are currently accepting graduate research students. If you are, <u>would you be willing to discuss</u> with me about my PhD study plan?</i></p>
4	<p><i>a focus on motor vehicle accidents and <u>would like to know whether you are currently accepting PhD students as I would very much like to work with you.</u></i></p> <p>I have closely explored your department's website sent by professor X, and it seems <i>like an excellent fit for me</i> because of its emphasis on transport,</p>
5	<p><i>I hope you do not mind my getting in touch, and I would like to inquire whether you are willing to supervise a PhD project or not. If yes, <u>it would be great to response to my email</u> in order to assign a suitable time and discuss the proposal as soon as you are available.</i></p> <p>I do appreciate any time you can respond to me on this email address</p>
6	<p><i>I would like to inquire whether you are currently accepting PhD. Students. If you are, <u>would you willing</u> to talk to me a bit more, by email or interview.</i></p>
7	<p><i>I hope you do not mind my getting in touch, but I would like to inquire whether you are currently accepting graduate students. If you are, <u>would you be willing to discuss with me a bit more by email</u> about <u>my</u> research plans?</i></p> <p><i>I know you are very busy so I appreciate any time you can give me. Thank you very much.</i></p>

Some differences in copying requestive behaviour from this source will be discussed. It seems that the students knew how to employ the strategies mentioned in the original source and tailored them to their own topics. Interestingly, 50% of the Saudi female students chose to edit the part which says 'whether you are accepting graduate students' in the original source, replacing this with 'PhD students'. One wrote 'PhD project' instead. However, most men chose to keep it as it is 'graduate students', except for the one who wrote 'international PhD candidates'. It has been noticed that men are more inclined to call themselves 'international students', whereas women consistently called themselves 'PhD students'. There is psychological research evidence on gender differences in self-presentation, illustrating that "women place higher priority on creating a positive self-

presentation, while men are less concerned about the image they present in face-to-face (ftf) communication” (Haferkamp, Eimler, Papadakis, & Kruck, 2012, p. 91). Two females altered the original wording of ‘If you are’ to ‘If yes’ and ‘If so’, demonstrating written competence.

The error in the original message was corrected by some of the students. In the female data, the first, second and sixth examples directly copied from the online source, while the third and seventh corrected it. The fourth and fifth examples avoided the expression entirely. The moves used before or after the request and the way that students organised their thoughts around this copied source differed between females and males, as shown in Table 7.1, and was considered in the move analysis section (see Chapter Four). Despite the limited number of participants (11) who copied their requests from the online blog, the above tables suggests that women are 50% more likely to copy from outside sources or imitate strategies from native English sources. This might reflect the fact that these participants lacked ideas about how to write this specific email, wanted to take a more careful approach to their communication considering the stakes, or simply wanted to sound like native speakers. Although these requests were copied from an online source, they were considered in the analysis for a number of reasons: it reflects the student’s choices, as they thought it was appropriate; other students in the questionnaire data admitted to receiving help from some outside sources; and these emails were adjusted and edited to include other information. If these students who needed assistance in writing their emails did not find online resources, they would copy from one another. Hence, this thesis aims to provide some practical materials to support Saudi students when approaching Australian academics. To clarify the appropriateness of requestive forms expected within the Australian context, there needs to be some examples from Saudi applicants’ linguistics behaviour that diverged from such expectations.

7.4 Discourse organisation of requests by gender

In this chapter, requestive behaviour is approached from varying angles—textually and linguistically—to provide an understanding of how requests were patterned in Saudi participants’ data and what this reveals about gender differences in the context of academic negotiations. Therefore, the analysis was data-driven from the micro-level (in terms of the organisation of requestive positions and supported moves) and the macro-level (in terms of what it could reveal about cultural values and gender-specific tendencies).

As Figure 7.1 indicates, most participants—regardless of their gender—positioned their request at the end of their emails. Eight Saudi male applicants placed their request right at the beginning of their emails, compared to 10 Saudi women who made the request in the middle. The number of requests Saudi males used outnumbered the females. When analysed in light of discourse sequences, requests include two elements: head acts, and supportive moves. As the term indicates, head acts are the core elements that refer to main requests, such as ‘Could you supervise my research?’ Supportive moves, meanwhile, are the adjuncts to the head act, such as providing reasons to modify the impact or force of the requests (see Section 3.5). They can be put either before (pre-supportive moves, such as ‘If you accept me, I will acquire more knowledge..’) or after the head act (post-supportive moves, such as ‘You will help me approach my dreams if you accept my request’). Research focusing on discourse organisation or the supportive moves of requests has found that participants often use different combinations of supportive moves to increase the likelihood of the hearer’s acceptance (Dombi, 2019; Trang, 2019). The current supportive moves in this thesis have different labels to identify their functions (negotiation moves).

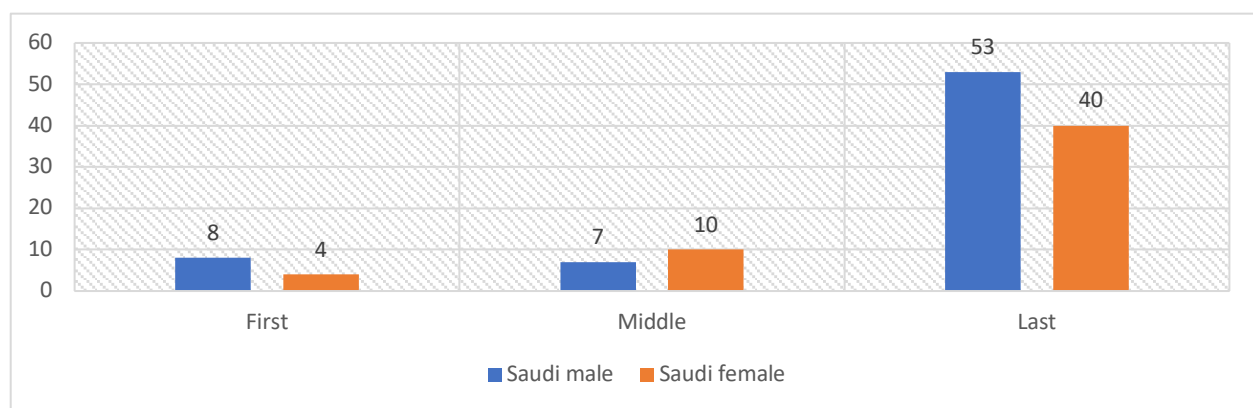


Figure 7.1 The position of requests in emails

The participants used many strategies to try and gain acceptance by a prospective supervisor. The most supportive moves found in Saudi male requestive data were found to be:

- 1- **Fund move**, which concerns having a full scholarship.
- 2- Complimenting the supervisor or commenting on their great work, which has been called the **focus on supervisor move**.
- 3- Showing willingness to **change** the PhD proposal or **topic** if outside the area of the supervisor’s interest.

Table 7.2 clarifies the most frequent supportive moves that both Saudi men and women employ *before* and *after* placing their requests.

Table 7.2 Negotiations moves before and after requests in Saudi data

Negotiation moves	Moves before requests (F= 54 requests; M=68 requests)				Moves after requests (F= 54 requests; M=68 requests)			
	Saudi F	Saudi M	Chi2 Sig.	Results	Saudi F	Saudi M	Chi2 Sig.	Results
1-Fund	11	7	0.12	No sig.	1	5	0.16	No sig.
2-Research interest	8	6	0.3	No sig.	5	3	0.28	No sig.
3-Proposal	3	9	0.15	No sig.	0	1	0.37	No sig.
4-Justification	0	2	0.2	No sig.	1	0	0.25	No sig.
5-PFC	4	1	0.1	No sig.	22	9	0	Sig.
6-Focus	10	2	0	Sig.	0	1	0.37	No sig.
7-Focus + compliment	2	6	0.25	No sig.	1	2	0.69	No sig.
8-Attach	4	1	0.1	No sig.	3	7	0.34	No sig.
9- Change topic	2	2	0.81	No sig.	0	7	0.01	Sig.
10-Topic	1	1	0.86	No sig.	2	2	0.8	No sig.
11-Major	1	3	0.43	No sig.	2	1	0.42	No sig.
12-Self-promotion	2	4	0.58	No sig.	2	2	0.81	No sig.
13-Context	1	1	0.86	No sig.	0	2	0.2	No sig.
14-Self-introduction	0	2	0.2	No sig.	1	0	0.25	No sig.
15-CV	2	1	0.42	No sig.	0	2	0.2	No sig.
16-Program interest	1	2	0.6	No sig.	1	2	0.69	No sig.
17-Gratitude	0	0		No sig.	2	2	0.81	No sig.
Total	52	50	-	-	43	48	-	-

It is to be noted that these are not the total number of moves because some of these moves might be repeated elsewhere in the students' emails. This table only captures the moves that came straight after or before the requests¹³. Notably, the move with the highest frequency that preceded a request for Saudi female students was the fund move. Saudi females also focused more on supervisors before requesting, with a significant difference ($p = 0 \leq 0.05$) in comparison to Saudi males (see

¹³ If a participant made two requests in two different positions in their email, then these moves were counted separately. However, if a participant made two requests in a row, the moves before or after the requests were counted as though there were only one request.

Table 7.2). Six Saudi male students used focus + compliment before implementing a request by using an affective appeal. There are three moves that both genders have in common before the requests: fund, research interest and focus on supervisor. However, in terms of moves that come straight after the requests, one move in common is promoting further contact (PFC), with a Chi-square significant difference of $p = 0 \leq 0.05$ (Table 7.2). Females appeared to utilise this more than males. Saudi males instead tended to use their Change topic move straight after requesting at a significant difference ($p = 0.01 \leq 0.05$), as women did not use it after requests at all.

At a frequency level, 44% of Saudi women promoted further contact straight after the request. This may be due to a need to be reassured that their request is answered; the students therefore left the supervisors with this last impression that they should notify them of acceptance or rejection. Herring (1996) also notes that women encouraged further communication in emails. This move has been found to be one of the main negotiation moves in email media, as it carries on the negotiated topic at hand (Alsharif & Alyousef, 2017; Biesenbach-Lucas & Weasenforth, 2002). Similarly, Lesikar (1984, as cited in Bhatia, 2014) believed that an invitation for further correspondence opens the door for further negotiations. The Saudi women used PFC for two reasons: confirmation of approval ('I would be very grateful for your reply') or a meeting to discuss ('and wish to arrange a time to meet...'). Both cases indicate a desire to know their supervisor's decision.

The Saudi female participants mostly requested immediately after indicating something related to the supervisor, either commenting on the supervisor's work or indicating shared research interests ('I found your research interesting and perfectly fits my PhD plan'). This then led to a more natural request: 'It would be very excited to me if you supervised my research since you are working on similar issues'. Additionally, the Saudi female participants used a Saudi cultural concept called *Mayanah*, where showing friendliness is essential to lessen the impact that a power imbalance may have on negotiation through a more informal approach. *Mayanah* in its strategic element is similar to 'claim[ing] common ground', found in Brown and Levinson's positive politeness schema. Brown and Levinson (1987) outline three main categories: 1) Convey 'X is admirable, interesting,' 2) 'Claim in-group membership with H, and S) 'Claim common [point of view/opinions/attitudes/knowledge/empathy]'. Each category has sub-strategies to carry out the act. In the first category, there is a sub-strategy called 'exaggerate interest with the hearer'. An example from the Saudi female data—which also reflects *Mayanah*—is the use of amiable terms

such as ‘excited to me if you supervised’, where this participant conveyed an admirable stance and interest towards the hearer. Both the second and third positive politeness categories above constitute the key communicative purpose in *Mayanah*, where participants tried to avoid highlighting themselves as lower in status even within the complementing speech act (‘I think you will be the right person to supervise me’).

The Saudi male participants consistently initiated their emails with the reason why they were writing—the *proposal move*. This can have an implied request form, such as ‘I am hoping to have the opportunity to become a PhD candidate at X University’. Immediately after, they would indicate their request (‘so I am looking for a PhD offer from you’) or introducing their fund status before placing their request (‘I have been granted a fully funded scholarship... [which] will cover my tuition and practical fees... In conclusion, it’s my pleasure to do my PhD in your department’). Typically, the Saudi male students ended their requests by an affective choose/change topic move, such as ‘... and would like you to recommend which one [topic] is most suitable in which area’. The Saudi male requests were characterised by language of giving deference (Brown & Levinson, 1987) that, at times, necessitated the use of over-politeness to fill the gap of such power imbalance (‘If you take me as one of your PhD students, it would be an honour for me’). This relates to another Saudi cultural notion known as *Kalafah* that informs how people respond to power relationships; one emphasises “either the lowering of oneself or the raising of the other” (Brown & Levinson, 1987, pp. 178-179). Brown and Levinson (1987) assert that giving deference has two sides to the coin in the realisation of deference: the negative side is when the speaker humbles himself, while the positive is when the speaker raises the hearer in the way that satisfies their desire to be treated as superior. An additional dimension that the current data added to this politeness strategy is the use of hearer-oriented language in different moves and requests (‘I believe that if **you** could give me some of **your** time and supervise me’, or ‘looking for a PhD offer from **you**’). The way Saudi male students responded to such *Kalafah* or formality between themselves and the supervisor was partly emphasised by hearer-oriented language (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989), which includes pronouns like ‘you’ or ‘your’. A more thorough discussion about differences in requestive behaviour between genders will be provided in the next section.

