Differences in the Pragmatic Competence of Saudi EFL and ESL Learners

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Declaration

I, Muhammed Altheeby, confirm that this submitted thesis, entitled *Differences in the Pragmatic Competence of Saudi EFL and ESL learners*, is an original work undertaken by me during the period between June 2014 and August 2018 under the supervision of Dr. Mercedes Durham. I certify that no materials submitted for any previous awards or qualifications are included, and declare that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

Pragmatic competence, the ability to use language effectively in a contextually appropriate fashion, has been a central concern in pragmatic studies for more than four decades. A large number of pragmatic competence studies have examined the pragmatics of native and non-native speakers of English, investigating the significance of the spread of the language across the globe. In the majority of studies, the focus has been on the pragmatic norms of native speakers, the development of English language learners' pragmatic competence, and the apparent pragmatic differences between native speakers and language learners. However, there is a dearth of studies contrasting the pragmatic competence of EFL and ESL learners. The present study targets this under researched area, by evaluating the pragmatic competence of Saudi EFL learners in Saudi Arabia and Saudi ESL learners in the UK. More specifically, it investigates how EFL and ESL groups perform the speech acts of *requests* and *refusals* in English, in contrast with British native speakers of English (NSE) as a point of comparison. The participants in this study are 90 Saudi EFL learners, 90 Saudi ESL learners, and 60 British NSE. The data set, including the utterances of requests and refusals in English, was compiled using two quantitative research methods: (1) a discourse-completion task (DCT) comprising nine request scenarios and nine refusal scenarios, and (2) a role-play task (RPT), involving six request scenarios and nine refusal scenarios. The pragmatic features of the requests were categorised, quantified and analysed using the classifications set out by Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989), whilst the pragmatic features of refusals were categorised according to the Universal Refusal Strategies Taxonomy of Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990, pp. 72-73). The results indicate notable pragmatic similarities and differences in the requests and refusals across the three groups. To summarise, the ESL and NSE groups' results showed relatively more similarities when compared with the EFL group, in terms of directness, politeness norms and modifications. The data also revealed that sociological variables (e.g. power, social distance) influence participants' speech acts, and the length of time spent learning English and the intensity of communication affect the non-native groups' acquisition of speech acts.

Key words: Pragmatic competence, English as a Native Language (ENL), Native Speakers of English (NSE), English as a foreign language (EFL), English as a second language (ESL), speech act of requests, and speech act of refusals.

Word Count: 70,200

List of Abbreviations

EGL	English as a Global Language
ENL	English as a Native Language
ELF	English as a Lingua Franca
ESL	English as a Second Language
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
NSE	Native Speakers of English
L1	First/Native Language
L2	Foreign/Second Language
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TL	Target Language
PC	Pragmatic Competence
SAT	Speech Act Theory
FTA	Face Threatening Acts
DCT	Discourse Completion Task
RPT	Role-play Task
CCSARP	Cross Cultural Speech Act Realization Project
IELTS	International English Language Test System
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
STEP	Saudi Test for English Proficiency
ILP	Interlanguage Pragmatics
CCP	Cross-cultural Pragmatics
CLA	Communicative Language Approach
KSP	King's Scholarship Program

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1 Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

1.1 Introductory Remarks

Arguably, effective communication is the central measure of success when learning a foreign or second language (L2). Nevertheless, many L2 learners find that they struggle to use their target language conversationally, despite having adequate command of linguistic components, such as phonetics, phonology, syntax and semantics. Language is more than mere sounds, grammatical rules and combinations of words, it also reflects the cultural values of native speaker society, as language and culture are "intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture" (D. Brown, 2000, p. 177). Consequently, language cannot be used appropriately without an appreciation of the rules of politeness that govern the target speech community (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Koike, 1989). In addition to this, the meaning of utterances depends heavily on the context in which they are produced (such as the physical and psychological environments, interpersonal relationships, and other contextual cues), and therefore context should be taken into account if learners wish to further understand the action orientation of talk (Hurford & Heasley, 1983; Ochs, 1979; Searle, 1979). Hence, learning, teaching or using a language without appreciating the associated cultural, social and contextual complexities could prevent learners from attaining pragmatic competence (Al-Kahtani, 2005; Krasner, 1999).