7.5 Language and Power

This section focuses on the relationship between language use and gender in relation to power; specifically, how language is shaped in a way that reflects how each gender perceives power differences. Despite the fact that many pragmatic and sociolinguistic studies have attempted to explore the relationship between language use and gender, some issues remain unexplored (Al-Khawaldeh & Žegarac, 2013). One such nuance is whether women's and men's speech acts reflect power differentials in certain situations (Mills, 2003; Tannen 1999). A number of influential studies have declared that differences in linguistic behaviour are rooted in differences in the social construction of gender; each gender is expected to meet certain rules in certain social or institutional settings (Crawford, 1995; Trudgill, 1999). Brown (1980) maintains that situations of social interaction are important for analysing language use because they provide evidence of the social motivations informing discursive choices. Power is traditionally thought of as the control powerful people have on powerless subordinates (Belkin et al., 2013). However, Mills (2003) upholds the notion that, in the study of power, we should step away from the binary of the powerless and powerful divide. The relationship between power and language is rather more complicated. If we move away from such binary thinking, we may be able to unveil contextual factors that play certain roles in the way each gender reacts to a power differential situation. Johnson & Roen (1992) have also highlighted the significant role contextual variables play in shaping gender language differences. Among those contextual variables in this study is the degree to which each gender perceives power in academic email interactions, and how this may be reflected in their use of supportive moves. The notion of supervisory power seems to be interpreted differently by each gender as manifested by their communicative style. To effectively analyse the results, it was necessary to consult the relevant literature to support the current findings of the Saudi male participants showing more politeness strategies when voicing a request.

There seems to be a lack of studies on how each gender perceives power in certain workplace or academic situations, especially when each gender applies for entry into tertiary study. In particular, observing the language and power variations between genders in naturalistic email data—specifically in Saudi discourse, where gender segregation dominates—has received scant scholarly attention. Over the past three decades, various scholars have argued that women express positive politeness and use mitigating strategies to avoid threatening their interlocutors' face (see

Holmes (2013) for an overview). The results of some traditional studies, which found that female speakers use powerless speech, may be attributed to different social roles and status of men and women in traditional societies (Smith, 1992). Most of the current participants are men and women who already work as academics and are in good career positions. The analysis in this chapter is intrinsically linked to problems central to research on gender-differentiated speech: in particular, the issue of how power and solidarity relations are encoded in language. Evidence pertaining to gender differences in the speech act of requesting is still lacking. As has been confirmed, requestive behaviour generally offers “fertile ground for the study of any potential connections between linguistic politeness and gender” (Lorenzo-Dus & Bou-Franch, 2003). Investigating requests offers the clearest examples of rapport-sensitive speech acts (Spencer-Oatey, 2000).

In total, men made more requests (68) than women (54) in this research. At a qualitative level, there were contextual features that determined how an affective request can be judged, which differed across genders more so than discursive features. The way requestive behaviour was judged required workable categories for analysis to differentiate between affective and rational requests. This formula was inspired by Bardovi-Harlig (1996), who suggested four main categories to differentiate native and non-native speakers in their use of speech acts: the form of the speech act, semantic formula, content/contextual factors, and different speech acts. These categories were based on what she had observed in her native and non-native data. This provided grounds for how researchers could build their own categories for specific speech acts and, in this instance, differentiate the requestive behaviour of male and female participants. As Saudi male participants made 68 requests, this means that about 38% made two or more requests in their emails. This is consistent with Hariri's (2017) thesis, which found that Saudi males made more requests in their emails than females.

Each request was coded in line with genre studies, classifying each move as a separate text unit according to its particular communicative purpose (Bhatia, 2014; Swales, 1990). Hence, the repetition of requests was coded in accordance with how the moves were classified in this project. From a qualitative point of view, the repetition of requests added more force to the tone of the email, especially when two or more requests came sequentially. This may be perceived as a pleading for acceptance that may, in turn, make the imposition even higher on the supervisor. This can be seen in one example from a male who made four requests in a row:

Saudi male data (Request)

- 1 *I would like to know if you agree to have a new student in that period <request> (1). It gives me a great opportunity if I work under your supervision and learn from your experience in the field <request> (2). I have many ideas for the PhD project and I am enthusiastic to work under your supervision <request> (3). In order to complete official requirements here in my university, I need an acceptance letter from University of X <request> (4).*

Having many requests in a row is one technique that evaluates requestive behaviour as demanding—and, therefore, affective. The evaluation of affective requests also has some connection to supportive moves, which has an immediate influence on how the prospective supervisor receives the requestive behaviour. For example, five male students placed their requests straight after a direct compliment to the supervisor (Focus + compliment in Table 7.2):

Saudi male data (Focus + compliment)

- 1 *this inspiration is laced with a passion to be trained **under the supervision of the scholar like you who has developed an international reputation** in the field. I would very much like to be supervised by you at your convenience*

Besides the compliment, the way the above request is worded is unusual in terms of asking to be supervised at the supervisor's 'convenience', as supervision is about dedicated time and effort. Again, this is a reflection of *Kalafah*, where the student showed that he would demand the least attention to encourage acceptance. Requiring the least 'demand' from a supervisor was only found once in the female data, though this participant indicated that her brother had assisted her with writing the email. Lastly, a request placed in a terse email without providing essential details makes the requestive behaviour seem dismissive and leaves a negative impact on the potential supervisor due to its potential lack of seriousness. This can be observed in the example below:

Saudi male data (Request)

- 1 *Hi D. X
This is (name), I am from Saudi Arabia and I am looking for supervisor in my PhD study.
I would love to be one of your student[sic], If you are interested in my research. Looking forward to your reply.
Regards
Name*

This prospective student has not referred the supervisor to an attached PhD proposal. If the requestive behaviour was only stripped away from the above email ('I would love to be one of

your student[s']') and compared to female requests, they may resemble one another linguistically; however, taking contextual factors into account, they would differ qualitatively in some considerable ways. For this and similar reasons, the new wave of politeness theorists have prioritised contextual factors over discursive features (Haugh & Culpeper, 2018). Contextual elements are adopted to clarify the way certain utterances are carried, assisting with the judgement of politeness or impoliteness (Mills 2011). The notion of how such a short email might change the way people evaluate its content has not been adequately elaborated in CMC and pragmatic studies. Nevertheless, it has been suggested that providing reasons before or after requesting behaviour mitigates the impact or the force of requests (Sifianou, 1999; Taguchi, 2006; Trosborg, 1995), but not vice versa. Using short emails with an overt request that is not explicitly directed to the supervisor as the main point of contact makes the request appear more like a taken-for-granted order. The example below reflects this:

Saudi male data (Request)

1 *Hi,
This is (name) 28 year old and study at X university in X, Australia (Master of X, major: X, minor: X). The expected date of graduation is June 20**. I would like to continue for PhD in X specifically X.
I am fully sponsored by Saudi government.
see ya
First Name*

The above case was extreme in the sense that it was informal in its opening and closing; the student did not even mention the supervisor's name after 'Hi' and closed his email with a very casual closing ('see ya'). The way the email was written included an implied high imposition question ('I would like to continue for PhD... I am fully sponsored...'), with the final remark suggesting that being 'fully sponsored' could assure him admission. This student received an assertive reply from the prospective supervisor, including some appropriate steps to approach a supervisor and an apology for rejecting the student. The student then pleaded for the supervisor's acceptance and changed the way he approached him, but received no further replies. Although some studies suggest that emails should be kept short, students in this context need to provide essential details about their research plans and application using the right politeness tone for academia. If the requestive behaviour of this email was assessed in isolation ('I would like to continue for PhD in X'), the level of imposition caused by the short email would not be obvious and could be deemed

rational, rather than affective. Moreover, as suggested by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), it can be simply classified as a non-conventionally indirect request, which says very little about how these requestive behaviours were shaped. This plainly illustrates the necessity of considering contextual factors when analysing email requests, rather than only discursive features; this is especially the case when evaluating persuasion content, politeness and tone. This example is not persuasive because it lacked both key details about the applicant and ended carelessly, which had a negative impact on that supervisor.

Kecskes (2015) argues that if a researcher finds cues, such as explicit comments made by the receiver of a specific interaction, this would bring about sufficient evidence of the inappropriateness of that instance. However, he also asserts that when evaluating intercultural communication, the “researcher is expected to identify the norms of appropriateness for a given community of practice and then assess a given utterance as polite or impolite against those norms” (Kecskes, 2015, p. 44). In the case of this chapter, evaluating requestive behaviour demanded some contextual factors, whether it was the shortness of the emails, multiple requests in a row, or even requesting after a direct compliment to a supervisor. These contextually-linked factors, which weaken the position of the request in emails, have not been recognised in the majority of existing pragmatic studies as they tend to focus on the forms of specific requests rather than global issues surrounding them. Bardovi-Harlig (1996) also pointed to the semantic formula that might differentiate groups. One formula found in this data was what may be called an exaggerated assertion specific to *Kalafah* language, such as ‘I am confident that your acceptance will definitely change my life’. Other semantic formulae include honorific language (e.g. ‘I am honoured/grateful’) and hearer-oriented language, which was particularly used to stress power differential language by Saudi male students. This will be examined in the next section.

7.5.1 Hearer- and speaker-oriented language

Table 7.3 Total number of affective requests in Saudi data

	Affective requests	Total requests	Percentage
Saudi Male	45	68	66.18%
Saudi Female	10	54	18.51%
Total	55	122	45.08%

As shown in Table 7.3, 66.18% of Saudi males submitted affective requests, compared to just 18.51% of Saudi females. It has been argued that the degree of perceived entitlement in a request is inherent within the construction of the event, along with contingencies that could be involved in the recipient granting the request (Curl & Drew, 2008). To supplement the contextual categories that assisted in identifying affective requests, some semantic formulas were implemented to differentiate between both genders' perception of power. One of these formulae was the hearer-oriented language, which was mostly employed by Saudi male applicants as part of the 'giving deference' strategy. This notion set out a perspective with which different politeness strategies can be compared (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) suggested different categories that aim to reflect the speaker's referential point of view rather than power differential language. Among the categories relevant to this discussion are hearer-oriented language and speaker-oriented language. They provided some examples for each category:

- 1- **Hearer-oriented:** (*Could you tidy up the kitchen?*)
- 2- **Speaker-oriented:** (*Could I borrow your notes?*)

Hearer- and speaker-oriented language are employed to widen the scope of whether the pronouns used within requestive behaviour reflect deferential language, as was specifically observed in the Saudi male data. Since the level of politeness of requests varied depending on the propositional content of the expression chosen, the way hearer- and speaker-oriented requests were used in this particular context could allow for a new perspective on how this language responds to power differences. There is empirical evidence that hearer-oriented language, at times of expressing requests in pre-condition situations (which may involve power distance), is considered more polite as it allows the hearer to decide whether or not to comply (Phillips, 1993; Van Mulken, 1996). For example, children were found to produce more hearer-oriented requests when asking favours of adults (Ervin-Tripp & Gordon, 1986, as cited in Kasper, 1990). This notion of children addressing adults with hearer-oriented language could reflect the perception of adults' power, rather than a desire to be polite.

Saudi male participants tended to use hearer-oriented language in a way that emphasised the power gap between themselves and their prospective supervisors. This could also suggest their employment of a *Kalafah* approach to negotiation. Saudi women tended to use more speaker-oriented requests that emphasised a personal wish to modify the addressee's behaviour for their own benefits (Trosborg, 1995), such as in the example '*I* would be very excited if you supervise

me'. It was interesting to observe that the hearer-oriented requestive behaviour in the Saudi male data reflected a pleading tone only because of the way the request was formulated. For example, it was noticed that both genders used a similar number of hedges. However, the use of phrases such as '*If you* could give me some of your time and supervise me' presents a pleading tone mitigated by an if-clause. These kinds of expression between hedges and requests cannot be determined by quantitative analysis. This pleading tone put the prospective student at risk of losing their own academic and scholarly status by portraying themselves as demanding. Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993) argue that students need to strike a balance between compliance and initiative in their negotiations to reserve their own status and, in certain situations, determine speech acts that are congruent with that status.

One of the challenges with quantitative analysis is that it cannot capture discursive features under those contextual factors to summarise differences between genders. It was too simplistic to count the pronouns 'I' or 'my' as signs of speaker-oriented language and 'you' or 'your' as signs of hearer-oriented language specific to a deferential tone. Another example to elucidate this difficulty is shown by the data of the Saudi women who employed hearer-oriented pronouns as referential rather than deferential. This can be seen in the statements below.

Saudi female data (Hearer-oriented language)

- 1 *I wonder if **you** take on a new PhD student*
- 2 *I am not sure if **you** are willing to supervise*
- 3 *I wonder if **you** are interested in such a topic*
- 4 *I hope **you** would be able to supervise me*

Saudi women showed more status-preserving strategies, distancing themselves from using explicit illocutionary force in their speech acts of requesting, apart from ten instances that were counted as affective requests (see Table 7.2). The argument above regarding contextual challenges facing politeness theory, along with other factors, has been addressed by many discursive theorists (Haugh, 2007; Kecskes, 2015; Locher, 2012; Mills, 2003; Mills, 2011). The next section involves evidence of quantitative similarities in discursive features across both Saudi genders where the contextual factors cannot be determined.

7.6 Discursive features of requests

Since politeness is a sociolinguistic phenomenon that informs requestive behavior (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Brown & Levinson, 1987), some “requests are substantively different from others on the basis of what is being asked for, and to whom” (Eskin, 2018, p. 49). To properly unpack the influence of gender and culture on the discourse of requests, it is important to look into the way these requests are formed. Despite the fact that a great deal of studies focus on the application of the request, head-act taxonomy and categories (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Trosborg, 1995), the current study takes a holistic data-driven approach to the linguistic phenomena of negotiation and culture. In particular, the researcher has identified requestive behavior deductively by exploring its discursive features in the emails. Three forms of syntactic downgraders in the requestive behaviour were categorised according to Torsborg’s (2011) categories of internal and external mitigating devices. She classified syntactic downgraders as internal mitigations and lexical devices as external. The former include interrogatives (question-like, such as ‘Do you have the possibility’), declaratives (sentence-like, such as ‘I hope you will be able to supervise my proposal’) and conditionals (may include an if-clause, or other conditional forms such as ‘Once you accept me as a PhD student, I can then submit an application’). These syntactic features play a role in mitigating the force of the request. Lexical devices were divided into polite markers, such as ‘please’, and hedges such as ‘would’ or ‘could’ (see Table 7.6). Both forms of mitigation are included in Table 7.4 and will be examined in more detail below.

Table 7.4 illustrates the mean, standard deviation, number of participants, and occurrences of syntactic downgraders and lexical devices used in the requestive forms for the Saudi females and males¹⁴. An independent sample t-test was conducted to determine whether the mean use of syntactic downgraders and lexical devices differentiated between genders. However, no significant differences were found for either lexical linguistic devices ($t(118) = .52, p = .928$) or syntactic downgraders ($Levene's t(95.85) = -1.14, p = .258$). This made it difficult to detect discursive features between genders in Saudi discourse through quantitative analysis due to similarities in their use of English language at a macro-level. In terms of frequency, Saudi women were more inclined to use hedges than any other linguistic feature, followed by conditional statements. For

¹⁴ Note: participant refers to unique participant count (females made 54 requests and males made 68 requests), whilst occurrence refers to total number of occurrences (i.e. in their request, some participants may employ the above features more than once)

Saudi males, declarative syntactic downgraders were the most commonly used linguistic feature, with hedges a close second. The least used linguist feature was declarative syntactic downgraders for females, and interrogative syntactic downgraders for males.

Table 7.4 Use of syntactic downgraders and lexical devices in request forms

Linguistic features	50 Saudi females (= 54 requests)			50 Saudi males (= 68 requests)		
	<i>M (sd)</i>	Participants	Occurrence	<i>M (sd)</i>	Participant s	Occurrenc e
Lexical devices	1.32 (0.79)	43(86%)	66	1.32 (0.84)	41 (82%)	60
Hedges	1.14 (0.64)	43(88.0%)	57	1.20 (0.89)	38 (82%)	54
Polite markers	0.18 (0.39)	9 (18.0%)	9	0.12 (0.33)	6 (12%)	6
Syntactic downgraders	1.14 (0.53)	46 (92.0%)	57	1.24 (0.72)	43 (86%)	62
Interrogative	0.22 (0.42)	11 (22.0%)	11	0.02 (0.14)	1 (2%)	1
Declarative	0.14 (0.35)	7 (14.0%)	7	0.86 (0.35)	1 (20%)	43
Conditional	0.78 (0.51)	37 (74.0%)	39	0.36 (0.48)	3 (60%)	18

Table 7.5 Examples of syntactic downgraders in Saudi data

	Declarative	Interrogative	Conditional
Males	<i>I look forward to have the honor to undertake my PhD under your supervision.</i>	<i>Would you willing to talk to me a bit more, by email or on the phone?</i>	<i>It would be such honourable if I have the chance to be a PhD candidate under your supervision.</i>
Females	<i>I would like to join the group and hope you can be my supervisor.</i>	<i>Could you please advise me about the PhD projects and supervision availability</i>	<i>I would like to know if you have the capacity to supervise me because I am planning to apply for a PhD degree.</i>

Table 7.5 shows an example of each requestive category of syntactic downgraders according to Trosborg (1995). The way Saudi males adopted the declarative style in their requests entails the use of honorific language and respect, while Saudi women mostly relied on the neutral declarative style. This is seen in the examples in the table above. In the interrogative style, only one Saudi

male used a question mark after his request, which is a strategy found more in the female data. This is discussed in greater detail below. Most Saudi male examples of conditional requests focused on expressing feelings, such as being ‘honored’ if they had the chance to be accepted. However, in the Saudi female examples, a sense of desire for confirmation emerged, evidenced by this formula: *‘they want to know’ + ‘if the supervisor is able/have the capacity/interested to supervise them*. Therefore, ‘if’ was not used to stress status difference—such as the case with Saudi males—but an inquiry ‘if’ the supervisor is available. Other examples supporting this finding include:

Saudi female data (Use of ‘if’)

- 1 *I wonder **if** you are interested in such a topic. If you do so, it would...*
- 2 *I wonder **if** you take on a new PhD student in 2015 and if you are interested in my project proposal!*

It seems that Saudi males focused more on *Kalafah* language in their conditional requests, which largely presumes a humble stance in this data. Alternatively, as Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 272) argue, the if clause in certain examples “functions pragmatically as a hedge on the force of speech act”.

Saudi male data (Use of ‘if’)

- 1 ***if** you could give me some of your time and supervise me, I would be very happy...*
- 2 ***if** given a chance to prove my worth*
- 3 ***if** I have the chance to be a PhD candidate*

Interestingly, as there seems to be similarities in Saudi males’ use of declarative and conditional requests, Saudi women’s conditional requests at times overlap with their interrogative requests; both seem to revolve around their need for confirmation, closed with a question mark. This reflects doubt and a desire to be reassured and confirmed. Like tag questions, question marks—at least in these particular requests—are used to invite verification, consent, confirmation (Waseleski, 2006) or simply as “a notion of possibility” (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 153). This can be seen in the following examples.

Saudi female data (Use of question marks)

- 1 *I am interested in your area, and **would like to know** your possibility for supervision at end of 2017?*
- 2 ***I would like to know** can you accept new students for Fall 2015?*
- 3 *However, **I am not sure** if you are willing to supervise such this area?*

The use of a question mark or an exclamation mark in some formal business letters can be interpreted as a sign of informality. Ball (2009) argues that question marks can be used as a stylistic, rather than traditional, rhetorical device. Since the question mark indicates that the person is asking a question, it can be argued that the use of the question mark in these academic emails embeds an illocutionary force for the receiver to answer it. This is in line with research on emoticons, which concluded that the use of certain emoticons online indicates the illocutionary force of the text and contributes to its pragmatic meaning (Dresner & Herring, 2014). The requestive data of the Saudi women in this study included more than 22% who used interrogative forms (11 participants out of 50), seven of which used question marks. The use of the questioning strategy could be seen as further evidence of the women pushing for a reply, as they wished to receive confirmation of whether or not their project would be approved by that supervisor.

Since the focus of this thesis is largely on the language of negotiation, requestive behavior is viewed from this particular angle, particularly from the point of view of how one could be more culturally competent when comparing Australian ways of negotiation to that of Saudis. There is one particular difference that generally distinguishes the Australian data: the sense of providing alternatives (optionality) to mitigate the negotiations. This was rarely found in the Saudi data, though it should be considered in any form of negotiation (Alsharif & Alyousef, 2017; Biesenbach-Lucas & Weasenforth, 2002). The example below illustrates this sort of optionality:

Australian female data (Use of ‘if’)

1 *If I proceed with this study and therefore need a supervisor, I am wondering if this is something you may be able to consider? If you think this could be both possible and of interest to you, could I request a time to meet with you and discuss further? If it is not possible for you at this stage, then of course I understand **completely**.*

There is a list of different scenarios in the above response expressed by the ‘if’ conditional, reflecting an indirect way of requesting through hedging. This was then concluded with the student expressing their understanding that their request may be met with a refusal. The following is another similar example that highlights an understanding of the fact that approval may not be granted:

Australian male data (Use of ‘if’)

1 *I understand PhD projects are often limited by funding and am wondering if you are taking on any students.*

This minimises the imposition on the supervisor, provides optionality (Leech, 2016) and preserves the student's status (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1990). The student expressing understanding in this context might evoke empathy in the prospective supervisor, which may encourage them to accept the student. Additionally, this portrays the student as an independent and understanding person—someone who the supervisor could imagine working with for the duration of a PhD project. In negotiation literature, the ability to use emotions productively, such as showing understanding, might contribute to outcome satisfaction and could likely lead to future agreement (Mueller & Curhan, 2006). Interestingly, while eight Australians used the term 'I understand' (40%), as in the previous example, only one Saudi male used it (1%) in the context that he knew the supervisor was on leave ('I understand that I should not expect feedback from you soon').

Recognising the possibility of rejection does not exist in Saudi negotiation, at least in this specific context. It is not a norm for Arabic speakers to request something from someone of higher status, only to indicate that their rejection would be well-received. The benefit of empirical studies such as this one is that they can highlight these underlying aspects of cross-cultural differences between Arabs and Anglophones. There is a considerable amount of literature suggesting general tendencies of Arabic persuasion: repetitions, employment of metaphoric language and use of strong emotions when presenting ideas (see Suchan, 2014, for an overview). However, very little is known about the nuances of these persuasion strategies; examining the absence and presence of some moves adds more understanding to such well-established body of research. The if-conditional in the current Saudi data was not employed to express anticipation of possible rejection, but rather to express feelings of gratitude if accepted: '*If you could give me some of your time and supervise me, I would be very happy* as I am sure I will learn a lot from you and provide a good thesis'.

7.7 Hedging

Table 7.6 presents a list of lexical hedges used by the Saudi participants in this study. Even though there are many lexical hedges identified by previous researchers, such as Holmes (1990), Low (1996) and Hyland (1996), this section focuses only on the eight used by the present subjects within their requestive moves. According to Holmes (1990), hedging is a way to express uncertainty, tentativeness and soften the utterances of the speaker. While the word 'believe' was counted as a

hedge in one male example, it was not counted as such in the female data where it was instead used as a strengthener ('I believe that I am able to produce good research material under your supervision'). This revealed gender differences in the way they were implemented. In contrast, one male participant used 'believe' as a way to emphasise power distance ('If **you** believe that one of my topics needs changes to be acceptable, perhaps **you** could suggest changes'). Due to the fact that 'believe' was the only hedge used as a strengthener in two female participants' data, they were excluded. Other hedges are displayed in the following table.

Table 7.6 Hedges used in requests in Saudi data

Hedge	Saudi Females (<i>n</i> = 50)			Saudi Males (<i>n</i> = 50)		
	<i>M (sd)</i>	Participant s	Occurrence	<i>M (sd)</i>	Participants	Occurrence
Could	0.18 (0.39)	9 (18.0%)	9	0.18 (0.39)	9 (18.0%)	9
Would	0.68 (0.74)	26 (52.0%)	34	0.58 (0.76)	21 (42.0%)	29
Hope	0.12 (0.33)	6 (12.0%)	6	0.22 (0.46)	10 (20%)	11
Think	0.04 (0.20)	2 (4.0%)	2	0.02 (0.14)	1 (2.0%)	1
Believe	0	0	0	0.02 (0.14)	1 (0.2%)	1
Can	0.10 (0.30)	5 (10%)	5	0.16 (0.37)	8 (16%)	8
Wish	0.04 (0.20)	2 (4.0%)	2	0	0	0
May	1.00 (0.00)	2 (4.0%)	2	0.04 (0.20)	2 (4%)	2

As shown in Table 7.6, the Saudi participants used 'would' more than any other hedge (52% of females, 42% of males); eight females and eight males used it twice. 'Could' was used by 18% of both Saudi females and males. 'Hope' was used by 12% of Saudi females and 20% of males, with one male using 'hope' twice. 'Think' and 'believe' were used by 4% of females and 2% of males. 'Wish' was not used by any Saudi males, but was used by 4% of females. For both females and males, 'think' was only used by 4% and 2% respectively. 'May' was used by 4% of both males and females. 'Can' was used by 10% of females and 16% of males. An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether the mean use of hedges differed for Saudi Arabian males and females; however, no significant differences were found.

An independent sample t-test was also conducted to determine whether the mean use of hedges differentiated the Australians and Saudis. There was a significant difference in the mean

use of ‘would’ (Levene’s $t(39.22) = -2.11, p = .041$). Saudi participants ($M = 0.63, M = 0.75$) used ‘would’ more than Australians ($M = 0.35, SD = 0.49$). There was also a significant difference in the mean use of ‘can’ (Levene’s $t(99) = -3.846, p < .001$).

No Australian used ‘can’, whereas some Saudis used ‘can’ at a higher rate ($M = 0.13, SD = 0.34$). An independent sample t-test was then conducted to determine whether the mean use of syntactic downgraders and lexical devices differentiated between Saudi and Australian females and males. There was no statistically significant difference between the mean use of lexical devices for Australian and Saudi Arabian females ($t(63) = 0.30, p = .767$). However, there was a statistically significant difference in the mean use of syntactic downgraders for Australian ($M = 0.93$) and Saudi females ($M = 1.14$) (Levene’s $t(49.71) = -2.05, p = .046$). These results suggest Saudi females had a greater mean usage of syntactic downgraders than Australian females

Table 7.7 Hedges used in requests in Australian data

Hedges	Females ($n = 15$)			Males ($n = 5$)		
	$M (sd)$	Occurrence	Frequency	$M (sd)$	Occurrence	Frequency
Could	0.40 (0.63)	5 (33.3%)	6	0	0	0
Would	0.33 (0.49)	5 (33.3%)	5	0.40 (0.55)	2 (40%)	2
Hope	0.20 (0.41)	3 (20.0%)	3	0.20 (0.45)	1 (20%)	1
Think	0.13 (0.35)	2 (13.3%)	2	0	0	0
Believe	0	0	0	0	0	0
Can	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wish	0	0	0	0	0	0
May	1.33 (0.58)	3 (20%)	3	0	0	0

Given the high usage of ‘would’ by Saudi participants, a qualitative description is provided as a means to differentiate the way each gender employed it. In the Saudi male data, the hedge ‘would’ was used while requesting, reflecting *Kalafah* language:

Saudi male data (Hedge)

- 1** *I would very much appreciate it if you could help me find a supervisor*
- 2** *I would be very happy as I am sure I will learn a lot from you and provide a good thesis.*

Although similar to the Saudi male data in some ways (*'It would be a great opportunity to work with you'*), females used *Mayanah* language that was never used in the male data (*'[I] would be excited to enrol in one of the available projects in the X lab'*). Generally, Saudi male and female data resembled each other linguistically, but there were some contextual factors indicating gender differences in the requestive behaviour that unveiled an inclination towards either *Kalafah* or *Mayanah* orientation. These contextual factors signal the differences between old and new politeness approaches, with the former focusing on evaluating the statement in isolation and the latter suggesting a broader approach that judges each statement in light of its contextual factors.