Pragmatics, which generally concerns the communicative use of language, extends interest beyond dictionary meanings of utterances by addressing what is actually meant by an utterance based on the norms and conventions of a particular society, or the context, in which a conversation takes place (see section 2.3 for more on pragmatics and its definitions). By

developing a good command of cultural, social and contextual conventions, L2 learners can communicate effectively and appropriately with both native speakers and other learners (Mey, 2001; Searle, 1975; Yule, 1996). The field of pragmatics, since its initial emergence as a branch of linguistics in the late 1960s and early 1970s, has instituted a major paradigm shift in language learning and teaching, triggering a move away from emphasis on the accuracy of language structures, in terms of syntax and phonology, and towards stressing the significance of accurate communicative language use (Jucker, 2012). Today, the objective when learning an L2 is typically the achievement of functional communicative skill in the target language, with the aim being to use language that is appropriate to communicative situations and fit specific sociocultural parameters. This ability is generally referred as pragmatic competence (see section 2.4).

The concept of pragmatic competence is central to this study, which investigates the pragmatic knowledge of Saudi learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL Group) and Saudi learners of English as a Second Language (ESL Group). More specifically, the present research examines and contrasts how the two non-native groups perform the speech acts of *requests* and *refusals* in comparison to a control group comprised of British Native speakers of English (NSE). To broadly introduce the thesis and the study, the following section (1.2) situates it within the body of broader literature and provides a context for the reader. It also illuminates the background to this research, focusing on several of the concepts and terms that are used frequently throughout this thesis. Following this, the significance of the study is presented in section 1.3, and the research questions in section 1.4. Finally, the chapter concludes with a broad overview of the entire thesis (section 1.5).

1.2 Situating the Study

English is widely used as the common language of communication, diplomatic relations, education, trade, and business among people from diverse cultural and linguistic

backgrounds (Jenkins, 2003; Kachru, 1992a). The expansion of English across the globe, coupled with reality that most communication is now between non-native speakers, has contributed to the development of a variety of native and non-native norms of English usage (Caine, 2008). There exist multiple varieties of English (*Englishes*) globally, which can be categorised into three general groups: 1. English as a Native Language (ENL), 2. English as a Second Language (ESL), and 3. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Kachru, 1982). These three terms can be used generally to describe particular varieties of English, depending on their location and the circumstances associated with their use (see section 2.2). Research investigating the pragmatics of ENL, ESL and EFL speakers, which has been of increasing interest with the expansion of English as a global language, highlights general sociolinguistic and pragmatic differences in the use of English internationally (see Al-Eryani, 2007; Allami & Naeimi, 2011; Bardovi-Harlig, 2013; Barron, 2000; Barron & Inc., 2003; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Byon, 2004; Caine, 2008; Chen, 2006). Furthermore, such research has identified a number of pragmatic failures (and non-native use of English) that arise among users of English; these are generally caused by a variety of factors, such as the influence of the learning environment, the effect of the user's first languages (L1s), exposure to L2 input, teaching methods and strategies taught, and the need for, and perceived status of the English language locally (for more, see Barron, 2003, pp. 36-60).

Since the emphasis in the present study is on the role of learning environments (specifically EFL and ESL) in the acquisition of English pragmatics, it seems vital to briefly shed light on how English is generally learned and used in these two learning environments. Initially, the use of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) takes place in countries where English has no official status, and is mainly used for specific and limited purposes (such as in Saudi Arabia). Teaching and learning English in such societies brings unique challenges, ranging from limited access to authentic language, to confusion about how to use English appropriately in learners' future contexts of use. Additionally, an EFL education might merely

offer advice on the application of grammatical rules in oral and written practice; although grammatical competence alone, as suggested by Hymes (2001), does not guarantee proficiency or competence. Therefore, EFL learners are prone to making pragmatic errors, potentially only realizing the importance of the sociocultural and pragmatic aspects of English when meeting NSE or visiting an English-speaking country and experiencing difficulties communicating.

In contrast, the use of English as a Second Language (ESL) takes place in two different contexts: ESL countries (e.g. India, Nigeria and Singapore) and English-speaking countries (e.g. the UK and the USA). In ESL countries, English is used as an official language within governmental institutions, courts, educational institutes, and by the media, affording it a relatively crucial role as a medium of communication. Learners of English in ESL countries expect to use the language inside and outside school, and a good command of English is essential to accessing the best social and economic opportunities (Broughton, Brumfit, Flavell, Hill, & Pincas, 1988). However, English in ESL countries is still used non-natively, and therefore teaching, learning and using English in such contexts poses specific challenges, which differ from one ESL country to another (Kachru, 1982; Kachru, Kachru, & Nelson, 2009). It is also worth mentioning that the distinction between EFL countries and ESL countries is not clearly delineated (see Modiano, 2009, p. 38), and has been the topic of additional scrutiny as the influence of the globalization has made it difficult to differentiate between EFL and ESL countries; this is to say that the EFL and ESL countries now appear to be merging into a single EFL category, with the developments in technology and telecommunications (see section 2.2 for further details).