7.8 Off-record strategies by gender

Although this study has attempted to classify emails in terms of their discourse pattern analysis (moves), some moves—such as a direct request for acceptance—were not found in some messages. However, they were hidden at times within other moves such as the 'proposal', where a student indicates the purpose of writing their message; for example, a student may say 'I am writing this email because I am interested to do a PhD by research in engineering at X University'. This statement clearly indicates the purpose of the email and provides sufficient indication that the student needs supervisory approval, especially when closing the interaction by expecting further communication. This sort of hidden request is called an 'off-record' strategy (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This strategy focuses on indirect language that apparently removes the potential for the recipient to be imposed upon. For example, in this particular context, instead of asking the potential supervisor to accept them directly, a few participants chose to go off-record. Instead, they showed their interest in either the area of prospective research or the particular university or program. While there were seven men out of 50 who chose to go off-record, only one woman did so. This strategy relies heavily on pragmatics to convey the intended meaning while still utilising the semantic meaning as a way to avoid losing face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Eight out of 100 Saudi participants used off-record strategies; this is a relatively low number and sharply contrasts with some other studies that found Saudi participants tended to use off-record strategies in high power distance encounters (Al-Ageel, 2016; Hariri, 2017).

The distribution of the most indirect, off-record hint variants did not fit the predicted pattern of greater indirectness used to achieve the greatest minimisation of weighty FTAs, as

suggested by politeness theory. The best way to request in this context is unclear. It can be claimed that negative politeness may not serve in this particular type of email, where the student needs to explicitly ask about the supervisor's availability and whether they are interested in their topic. Although traditional politeness theorists suggest that hinting is considered a politeness strategy that mitigates imposition (Brown & Levinson, 1987), that may be inappropriate in this context as the supervisor is expected to understand what is being requested and react either by approval or refusal. This also stresses the importance of context as recommended by the discursive impoliteness theorists. Another critique that can be added to traditional politeness theory is that the use of some off-record strategies by some of the Saudi students could be attributed to a face-preserving strategy, rather than the fear of threatening the receiver's face. Ogiermann (2009) has also argued that the reluctance to clearly state one's request could be interpreted as an attempt to save one's own face, leaving the hearer to take initiative to fulfill the speaker's wishes.

The use of these hinting strategies highlighted the Saudi students' gravitation to uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 2001). In her doctoral thesis, Orth (2015) found that Saudi students have a tendency towards uncertainty avoidance in unstructured or unpredictable situations. It seems that in these requestive events, students avoid making a direct straightforward request—not only because they cannot predict the answer, but because they wish to leave it open for the supervisor to identify what the student requires. There is generally a tendency for vagueness in high context cultures, such as Saudi Arabia, as speakers try to cooperate by avoiding confrontations that could occur from a direct request.

Though seven Saudi males used hinting strategies instead of requesting directly, it seems that they managed to back up their indirectness with competing supportive moves, such as mentioning funds (see next page for Table 7.8). In the fourth and seventh examples in Table 7.8, participants showed a flexibility towards changing their topic; in the second, the student only mentioned the purpose of writing his email (to continue 'for PhD') without making an explicit request at all. There is only one example where a female student went off record by asking the potential supervisor to check her attachment, concluding the email with her best wishes. By directing the supervisor to check her proposal attachment, she implied that she needed their approval. Two Australian participants used off-record strategy when requesting. Their off-record strategies were different, however, as the supervisor could see that they were requesting supervision indirectly by suggesting a meeting or further discussion if they were 'interested in the

proposed topic’ without directly asking if they were available for supervision or willing to accept them.

Table 7.8 Off-record requestive strategies in Saudi male and female data

No	Saudi Males
1	I am expecting to do the best in my PhD in a field that would be interesting <u>for both of us</u>
2	<u>I would like to continue for PhD</u> in hematology specifically coagulation. <Proposal]
3	I have a full governmental scholarship to continue my study in a PhD program <Fund] and <u>I am really interested in the PhD program</u>
4	I’m interested in the area of enterprise systems, business analysis and information security management, but I’m also open <u>to any suggestions you see fit</u> <Change topic].
5	<u>I am interested in doing a PhD by research</u> in engineering or applied science at X University.
6	<u>I would like to continue for PhD in</u> ***** specifically ***** I am fully sponsored by Saudi government <Fund].
7	I am looking for a PhD opportunity in ***** but I may accept any topic related to X <Change topic] as I already awarded a scholarship. <Fund]
No	Saudi Females
1	I am very interested in the health promotion and public health, which is part of my specialty in the university where I work now. <Attachment] I attached my proposal and some relevant documents, <u>could you please check the attachment.</u> <Attachment]

7.9 Chapter summary

While mainstream research in the area of request analysis has been mostly categorical, this chapter reports a more thorough investigation into different discursive behaviour surrounding requestive events. Researchers such as Al-Gahtani and Alkahtani (2012) and Al-Ageel (2016), who have adopted traditional methods to analyse requestive behaviour using DCTs, found results that could not precisely represent gender differences; this was not the case in the current results. However, some distinctive gender differences found here—namely the fact that the Saudi men were using language that stressed hierarchy more than females and making more requests overall—were similar to those found in Hariri’s (2017) study. Her findings showed that men used more requests

and apologies than their female counterparts, who relied on a more friendly approach; this has been echoed in the current research. It is hoped that this chapter has offered new insights into how requestive behaviour may be evaluated from a more data-driven approach. It may also help clarify some misconceptions regarding the generalisation of gender differences in the literature to date due to the absence of comparable data, especially in terms of power differentials with a group of participants belonging to the same culture. *Kalafah* and *Mayanah* as two sides of negotiation orientations specific to Saudi culture were discussed and elaborated on. It also added a new layer to the methodological approach to requests, implementing hearer- and speaker-oriented language to discover the influence of power on each gender's language as manifested by the stress of the pronouns 'you' and 'I'. While this chapter argued that hearer-oriented language as implemented by Saudi males can be used in a way that puts people in a weakened position, the literature suggests that it is confronting for the recipient; therefore, it should be replaced by speaker-oriented language to sound more polite. Moreover, a detailed distinction of syntactic downgraders and lexical devices in request forms were made by both genders. Although there were no statistical differences in their frequencies, discursive features were described to highlight the significant differences between both genders.

Tannen (1999) asserts that men focus more on hierarchy, which could provide some explanation as to why the Saudi men showed *Kalafah* language when faced with such a power imbalance; the Saudi women instead showed *Mayanah* and overfriendliness (such as expressing how 'excited' they were) to deal with such power differences. Stereotypical studies on gender and politeness differences have categorised women as being more polite than men; however, in line with Mills (2012) and other new wave impoliteness theorists, researchers should develop a complex, pragmatic model of interaction that can account for the ways gender inflects the production and interpretation of linguistic politeness in its interactions with other variables like race, class, age, or culture. This chapter offered new lenses for categorising gender differences in approaches to polite negotiation in the Saudi Arabian context. These dual approaches to negotiation (*Mayanah* and *Kalafah*) might be applicable to other cultures and deserve further exploration. Among the general findings of this chapter were that Saudi women were more likely to copy and imitate native speakers using online resources (seven women versus four men), most participants positioned their requests at the end of their emails, and Saudi female participants were more likely to promote further contact as a means to have their requests answered. Saudi male

participants were more likely to be competitive in their requestive behaviour, employing moves surrounding requests that stressed both their funding arrangements and their openness to changing their PhD topics. They also used more off-record requests. A significant difference between both cultural groups were stressed in the use of 'can'; while Saudi students used 'can' often in their data, Australians never used it in their emails.

Chapter 8: Emerging Themes and Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

In business and in life, you don't get what you deserve, you get what you negotiate.
Karrass (1996)

Despite its significance, the language of negotiation with strategic employment of both content and form in relation to intercultural email settings in academia has received scarce attention in research to date. Potentially missed opportunities, confusion and miscommunications may occur when a person lacks the knowledge of how to negotiate interculturally, particularly when aspiring to be an international student in Australia. The first methodological issue facing the current research was assessing e-negotiation discourse to identify patterns of both content and tone in these academic emails. Linguistic studies have not adequately focused on e-negotiation discourse; therefore, the researcher had to develop different layers of analysis to facilitate and widen the understanding of how people negotiate interculturally, what expectations are not met, what linguistic features are appropriate and in what genre individuals should organise their content. The Australian data served as a representative corpus to identify how Saudi students deviate from Australian norms. To this end, traditional and new discursive waves of politeness were implemented alongside genre analysis and persuasion frameworks to examine the communicative functions of academic email negotiations. Other negotiation features were taken from Hofstede's (2001) intercultural model and from the business literature. There was a need for a multidimensional methodology to assess a broad range of linguistic and rhetorical features to adequately account for cultural and gender variations.

By exploring the negotiation moves and various politeness strategies in academic emails, the present research attempted to show how negotiation is achieved via email. Ultimately, this study aimed to facilitate intercultural communication to shed more light on how people of various cultures within an academic setting communicate in different ways. The implementation of various theories and approaches has produced an in-depth analysis of such linguistic phenomena.

This study analysed 120 emails gathered from 120 different participants. To better evaluate Saudi communicative strategies, 20 Australian participants were also involved in

addition to the core 100 Saudi participants. A background information questionnaire with open-ended questions was administered to gain further insights about both cultural groups' backgrounds and perceptions towards this specific kind of negotiation, assisting with the interpretation of their naturalistic data. The first chapter of this thesis provided a foundation for how prospective Saudi students' negotiations were situated within the Anglo-Australian culture. The second focused on persuasive appeals and their percentages among both gender and cultural groups to evaluate the hundred Saudi emails as a core data set in comparison with the Australian complementary data set. The third chapter explored the framework of the thesis and the fourth provided insight into the methods through which the study was conducted. Chapters Five, Six, and Seven delved into the findings of the study and were designed to answer the three main questions in this thesis.

The study revealed that there are certain culture-specific negotiation protocols embedded in politeness strategies, such as the Saudi custom of using compliments to appear more persuasive, and established that the hierarchy of academia played the most significant role in the composition of the Saudi emails. This study also contributed to the classification of discourse pattern moves in an occluded genre (Swales, 1996), and the identification of (im)politeness strategies. Interestingly, the study provided considerable findings outlining the cultural and gender styles of negotiation. Despite their communicative differences, most of the current participants were accepted by the supervisor they approached. This shows that, although there may be cultural differences in the Saudis' approach, it is not necessarily working against them in terms of their persuasion and achievement of a desired outcome. However, the main quest of this research was not about whether these participants were accepted or rejected, but rather unpacking the cultural differences in all participants' negotiation approach to raise cultural awareness and promote intercultural intelligence and competence. To summarise the overall findings, the next section will address each research question in detail.

8.2 Answering the three research questions

8.2.1 Question One

1) What are the norms of Saudi students' negotiation strategies, as revealed by their choice of generic options (moves) and rhetorical construction, in comparison with their Australian peers when approaching a potential PhD supervisor via email?

- a) What are the dominant linguistic features that Saudi students use in comparison with Australian students? What (if any) are the gender differences among them?
- b) How does a participant's perception of the appropriateness of negotiation influence their linguistic behaviour?

Many cross-cultural communication studies suggest that different cultures utilise different linguistic norms (Hofstede, 2001; Sifianou, 1999; Wierzbicka, 1985, 2003). The discourse patterns in this study consisted of 27 negotiation moves that students relied on when writing a PhD email proposal. These moves consisted of the most frequent topics found in prospective students' emails, such as self-identification, CV information and research interests. The highest number of moves used by Saudi students was 13, while Australian students used up to 15; thus, prospective Australian students employed more extensive strategies in their negotiations.

In terms of politeness strategies, the findings are consistent with previous research; Australians, being native English speakers, employ more negative politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987), while Saudi Arabian speakers tend to use more positive politeness strategies. In terms of opening and closings, it was found that all the emails included both, reflecting the formality of such academic email negotiation. However, Australian students used more informal greetings, such as 'Hi Sam'; this testifies to the core cultural value of egalitarianism, where hierarchy is not emphasised and even hidden throughout communication in the Australian context. The dominant discursive features that distinguished the Saudi students included paying the prospective supervisor compliments and the use of over-politeness strategies; more emphasis was placed on showing themselves as 'lower' in status, or seeking 'guidance' and 'help' from the supervisor. This comes in line with the argument that international students seemed to approach negotiation as a form of favour asking, rather than negotiation (Biesenbach-Lucas & Weasenforth, 2002). There was also a main distinction between both cultural groups in that the Saudi data largely

focused on CV information, achievements and providing evidence of their competence by referring to employment, degrees, and GPA scores. While the Saudi negotiation approach took a competitive orientation, the Australian data reflected a more cooperative approach to negotiations by demonstrating a good knowledge of both the topic and prospective supervisor. Instances of language transfers were discussed in Chapter Five.

The questionnaire asked the participants what they believed should be included in this kind of email and why they thought they had been accepted/rejected by their potential supervisor (see Appendix A). It was striking that both cultural groups seemed to emphasise almost the same points, such as showing that you know the supervisor and are not randomly selecting them and demonstrating knowledge of your research topic. However, the way this was embodied in their data was completely different. While Saudi students showed familiarity with the supervisor by vaguely complimenting them on their work, Australian students proved their knowledge by focusing on specific points. Further, Saudi students were more confident that they would be accepted because of factors such as scholarships or having 'novel' topics, while Australian students tended to focus more on their research topic as being well-researched and written. Their perceptions and beliefs have largely influenced the way they approached and negotiated requests with their supervisors. Instances of Saudi competitiveness or impolite confident language, which may have come across as informal with pushy requests, were a reflection of how they perceived their entitlement and the appropriateness of negotiation.

In terms of the perception question, there were several commonalities between the genders of each cultural group: while females referred to 'excitement' in their emails, males gravitated towards the language of self-praise and confidence. In fact, one major difference between the Saudi and Australian males when discussing the reasons why they were approved was that Saudi students felt their proposed topic satisfied the supervisor; Australian males assumed that their topics addressed a large gap or issues, regardless of whether the supervisor was satisfied. There were generally two underlying strategies behind the discourse of each cultural group: one concerned with portraying the self as important, in the case of Saudi students, and the other concerned with showing a professional face and networking, in the case of Australian students. Although this research question is answered separately in this section, it is the main driving force behind the investigation and overall PhD research. As such, the answer is linked to all other research questions, which included other variables such as gender and power.

8.2.2 Question Two

2) How do Saudi students employ persuasive appeals and (im)politeness strategies in their negotiations?

- a) How do their persuasive appeals compare to Australian cultural expectations?
- b) How do Saudi students employ persuasive appeals to form (im)polite negotiation moves?

Chapter Six provided a fine-grained analysis in terms of exploring the moves that played a major role under each persuasive appeal. The persuasion framework helped to filter these moves by identifying their persuasive categories: a rational, affective, or credibility appeal. It described in detail how the different genders and cultures employed negotiation moves within a certain persuasive appeal. While statistical comparisons indicated similarities between groups, the qualitative analysis revealed subtle differences unique to each culture and gender. Regardless of how many rational details were written into Saudi negotiations, they were often characterised by vagueness and lack of optionality when juxtaposed with Australian emails. On the whole, Australians appealed more rationally than their Saudi peers and made comparatively less use of credibility and affective appeals.

Rational appeal

There were substantial variations in the number of times each cultural group used the generic options (moves) in terms of rational appeals. Australians focused more on core rational appeals for this specific context, which included the research topic and plans to approach their research goal. Some students went beyond this and provided thoughtful justifications about why their research was worthwhile. Lastly, a few (namely females) linked their previous academic experiences with their research topic in terms of relevance; in other words, how such experiences had either led them to choose their research topic or made them more expert in the subject matter. Overall, Australian participants utilised rational appeal moves more than Saudi students at a significant chi-square difference on nine moves out of a total of 15 rational moves.

Affective appeal

The affective appeal was found to be the most interesting aspect of persuasion, displaying how people from different cultural or gender backgrounds employ emotion in their negotiations. To

some extent, it could predict the gender of the email author, particularly between Saudis. It is likely that the men used more deferential, hierarchical and hearer-oriented language to reveal their appreciation of power distance. Strategies that highlighted this include apologies and honorifics within some contextual features that emphasised the student's lower status. These kinds of affective expressions are relevant in a Saudi context, but not in an Anglo-Australian setting.

At the heart of the affective appeal is the use of pressuring/imposition tactics: request, choose/change topic and promoting further contact, among other moves. The Saudi participants expected compliance from the supervisor by either showing their weakness ('I'm hoping you would be kind enough to accept me') or desperation ('I need feedback!'). This way of using language was not found in the Australian data at a qualitative level. However, at a quantitative level, the Saudis and Australians differed significantly in terms of using two affective moves; Australians used fewer emotional requests and provided more context when reminding the potential supervisors who they were. In respect of Saudi gender differences, there were three significant areas that differentiated them: Saudi males used more emotional requests and focused more on complimenting the supervisor, while Saudi females promoted further contact using positive politeness ('I will be more than happy to discuss that further').

Credibility appeal

Saudi students used more credibility appeals than Australians, with more emphasis on the self and one's achievements. The over-emphasis on the self is not well received in Anglo-Australian culture, though it is more encouraged in America and Eastern cultures in general. Therefore, avoiding mentioning CV information altogether cannot be recommended, as potential supervisors based in Australia, too, may be from other cultural backgrounds. Credibility appeals were mostly presented without context in the Saudi data, usually taking the form of a list of qualifications without a clear link to a student's PhD research or plans. Focusing on qualifications and achievements without linking them to the PhD project was classified as 'self-glorification,' as the emphasis on the self was irrelevant to the context. Self-appraisal, on the other hand, was strategically used by Australian students to link job experience with the PhD project. This is not to say that the student intentionally acted strategically; regardless, it came out naturally within the context. There were occasions when one or two Australian students used irrelevant tactics like those used by Saudi students. To properly explore the data, engagement with the Gricean maxims

of manner and quantity, quality and relevance was necessary. While most of what was discussed in Chapter Six was data-driven, granting new insights largely on Saudi gender differences and partly on cultural differences, some instances supported results from genre studies that examined letters from job applications. Saudi female students used some unique tactics, such as disclosing their gender identity in the email or exaggerating their self-worth to compete with their peers; this deserves further study in the current literature.

Consequently, the findings of this chapter contradict conventional gender biases in linguistic studies, as it was found that the Saudi men made more compliments, greetings and used more affective language during these interactions with a power imbalance. The language used by males may be due to the hierarchical structure existing in high context cultures, as they may have been new at dealing with such situations of power imbalance outside of their home country. Although the Saudi women used more credibility appeals, such as self-promotion, to position themselves as competent and confident in undertaking PhD study, the men displayed competition in the sense that they wanted to be accepted by any means. This could have contributed to the emergence of the language of praise and compliance. This chapter concluded by defining the persuasive writing styles of each cultural group. While the Australians preferred longer emails with breaking narrative styles, the Saudi students often produced expository styles in their persuasive texts.

8.2.3 Question Three

3) What requestive behaviour do students employ to gain approval from the prospective supervisors?

- a) How do Saudi males and females differ in terms of their requestive patterns?
- b) What is the impact of power distance on each gender's requestive language?

While mainstream research in speech act analysis has been mostly categorical, Chapter Seven reported a more thorough investigation into different linguistic behaviour surrounding requestive events. Researchers adopting traditional methods to analyse requestive behaviour using DCTs found results that cannot precisely represent gender differences (Al-Gahtani & Alkahtani, 2012). This was not the case in the current results. Generally, men made more requests (68) than women

(54). The findings in Chapter Seven suggest that 11% of Saudi participants managed to copy an identical email found online that outlined a perfect American email sample for approaching a supervisor. More Saudi males placed their requests at the beginning and at the end of their emails in comparison to females. The moves before and after requests were often delineated by gender; Saudi males were likely to focus and compliment the supervisor before placing their request at a statistically significant difference, while females placed their fund move (having a scholarship) before requesting. After placing their requests, Saudi females promoted further contact at a far more significant level than males, which may be due to their need to be reassured that their request would be answered; thus, they left the supervisor with this last impression that they were waiting for confirmation. The Saudi males instead showed a willingness to change their PhD topic straight after the request, again at a statistically significant level.

Some distinctive gender differences emerged, namely *Kalafah* and *Mayanah*, as two sides of negotiation orientations specific to Saudi culture (although this could be applicable to other selected Gulf countries). Saudi men used requestive language in a way that stressed hierarchy (*Kalafah*) more than females, and also made more requests than females. Tannen (1999) asserts that men focus more on hierarchy, which could provide some explanation as to why the Saudi men showed *Kalafah* language when negotiating in a situation with power imbalance, while Saudi women displayed *Mayanah* and overfriendliness (such as in the term ‘excited’) to mitigate such power differences.

Contextual factors were used to evaluate the degree of (im)politeness in these emails, as the judgement of how (im)polite these requestive moves were proved challenging. For example, some requests, despite their polite language, were written many times in a row; this indicated a higher imposition, which could cause discomfort to the hearer. Generally, hearer-oriented and speaker-oriented language are used to identify directness and indirectness in the politeness formula. It is suggested that the use of hearer-oriented language, such as ‘**you** should do this,’ implies some sort of directness and imposition; ‘**I** think this should be done’ suggests indirectness with less imposition, and is therefore a more polite formula (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Leech, 1983). However, this study examined how each gender used hearer- and speaker-oriented language in a power-imbalance situation and found that, at least in this context, the opposite was true. Thus, ‘**I** would be very excited if you supervise me’ from the Saudi female data suggested a language of friendliness and *Mayanah*. Hearer-oriented behaviour in the Saudi male data, as in ‘if **you** could

give me some of **your** time and supervise me,’ reflected a pleading tone and *Kalafah* language. The investigation of pronoun use is significant as it reveals underlying assumptions about each gender’s communicative trends. In one study mentioned in the literature review (Chapter Two), women showed evidence of sensitivity and awareness of the recipient by using forms of warnings, questions, and references to ‘you’ (the recipient) (Colley & Todd, 2002).

Speaker versus hearer orientations provided a wider lens to examine these emails, allowing for a better illustration of the influence of power in both Saudi male and female language. In terms of request structure and linguistic features, both Saudi groups used hedges, with *would* being the most widely used. There were also a few occasions where Saudi students went off-record and preferred to use hinting strategies when requesting. This may indicate an inclination towards cultural avoidance. In terms of the highest frequency of request forms, Saudi females employed conditional forms of requests 39 times, whereas Saudi males employed declarative forms of request 29 times. The requestive behaviour of some Australian female students was similar to that of Saudi women when using conditional forms of requests and promoting further contact straight after their requests. Additionally, the requestive behaviour in Australian data showed optionality and different scenarios to address issues around acceptance, providing the supervisor with different avenues to further discuss the students’ requests.

It is hoped that this chapter offered some new insights as to how requestive behaviour may be evaluated from a more data-driven approach. Due to the absence of comparable data, different studies in the literature provided contradictory results in terms of gender differences, which may be due to the lack of particular situations linked with language use (Hobbs, 2003). Hence, Chapter Seven may clarify some misconceptions regarding the generalisation of gender differences that surfaced in the literature (see Section 2.4.4), especially in terms of power differentials with a group of participants belonging to the same culture. In line with Mills (2012), researchers should develop a complex, pragmatic model of interaction that can account for the way that gender — in its interactions with other variables like race, class, age, culture, or other contextual elements — inflects the production and interpretation of linguistic politeness.

8.3 Conclusions for intercultural email negotiation

This section contains the essence of the overall conclusions taken from the results of this research. It also provides some ideas for training and pedagogical materials to facilitate and widen the understanding of intercultural communications specific to Saudi and Australians.

8.3.1 Cultural formula of negotiations

Although this study concerned a specific group of participants and a particular context, the analysis led to certain cultural formulae of the negotiation styles specific to this context. This formula related to the main three subjects in these emails: the student, the supervisor, and the research topic.

Australian negotiation formula

I know you very well + I know my topic very well = We can then work together. (What you know + who you know)

Saudi negotiation formula

I am a great student + you are a great supervisor = We can work together. (Who you are + who you know)

This cultural formula of (what you know) and (who you know) was emphasised in different intercultural business communication studies (Stewart & Bennett, 2011), but was not previously linked to academic negotiation. In this research, it emerged as one of the themes of academic PhD opportunity negotiations in these two cultures. Although studies consider Middle Eastern cultures to be part of ‘who you know’ cultures (see Section 2.1.1), it has been revealed that this notion is emphasised within Australian academic culture, although more so on a networking level than in terms of nepotism. It can be concluded that content-related communication has a direct link to ‘what you know’, while the relational aspect of communication is deeply motivated by the notion of ‘who you know’ or ‘who you are’. This formula, although basic and a little outdated, will be essential for anyone needing to approach a different culture where the focus is either on who you are/know, or what you know (or a mixture of both, in the case of the Australians). For example, if a Saudi academic wanted to negotiate a PhD acceptance via email, the key to such negotiation is

to avoid vagueness and focus on core rational appeals: PhD plans and research experience specific to the subject matter. Although a plethora of studies emphasise the importance of linguistic and pragmatic competence to avoid pragmatic failure, this study suggests that there are other core persuasive appeals and generic options one must be aware of when approaching a prospective PhD supervisor. The provision of such formula extracted from the data does not aim to stereotype the linguistic behaviour of people from different cultures; rather, the identification of patterns of linguistic regularities in different cultures is significant, as it helps frame an understanding of cultural mapping and facilitate learning about other cultural norms (Dervin & Liddicoat, 2013).

8.3.2 Informality and formality as a means of politeness

An emerging theme of formality and negotiation has unveiled how both genders and cultures approach negotiation with somebody who is higher in power. Generally speaking, genders from both cultures were similar in their behaviour. While males tended to be more formal, females were more informal. Formal language among genders in this context refers to how a person avoids relational talk or restrains from freely expressing their feelings. Politeness theory predicted that, when speaking to someone of a higher power, people usually tend to be more formal; however, this was not necessarily linked to the nuances of how each gender might react to power imbalance in academic negotiation. Females from both cultures used more greetings, which could be deemed ‘relational’, and described how they would feel if accepted to work with the supervisor, using words such as *excited and happy*. In the same vein, males used words such as *honoured* or *grateful*. Traditional theories of politeness suggest that people are likely to use direct forms of communication when they hold a higher position in the institutional hierarchy than the addressee. However, the power dynamic was complicated in this context, with some Saudi participants claiming entitlement for their request as they had a scholarship and believed supervisors were in need of them. As a result, there were several instances of directness/impoliteness in terms of their linguistic approach.

This particular notion, when detailed in this thesis, sheds light on some other themes. For example, being formal in Saudi context necessitates giving deference, while being informal equals being casual or, at times, ‘too casual’. A short story might elaborate this cultural notion of informality and causality within a Saudi context. A Saudi academic who had recently acquired his doctorate from Australia returned to Saudi Arabia with notions of egalitarianism and asked

everyone to call him only by his first name (Ibrahim), including a coffee man who worked in his department. In a formal meeting, the coffee man greeted everyone by their title accompanied by their first names and asked politely for them to be seated using gentle gestures; when it was Ibrahim's turn, he simply said '*Ibrahim, you sit over there*'. Incensed at the informality and what he perceived as disrespect in front of his peers, Ibrahim then said he would never ask anyone to call him by his first name, if this was the consequence. Calling people by their first name equals casualness in the minds of most Saudis, which could lead to impoliteness. Therefore, informality for some Saudi students equals the use of less politic devices in their communication, such as in the instance of 'see ya'. For some cultures, being informal does not clash with respect and appreciation of the other party; this notion should be further explored in future research.

8.3.3 Kalafah and Mayanah as positive politeness strategies

Kalafah and *Mayanah*¹⁵ seem to be the main keys in unpacking Saudi negotiation styles, as they are the drivers behind the use of politeness strategies within Saudi society. These concepts can therefore be added as two main dimensions in the politeness formulae specific to Saudi polite discourse.

Kalafah Saudi cultural manifestation in negotiation can be characterised by the use of hearer-oriented language and should be deemed as a lower level of positive politeness. Al-Ageel (2016) touched upon the notions of *Mayanah* and *Kalafah* in terms of social distance; when people are at a close social distance, they are likely to adopt *Mayanah* (friendliness), whereas *Kalafah* (formality) is expected more with distanced relationships — especially where there is a power imbalance. However, *Mayanah* and *Kalafah* have not been described in terms of being a chosen approach to access power in negotiations. In this study, females were found to adopt a more friendly *Mayanah* approach to navigate the power imbalance between themselves and their prospective supervisors, while men were more inclined to use a *Kalafah* approach. This is consistent with Tannen's (1999) conclusion that males usually appreciate hierarchy more than females. Hariri (2015) also found that Saudi males used an 'expected' language of hierarchy when emailing people with higher power; this was not always the case with her Saudi women

¹⁵ Despite that the roots of that the words *Kalafah* and *Mayanah* come from the classical Arabic language, their classical root meanings are different from that of the Saudi colloquial language use. Hence, they are part of Saudi colloquial terms.

participants. In the current study, women not only did not use the expected language of hierarchy, but also adopted a more friendly approach (*Mayanah*) to negotiations. Al-Ageel (2016) classified *Mayanah* as a form of positive politeness, whereas *Kalafah* addresses the negative face of the hearer. This was found to be different in the current data: both cultural concepts were deemed positive politeness strategies, the former focusing on showing a friendly attitude and the latter on lowering the self and glorifying the other party. Despite the fact that Brown and Levinson (1987) classified ‘giving deference’ as a negative politeness strategy, they admitted that it has a positive politeness side attached. In the current research, Saudi men were found to make more compliments and greetings with two apologies that did not exist in the Saudi women’s data. The percentage of Saudi men implementing over-politeness strategies is noticeably greater than women, evidenced by the requestive formula, compliments, focus on supervisor, and use of hearer-oriented language.

These cultural concepts are important to understanding a cultural-specific formula of politeness. In societies such as Australia, people will not ask each other if they have enough ‘*Mayanah*’ or ‘*Kalafah*’ in a power situation, due to the fact that 1) the power difference in Australia is hidden, or not emphasised, and 2) relationships are not always the key to granting requests. Although these concepts may exist in Australian culture to some degree, with *Mayanah* being found in some of the female Australian participants’ language, it is deeply rooted in Saudi culture and determines the way Saudis use politeness strategies. *Kalafah* and *Mayanah* are opposite sides of the same coin of how people could access power. For example, Saudi males used 45 affective requests in the form of *Kalafah*, while only 10 females adopted this *Kalafah* style in their affective appeals (see Chapter Seven, Table 7.3). It was noted in this thesis that some females might have had assistance from males in writing their emails, as one admitted that her brother wrote the email for her. However, these instances of *Kalafah* in female language could also reflect mainstream cultural patterns when approaching negotiation with people of higher power.

In *Mayanah* relationships, people usually know one another and are therefore impacted less by power dynamics. However, this could also be used as a general approach to negotiation, such as with the Saudi female participants in this study; although most had no prior knowledge of the prospective supervisors, they approached them by simply not emphasising the power imbalance that existed between them. The way that the majority of Saudi females did not deal with the power imbalance in the same way as the males was striking and is worth further research and elaboration. When using *Mayanah*, people can be overly friendly and may use sweet talk, jokes,

or even plead in a playful manner. Some of these positive strategies were elaborated on by Brown and Levinson ('claim common-ground'), as discussed in Chapter Seven. The link between formality and over-politeness is interesting and rarely discussed in the literature. It is often claimed that some cultures, such as the Japanese, tend to use over-politeness strategies; however, this might be because Japanese people use a high degree of formality in their culture and with people from other cultures. Further, a sense of superiority or inferiority is often conveyed by the language each gender or individual uses, which may in turn influence their use of politeness formulae.

8.3.4 Vagueness as a means of cultural avoidance

Saudis used various strategies to appear vague. They claimed general knowledge of the supervisor and, in their questionnaire data, suggested that people should not mention everything in their emails; instead, one should entice the supervisor by encouraging them to ask further questions that the student intended to 'hide'. Saudis tended to strategically hide information to encourage further discussion. It should be noted that this technique should be avoided, as some supervisors may lose interest or lack the time to chase up prospective students. Some of this information, if mentioned, could possibly increase the student's chances of acceptance. Hinting strategies in requests and avoiding direct requests for supervision might also reflect such cultural avoidance in power imbalance situations (avoidance of confrontation). Further, using a misleading subject line such as 'Good morning' could also be an intended style of vagueness to attract attention.

8.3.5 Generating options as a key to a negotiation difference between the two cultures

The option move was one of the key moves that differed between cultures at a statistically significant level. This is because Australian students talked openly about supervisory arrangements and declared that they had contacted another supervisor for supervision. Further, they showed initiative in their approach by suggesting some options or alternatives or even simply showing understanding of the possibility of a supervisor being unavailable throughout their email data. There was a sense of predicting what the supervisor might think of and trying to figure out the answer. For example, Australian students would anticipate possible problems and show understanding of them. This is seen in the following examples.

Australian male data

- 1 *I understand PhD projects are often limited by funding and am wondering if you are taking on any students*
- 2 *If nothing comes to mind, I am happy to suggest some topics of my own to gauge your interest*

Such anticipation of counter-arguments or recognition that acceptance might not be granted does not exist in Saudi negotiations. It could be part of cultural avoidance, as they would normally expect a supervisor to provide further information. Looking back at my own communicative styles when I first arrived in Australia, I would understand some ways to address my problem, but would not mention them in my emails. Then, I would usually get a reply directing me to read other courses of actions on a website. As a result, I developed a way of negotiation where I would anticipate typical answers and address them in advance, so as to gain richer insights and a new course of action. This exploration of these emails provided dimensions of cultural values that makes it easier to understand why people communicate in the way they do.

8.4 Checklist of aspects of academic negotiations

The results and the analysis of the current project led to creating a list of recommendations for prospective Saudi students to take into consideration when approaching Australian academics for a PhD opportunity. This checklist of strategies addresses aspects relating to both the importance of politeness in intercultural email communications and methods of enriching the content of these communications. It has not only been created through the analysis of the naturalistic email data but has also taken into consideration the views and perceptions of both the Saudi and Australian participants. Based on systematic observations, current theories in business negotiations and academic politeness/communication, this checklist is well-grounded for providing practical advice for general and specific audiences. It consists of five main strategies:

- 1- **Focusing on the core content of the email:** It has been found that Anglo-Australian students focus more on the content of their PhD topic/plans/justifications, rather than focusing on their CV. Hence, if prospective Saudi applicants are going to email potential Australian supervisors, they should bear in mind that they need to elaborate more on their PhD plans, what exactly they intend to do, and the potential of their project in terms of addressing research gaps. They could possibly talk about what experience or justification

this project is linked to. Students should avoid simply attaching their PhD proposal without talking about it in their emails because it is the core subject matter that gives a potential supervisor a good impression of the student's capability. Another important thing to avoid is asking a supervisor to choose a PhD topic.

- 2- **Avoiding compliments:** Complimenting the supervisor in the Anglo-Australian context is not well received in Australian culture. This claim has some roots in previous studies (Peeters, 2004b; Sharifian, 2008); and has been confirmed by informal conversations with Anglo-Australian academics over the duration of this project. It could be implied and hidden in some Australian data, but not as overt as in Saudi data. A student instead could comment on the supervisor's work to prove knowledge of them, but not directly indicate that this 'great' supervisor 'would change their life'. These sorts of expressions might put the supervisor off. The Saudi students also indirectly complimented themselves and their achievements. They spoke about their CV info as a form of general achievements, not specifically related to their PhD plans as was the case with the Australians. Even the Saudi credibility appeals and achievements were hardly related to research experience; instead, they were mostly linked to job titles and positions. Therefore, they should point to their achievements in a tactical manner related to the subject at hand (the PhD project).
- 3- **Be transparent and avoid hiding information:** As elaborated on in Section 8.2.4, prospective applicants should highlight all relevant matters in their emails and attach their CV and related documents, not deliberately hide them to raise their chances of receiving a reply. This strategy may not work because, with one Saudi student, the supervisor asked about further information and later rejected the student's request for supervision. This was a waste of time for both parties.
- 4- **Providing suggestions (optionality):** As the previous section on generating options as a key to negotiation (see Section 8.2.5) suggests, prospective Saudi applicants should consider addressing possible issues that might cause miscommunication. If they have contacted another supervisor from the same university, they should simply declare that. This will not put them in a negative position; rather, it will show that they are taking responsibility for their decisions and being honest with the new supervisor. Further, showing understanding of the potential for rejection is considered a good negotiation strategy within Anglo-Australian culture. This is evident in the Anglo-Australian data, with

40% of students expressing understanding that the potential supervisor may not be able to accept them. The language of possibility is often associated with the if-condition. Therefore, it is a good idea to consider using this grammatical form to generate some alternatives or address some anticipated problems.

- 5- Promoting further contact:** This is one of the most important steps to carry on negotiation in email communications (Biesenbach-Lucas & Weasenforth, 2002). Encouraging further contact by showing willingness to meet or expecting a reply might assist greatly in any type of negotiation via email, especially within this context.

Appendix F shows two email examples that typically represent each culture's academic negotiation styles. They have been included to provide naturalistic samples for scholars or students concerned about how to approach the other culture within the norms and expectations of either Saudi or Anglo-Australian culture. These samples may provide a starting point to understand the process of negotiating an academic deal, such as a PhD topic with a prospective supervisor. If an Australian student wanted to approach a Saudi academic, for example, the email in Appendix F could provide a frame of reference for how Saudi applicants typically approach a supervisor.

8.5 Originality and contribution to knowledge

The originality and contribution to knowledge of this study are as follows:

- 1- The study is considered the first PhD study in the field to investigate PhD email proposals sent to prospective supervisors using naturalistic data, particularly analysing Saudi and Australian data from a negotiation and politeness perspective.
- 2- The study made its own methodological and theoretical contributions by discovering:
 - Important gaps of knowledge regarding persuasive appeals used in online settings in both intra- and cross-culture comparison.
 - The relationship between modern (im)politeness and persuasive tactics.
 - The distribution of moves under each persuasive appeal that participants from specific cultural groups utilise to meet expectations in an intercultural setting. This helps to both provide bottom-up and top-down investigation and explore meaningful patterns across gender and culture.

- An important gap linking affective appeals to the new wave of (im)politeness and emotional language to pressuring tactics on the face of the addressee.
 - Brown and Levinson's notion of 'common ground' to fit different categories in *Mayanah* and *Kalafah* as being part of Saudi cultural concepts. These concepts might be applicable to other cultures and deserve further exploration. In addition, the results of this research have contributed to the investigation of how each Saudi gender responded to power differential situations.
 - New perspective into utilising hearer- and speaker-oriented language, shifting from a referential to differential way of judging politeness. This provided grounds for highlighting the influence of power in gender language. Typically, these categories are used to track directness and indirectness to minimise imposition on the hearer.
 - A detailed account on how to evaluate both genders' use of requestive behaviour with qualitative examples and explanations in terms of interrogative and declarative forms of requests, differentiating both genders.
 - Cultural differences in negotiation (competitive versus cooperative) according to a specific academic negotiation task has rarely been discussed in the literature to date.
- 3- Since email communications are still considered the basic means for international students to communicate with prospective PhD supervisors, this area of research is significant in facilitating an understanding of cross-cultural and gender nuances.
 - 4- Observing language and power variations in Saudi men and women via naturalistic email data, specifically in these particular groups, where gender segregation remains dominant, has received scarce scholarly attention.
 - 5- This study also contributes to Saudi Arabia's 2030 vision, which includes preparing students for study abroad with global aptitudes linguistically, culturally, and academically.
 - 6- The study contributes to filling the gap of a largely understudied variety of English, namely Saudi English. This could add to the literature of World Englishes (WE) by concerning scholars who gather data focusing on how Saudi culture is reflected in the use of English language.
 - 7- The study has adopted a new approach by combining three kinds of frameworks to capture

the negotiation phenomena: politeness (with its old and modern waves), genre analysis and persuasion dimension, blended with other insights taken from business, psychology and intercultural communication literature. After researching widely in the field, it is thought that this multidimensional methodology is linguistically vital to properly unpack negotiation discourse.

- 8- Due to its exploratory nature, this study did not strive to investigate consistency with the literature, but rather identify potential communication patterns that could contribute to the success or failure of negotiation via emails in intercultural settings. This is important to facilitate communication and avoid misinterpretation of Saudi linguistic behaviour.
- 9- This study provided teachable materials that can be used in training centres for sponsored students about to study in Australia, and also for Australian institutions to consider.

8.6 Limitations of the study

This study had its own limitations; namely, the research sample size is not based on a large population, being limited to 100 Saudi participants and 20 Australians. The relatively limited number of emails obtained was due to the privacy of emails that made collecting them very challenging. Hence, such limitation could cast doubt on the generalisability of the data and findings (Creswell & Poth, 2016). One way to address this gap is by adopting a multidimensional framework to add to a greater in-depth understanding of the current negotiation phenomena, which may raise questions about its applicability to other domains outside of this particular investigation. The researcher conducted in-depth analysis of the language of 120 emails and adopted a questionnaire to uncover deep meanings and understandings of the phenomena at hand (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). This method offered a rich interpretation that could encourage other researchers to make an informed decision on the generalisability of this study's results.

Other limitations should also be acknowledged. First, this study is mainly based on a single-sided negotiation, which does not include how the other side would react to these emails, as the intent of this study was to focus on a single linguistic phenomenon (i.e, the discursive features utilised by Saudi students writing to a prospective PhD supervisor). Although the present research highlights important aspects of Saudi culture in CMC, its findings are necessarily limited by the context of the emails studied and the demographic profile of its participants being postgraduate students who mostly were living in Australia (as detailed in their background

information questionnaire and emails). Further, it was not possible to gather a sufficient number of email messages from native English-speaking students, as it was found that they usually negotiate a PhD acceptance either by phone or face-to-face. This is a finding in itself as some students sent an apology when asked to participate saying they were offered to do a PhD by their supervisors, not vice versa. Native speakers' data could also have been more balanced in terms of gender but, for various reasons, only five Australian males participated. More Australian women (15) were able to share their data. This meant that additional nuanced analysis of the Australian gender groups was not possible. This study may be criticised for reflecting a primarily essentialist approach, which is widely prevalent in applied linguistics research as scholars link language with national culture (Halliday, 2011). However, careful measures were taken by combining both quantitative and qualitative analysis and also using a combination of frameworks to allow more freedom when exploring the data and avoid some categorical classifications, such as in requestive behaviour. However, a multi-framework can also be a limitation. Thus, while a multi-framework approach can provide better insight into the complexity of the issues and a heuristic for analysing the ways in which people negotiate in their professional lives, using multiple frameworks may restrict the researcher from critiquing and further developing each of them thoroughly. That being said, the current researcher found ways in which other scholars in the field can further relate these frameworks together. Additionally, while connecting these frameworks, many gaps were identified and new discoveries emerged in terms of clarifying the way in which some linguistic choices can be analysed. Hence, despite the limitations, there were also advantages connected to the use of the multi-framework strategy.

8.7 Recommendations and future directions

From this research, several important areas have been identified that could provide a basis for potential theoretical exploration. These would help further the scope of the existing project's applicability and transferability for future directions. Firstly, with regard to future directions, this study calls for a data-driven approach for the investigation of requests with a taxonomy of criteria that stem from the corpus as distinctive features that the researcher could observe and identify, taking into account the contextual factors that influence the judgement of their (im)politeness language. Contextual factors should also include similar language situations and similar gender

circumstances to facilitate a better understanding and exploration of (im)politeness theory along with its theoretical framework components (i.e. genre, persuasion). One suggestion might be to include providing this kind of multi-layered framework with an appropriate academic label such as *e-dimensional impoliteness* that is used to unpack cultural discourses in email negotiations. This will allow for further modifications and developments. Although this research provided insights into Saudi students in an Australian context, an exploration of other cultures and contexts would bring interesting insights and add to existing scholarship. Additionally, looking at how the emails are interpreted by the recipient would be another possible area for further research. In the current study, for example, Saudi male politeness strategies might be thought to stress humbleness towards the prospective supervisors; this did not appear to be the case with Saudi females. Thus, further research is needed to explore these nuances by highlighting some aspects such as the use of pronouns and adjectives in a specific qualitative manner as used in this thesis.

Further research should explore how Anglo-Australians approach potential supervisors overseas and via email. This would help examine whether their strategies are different and whether participants would employ more compliments than when in their comfort zone. Besides, it would be beneficial to expand the email data sample size in each gender or cultural group to be able to test significance and generalise findings. It would also be helpful to ask participants about their perceptions regarding their supervisor's gender and the implications of such power differential on their strategies. Focusing on examining emails collected from a homogeneous set of participants, for instance, from the same faculty, with the same specialty and background, would be a sound strategy.

It would also be interesting to compare the email linguistic behaviour of Saudi students who study in Australia with those studying in Saudi Arabia. Being the most widely used social media platform in Saudi Arabia, particularly between academics, the exploration of negotiation strategies in WhatsApp would yield fruitful results. A case study approach elaborating on each move in depth using a small sample of emails would be helpful in identifying other potential cultural aspects and causes of possible miscommunication. Since most research does not seem to focus on how each gender perceives power in a specific setting, new empirical evidence needs to measure the power differential language between Saudi men and women. Additionally, investigating emails sent to prospective supervisors with examples of how the supervisors replied, comparing native versus non-native speakers, would be interesting for future studies. It would also

be helpful to investigate emails sent to the admission offices and the exchanges of these negotiations between applicants and admission offices, which generally make the final decisions regarding admission. As these are considered part of an archived past and have little chance of impacting ongoing relationships, this research may not have the same ethical issues and barriers. Face-to-face interviews, with both the prospective students and prospective supervisors, would also be of benefit for a more detailed investigation.

8.8 Concluding remarks

Answering the question of how Saudis negotiate interculturally and within Australian settings was not only based on an academic quest, but on a deeply personal curiosity to understand how, why and in what ways we differ from Western values — why we seem different and, at times, misunderstood. While digging deep into the naturalistic data, some new concepts emerged, and new ideas were generated to investigate the data from a different perspective. Some of these were written in the recommendation section and others were saved for future publications. However, the current research has satisfied the burning curiosity and sharpened the understanding of intercultural communication for Saudis in Australia. Finally, it is hoped that this study contributes to the understanding of e-negotiation discourse between people coming from different cultures to negotiate an academic matter, using a mixture of appropriate approaches that could be elaborated upon in future research. The story of investigating discursive behaviour to unpack cultural values will not end at this point but will rather be a starting point for further research.

Appendix A: Consent and Questionnaire

Consent and Background Information

1. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the information sheet.
2. I agree to participate in the research project as described.
3. I acknowledge that:
 - a. My participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.
 - b. Withdrawal of participation should be delivered in a written form to the researcher
 - c. The project is for the purpose of research and may not be of direct benefit to me
 - d. Privacy of personal information I provide will be safeguarded and only disclosed where I have consented to the disclosure or as required by law
 - e. Security of the research data will be protected during and after completion of this study
 - f. The data collected during the study may be published. Any information, which will identify me, will be used for research purposes only.

I consent to participate in this stage

☐ Yes

Your email will be required to match your data but it will never be revealed to anyone else

☐ I agree

What is your email address which you sent to the researcher?

Short answer text _____

Gender

☐ Male

☐ Female

Age

☐ 23-32

☐ 33-42

☐ 43+

I would like to receive a copy of the thesis results upon completion of the research

☐ Yes

☐ No

Do you study/have you studied at an Australian University?

☐ Yes

☐ No

What is your faculty name or major?

Short answer text _____

Current degree

☐ Masters

☐ PhD

☐ Above

Are you a local Australian citizen?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Were you born in Australia?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If born overseas, what year did you arrive in Australia?

Short answer text _____

What is your first language?

Short answer text _____

I also speak (any language you are fluent in):

Short answer text _____

Your mother's cultural background:

Short answer text _____

Your father's cultural background:

Short answer text _____

How long has writing emails to people from different cultures been part of your life/work?

Short answer text _____

How long have you lived in Australia?

Short answer text _____

Have you searched for some useful instructions to help you write your email proposal?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Did the supervisor you approached with your proposal accept you?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Why do you think your proposal was accepted/rejected?

Long-answer text_____

In dot points, what are the important points you think should be mentioned in your email to a prospective supervisor? Why? (you can write them in Arabic too)

Long-answer text_____

Appendix B: Affective appeals highlighting sample

Green: Affective appeal

Yellow: Rational appeal

Blue: Credibility appeal

Dear Dr First and Last name,

I hope this email finds you well <greetings>. I am emailing you in regard to my interest in the Masters of Education Research degree< proposal>. I do understand that it is slightly late, and I do apologise profusely < proposal>.

My name is First Last< self-introduction>, and I am currently in the last semester of my Master of Teaching (Secondary) with a History and Religious Education specialisation at XXX University < major>.

Previously, I have completed my Bachelor of Arts with a double major in History and Religion and Theology at XXX University, completing my Honours degree in History, also at XXX < CV>. My honours thesis concentrated specifically on the negative impact of religious anti-heretical rhetoric during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in the Languedoc (Southern France), culminating in the Albigensian Crusade < Masters title>. Taking more of a cultural history perspective, my thesis examined the particularities of the preaching rhetoric of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, and the anti-heretical religious canon and legislation, and its cultural impact on the perception of heresy within a very powerful Christendom. < Masters plans>

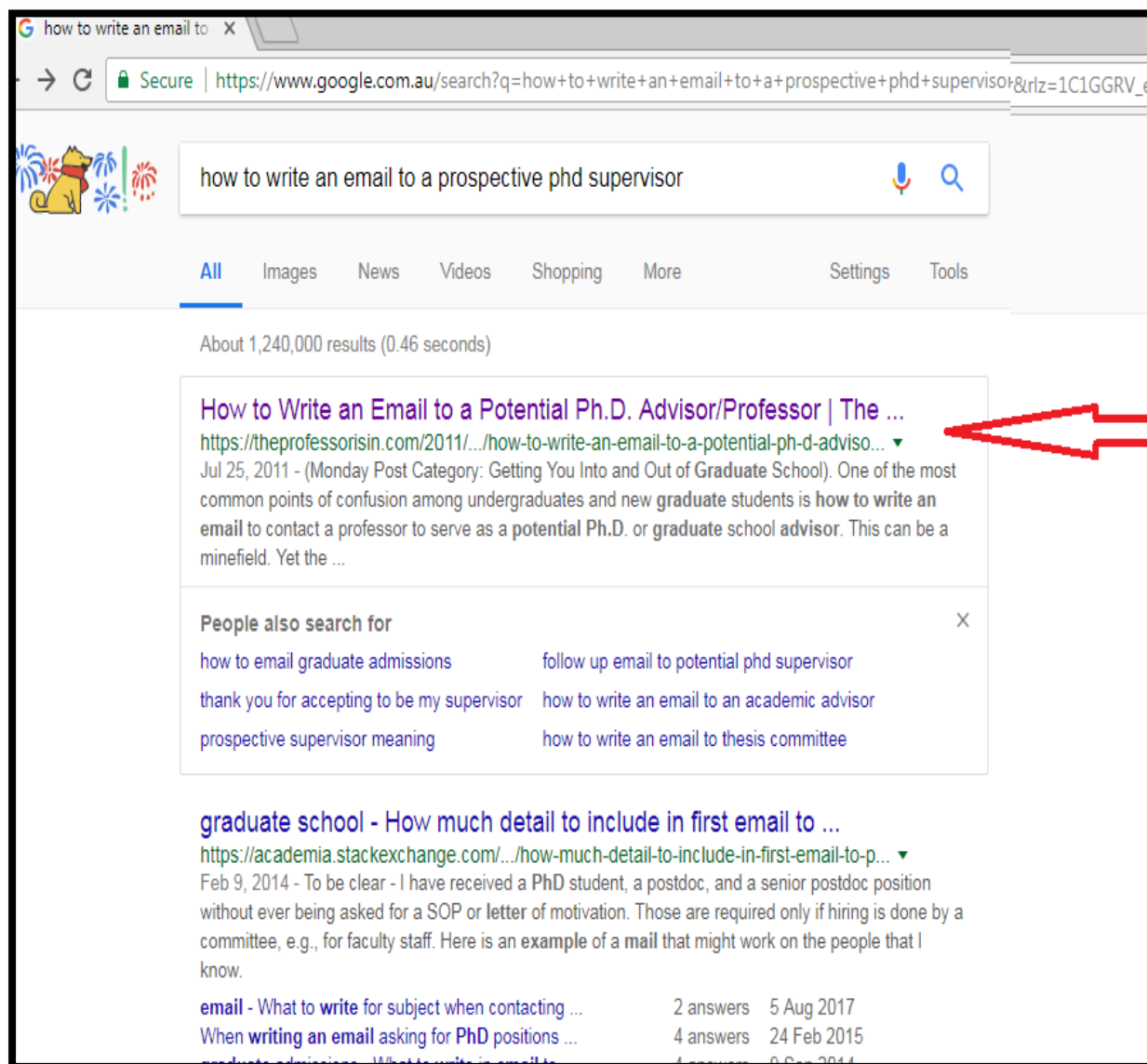
Throughout my course, and my practicum experiences, I have become interested in gender within the educational space and how the school environment impacts positively/negatively with student gender development. Specifically, I'm considering (?) how the concept of masculinity is developed within an educational space, such as an all-boys Catholic secondary school, and how that space impacts the notion of masculinity and how it is perceived by students.< research justification>

I understand that you are incredibly busy, but I would so enjoy discussing this with you < promoting further contact> and also helping me figure out what would be my next step in terms of supervision and application.< request for acceptance>I hope you have a wonderful evening. Looking forward to speaking to you.< promoting further contact>

Sincerely,

First and Last name

Appendix C: Emails copied from a website



Dear Professor XXX,

I am a student at XXX College with a major in xxx. I am a [junior] and will be graduating next May. I have a [4.0 GPA] and experience in our college's [summer program in xxx/internship program in xxx/Honors College/etc.].

I am planning to attend graduate school in xxx, with a focus on xxx. In one of my classes, "xxx," which was taught by Professor XXX, I had the chance to read your article, "xxxx". I really enjoyed it, and it gave me many ideas for my future research. I have been exploring

graduate programs where I can work on this topic. My specific project will likely focus on xxxx, and I am particularly interested in exploring the question of xxxxx.

I hope you don't mind my getting in touch, but I'd like to inquire whether you are currently accepting graduate students. If you are, would you willing to talk to me a bit more, by email or on the phone, or in person if I can arrange a campus visit, about my graduate school plans? I have explored your department's graduate school website in detail, and it seems like an excellent fit for me because of its emphasis on xx and yy, but I still have a few specific questions about xx and xxx that I'd like to talk to you about.

I know you're very busy so I appreciate any time you can give me. Thanks very much,

Sincerely,

XX XXX

Source:

<https://theprofessorisin.com/2011/07/25/how-to-write-an-email-to-a-potential-ph-d-advisor/>

Appendix D: Moves particular to persuasive appeals

Types of moves	<i>Rational</i> appeals	<i>Affective</i> appeals	<i>Credibility</i> appeals
Obligatory Moves	1- Proposal Mentioning the reason for writing the email as an objective fact without any reference to emotions.	13- Greetings A positive strategy aimed at showing an emotional appeal to enhance communication.	18- CV info Emphasising qualifications: career, awards, courses, job experiences.
	2- Major Mentioning the major as an objective fact without any reference to emotions.	14- Gratitude Showing appreciation to enhance communication.	19- GPA Mentioning their Masters scores, stressing their advanced level.
	3- Timeframe Proposing a timeframe of when the student intends to start their PhD.	15- Contexts Reminding a supervisor of knowing them, usually expressed in a kind way.	20- Fund Mentioning scholarships as part of their awards to continue their higher education.
	4- PhD topic Mentioning the proposed PhD topic, without any reference to emotions.	16- Choose topic Asking the prospective supervisor to suggest a PhD topic. The attitude is quite immature and considered as part of affective appeal.	21- Self-promotion Regarding the self as high-achieving and talking about future improvements, either in relation to abilities or how the career promotion will benefit them.
	5- Research interest Mentioning the research interest as a matter of fact.	17- Program/Uni interest Complementing the future program or uni— ‘institution glorification’.	23- Attachment Referring to attachments (CV, other credits, etc.)
	6-Options Suggesting a different supervisor as an alternative, or revealing that the participant has been in contact with other supervisors. This is expressed in a rational manner that does not involve pleading or positive politeness strategies.		
	7-Self-introduction When students introduce themselves by their names.		

Optional Moves	8-Promoting further contact Expecting the supervisor to formally reply to their emails (e.g. I look forward to hearing from you soon).	18-Promoting further contact Rushing/pleading with the supervisor for a reply or using positive politeness tone to encourage a reply.	Self-introduction Saudi students introduce themselves using their job title (e.g. I am a lecturer).
	9-Request Formed with an appropriate tone that does not involve emotions or pleading.	Request Involves an emotional/pushy tone or pleading linguistic behaviour.	
	10 Focus on supervisor Commenting on the supervisor's work by bringing evidence of certain papers or commenting on selected aspects of their work.	Focus on supervisor Complimenting the supervisor's knowledge or scholarship vaguely, without presenting any evidence of knowing their work.	
	11- Research justification Justify research in terms of research gap or significance (why doing such research is worthwhile).	Research justification Justify research as a matter of emotional gain.	Research justification Justify research by how it will add to CV and future reputation/ career promotion.
	12- Change topic Willing to change their topic if necessary and under certain conditions.	Change/choose topic Show great willingness to change their topic at the supervisor's request, or ask the supervisor to choose a topic for them.	Change topic Willing to change the topic as a competitive strategy to be accepted.
	22-Research experience Referring directly to similar research papers or supervising students with similar project papers.		Research experience Participants' research experience is linked to their job title.
	Change topic and fund moves: (only found in Australian data to be part of rational appeals).		

Appendix E: Statistical component moves results

Component Moves	<i>SAMPLE PROPORTION</i>	<i>STANDARD ERROR</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Opening	0.0758	0.0649	0.1658	> 0.05
Self-introduction	0.0477	0.0522	0.4049	> 0.05
Research interests	0.0527	0.0547	0.3491	> 0.05
Research Topic	0.0174	0.0320	-0.3506	> 0.05
Major	0.0468	0.0517	0.1547	> 0.05
Greetings	0.0191	0.0335	0.2033	> 0.05
Proposal	0.0436	0.0500	0.0824	> 0.05
GPA	0.0254	0.0386	0.2710	> 0.05
Timeframe	0.0232	0.0369	-0.1149	> 0.05
CV information	0.0553	0.0560	-0.1045	> 0.05
Attachment	0.0579	0.0572	-0.0480	> 0.05
Research Plans	0.0264	0.0393	-0.8290	> 0.05
Research experience	0.0070	0.0205	-1.1542	> 0.05
Change/choose topic	0.0232	0.0369	-0.1149	> 0.05
Context	0.0065	0.0197	-1.0324	> 0.05
Self-promotion	0.0147	0.0295	0.3262	> 0.05
Research Justification	0.0197	0.0341	-0.6015	> 0.05
Option	0.0077	0.0214	-1.0687	> 0.05
Program/Uni interest	0.0071	0.0206	0.4148	> 0.05
Fund	0.0451	0.0508	0.9069	> 0.05
Focus-on-supervisor	0.0445	0.0505	-0.7696	> 0.05
Request for acceptance	0.0912	0.0705	0.2998	> 0.05
Gratitude	0.0265	0.0394	0.0956	> 0.05
PFC (promoting response)	0.0560	0.0563	-0.0902	> 0.05
Closing	0.0682	0.0617	0.5447	> 0.05
Sign off	0.0758	0.0649	0.1658	> 0.05
Business card signature	0.0153	0.0300	-0.7255	> 0.05

Appendix F: Email samples

Email written by a Saudi male participant

Title of email:.....

1) Dear Dr. First and last name

It was my pleasure to meet you last fall < **context**], and you encouraged me to apply for the PhD program in Marketing at the University of XXX < **Indirect proposal**]. I have completed a Bachelor of Marketing with a (4.5 / 5) GPA from XXX University < **GPA move**]. In Dec 2008, I completed a Master of Marketing with a (3.9 / 4) GPA from XXX University <**GPA move**]. I am currently teaching in X University as a lecturer in College of Business & Economics and have been for the last five years <**CV info**]. Also, as we discussed that my family owns one of the biggest banks in the Middle East, The X Bank. Therefore, I need to improve myself by pursuing a PhD degree in Business and Marketing to enhance both my students' knowledge and the bank's performance < **PhD Justification**]. I have a full governmental scholarship to continue my study in a PhD program < **Funds move**] and I am really interested in the PhD program< **PhD interest**].

Once again, I appreciate your hospitality < **gratitude**], and I am looking forward to meeting you < **promoting further contact**].

--

Best Regards,<closing]

Mr. First S. Last

(all personal and professional contact details included) <**business card**]

Email written by an Australian female participant

Hi First, [a nickname was used]

My name is First Last < self-intro], I have been in contact with X recently about applying for the X University PhD programme < context]. I am interested in studying X spaces in a post disaster city in my home town of X, x < research interest]. X recommended I ask you if you might be interested in supervising such a topic < request for acceptance] as you have similar research interests < focus on supervisor]. I have broad experience in academia and am keen to pursue study at a higher level < self-promotion]

For my PhD, I would like to look into the X spaces of a post-disaster city < research plans]. My interest in X and X has arisen out of my current work which is illuminating interesting trends whereby the post-disaster state of a city has appeared to have contradicting effects on different elements of the city that appear to be both challenging and reinforcing X X ideals. For example instances of community gardening and x behaviour have sky-rocketed in local communities, challenging individualistic behaviour norms whereas the central government has been enforcing free market strategies in response to issues surrounding X and recovery strategies and in turn reinforcing dominant free market paradigms. What interests me about this is the way that X ideologies impact resilience at a community and central government level and how the post-disaster city is affected by this. < research justification].

My current thesis is looking into X X community resilience during the x/20x X X < research experience]. I am also working as a research assistant on a project looking at the x of the x x movement here in X and as a tutor for X studies and development studies papers from x to 300 x < cv information] so I have a strong background in research here in X. My interests are quite broad in the human X discipline but I am particularly interested in indigenous X, feminist X and urban X studies. < research interests]

I am looking at applying for entrance this month < timeframe] as well as for the scholarships that are available < proposal]. I just looked at the form and saw that it needs to be signed off by a potential supervisor. I was wondering if this topic might interest you and if so we could discuss whether or not you may be interested in supervising me? < request for acceptance] I

am also presenting on my current research at the upcoming X and X conference so I could meet with you face to face then as well. < promoting further contact] Unfortunately due to my financial circumstances I would need to obtain a scholarship in order to do a PhD but hopefully one will come through! < justification for Scholarship]

Thanks for your time<gratitude], I look forward to hearing from you < promoting further contact]

First name Last name (auto-signoff)

Appendix G: Ethics approval letter



Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)
Research and Innovation office
NH&MRC Code: EC00237

Notice of Approval

Date: 20 February 2017

Project number: 20337

Project title: *The process of intercultural email negotiation of requests between Saudi postgraduate students and Australian academics*

Risk classification: More than low risk

Chief investigator:

Approval period: From: 20 February 2017
To: 31 August 2019

The following documents have been reviewed and approved:

Title	Version	Date
20331 Cahill appn Feeny	Final	20 February 2017
Consent forms (stage one; stage two [students], stage two [academics], interviews).		20 February 2017
Stage one invitation to participate in research project (students)		20 February 2017
Stage two invitation to participate in research project (students)		20 February 2017
Stage two invitation to participate in research project (academics)		

The above application has been approved by the RMIT University HREC as it meets the requirements of the *National statement on ethical conduct in human research* (NH&MRC, 2007).

Terms of approval:

- Responsibilities of chief investigator**
It is the responsibility of the above chief investigator to ensure that all other investigators and staff on a project are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure that the project is conducted as approved by HREC. Approval is valid only whilst the chief investigator holds a position at RMIT University.
- Amendments**
Approval must be sought from HREC to amend any aspect of a project. To apply for an amendment use the request for amendment form, which is available on the HREC website and submitted to the HREC secretary. Amendments must not be implemented without first gaining approval from HREC.
- Adverse events**
You should notify the HREC immediately (within 24 hours) of any serious or unanticipated adverse effects of the research on participants, and unforeseen events that might affect the ethical acceptability of the project.
- Annual reports**
Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an annual report. Annual reports must be submitted by the anniversary of approval (20 February 2017) of the project for each full year of the project. If the project is of less than 12 months duration then a final report only is required.
- Final report**
A final report must be provided within six months of the end of the project. HREC must be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
- Monitoring**
Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by the HREC at any time.
- Retention and storage of data**
The investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data according to the requirements of the *Australian code for the responsible conduct of research* (section 2) and relevant RMIT policies.
- Special conditions of approval**
Nil.

In any future correspondence please quote the project number and project title above.



Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)
Research and Innovation office
NH&MRC Code: EC00237

Chairperson
RMIT HREC

Appendix H: Research Contributions

Publications:

- Alyousef, H. S., & Alsharif, A. A. (2019). Thematic progression in Saudi postgraduate Business students' multimodal texts: An SF-MDA of accounting discourse. *JEES (Journal of English Educators Society)*, 4(2), 99–105. <https://doi.org/10.21070/jees.v4i2.2582>
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Conferences:

- Alsharif, A. A. (2022 [forthcoming]). *Negotiation and (Im)politeness Strategies in Saudi and Australian Postgraduate Students' Emails: Gender and power issues*. 9th International Conference on Intercultural Pragmatics and Communication. The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.
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