Nowadays, the term ESL is considered to be accurate only when individuals are learning English in English-speaking countries, such as the UK or the USA. In such English-speaking environments, the opportunity to learn English is widely believed to positively benefit learners' linguistic, communicative and pragmatic competence (Bardovi-Harlig &

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Dornyei, 1997, 1998; Bouton, 1994; Hinkel, 1997; Koike, 1996; Schauer, 2006). Learners of English in English-speaking environments can communicate daily with a wide range of speakers, and have the prospect of encountering and participating in discussions on different topics in multiple authentic social and cultural contexts. Several studies, however, have revealed that the study-abroad (ESL) environment is not always advantageous for L2 learners, as they do not necessarily make more progress than those studying the L2 at home, nor do they automatically spend more time using/communicating in the L2 (e.g. Dewey, 2004; Freed, Segalowitz, & Dewey, 2004; Taguchi, 2008; Tanaka, 2004). Moreover, empirical studies comparing the actual effects of an at-home (EFL) environment to a study-abroad (ESL) one are still underrepresented within speech act research (Collentine & Freed, 2004; Taguchi, 2008). From the available literature, a picture emerges suggesting that the relationship between language gains, learning environment, time spent in the L2 environment, exposure to the target-language culture, and communication with native speakers is complex necessitating further thorough empirical investigation. Hence, this study aims to contribute to this area by examining the pragmatic competence of Saudi learners of English at home (EFL group), and Saudi learners of English abroad (ESL group). It is important here to provide a brief contextual overview of these two groups, as well as of English language use in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and this is done in the section below.

1.2.1   Context of the Study

In Saudi Arabia, attempts to incorporate EFL into the education system began in the 1930s, but they have dramatically increased over the last three decades. English is now considered the second most used language for communication after Arabic. It is the only foreign language taught within the formal education system, and is extensively used by international institutions, in industry, and at international companies. English is also present alongside Arabic in the media, on road signage, in airports, universities, hospitals, and

ministries. Although English plays a significant role in communication in a number of contexts in Saudi Arabia, Saudi EFL learners have serious problems using English effectively for communication (see section 2.2). This is because the pragmatic competence of Saudi EFL learners has been reported as below satisfactory, and a number of studies have claimed Saudi EFL learners experience difficulties using English for communication purposes (see Al-Seghayer, 2005, 2011, 2014; Al-Zahrani, 2008; Elyas & AlGrigri, 2014; Shah, Hussain, & Nassef, 2013). To exemplify this, a recent study on the pragmatics of requests by Rouissi (2014) revealed Saudi EFL learners exhibit a number of pragmatic failures, suggesting more communicative approaches should be applied as components of EFL instruction to overcome these pragmatic failures. Undoubtedly, to deliver a thorough diagnosis and practical recommendations to address such failures much more comprehensive research on this subject is required.

In addition to EFL instruction in the country, there are many government scholarship programmes affording tens of thousands of Saudis the opportunity to travel every year to study in English-speaking countries (mainly the USA and the UK). Some of these Saudi scholarship holders comprise the ESL group in this study, and are typically sponsored to stay in the scholarship country for between two and six years (see section 2.2.4). To date, there is a lack of large-scale comparative studies exploring the pragmatic competence of EFL and ESL learners, and Saudi EFL and ESL learners in particular. Thus, this study will contribute to the existing body of pragmatic competence research. Hence, the following section introduces the research on pragmatic competence, highlighting its importance to Second Language Acquisition (SLA), before concisely discussing how it has been examined and evaluated in interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) studies.

1.2.2 Pragmatic Competence and Speech Acts

Pragmatic competence is largely based on the concept of communicative competence as further detailed in section 2.4. Communicative competence was introduced by Hymes (1972) to refer to a speaker's linguistic knowledge and understanding of a set of sociolinguistic codes and rules for language use. Hymes (1972, p. 16) states that communicative competence is "dependent on two things: (tacit) knowledge and (ability for) use", clarifying that the tacit knowledge includes the linguistic knowledge (i.e. phonetics, phonology, syntax and semantics), and that the ability for use includes the skill of using the linguistic knowledge appropriately (adequately, successfully) in relation to context of use, which is now termed pragmatic competence. The concept of pragmatic competence can be generally defined as the ability to use language effectively in context, and one of the most important skills associated with this is the ability to choose one possible linguistic form over another in accordance with understanding of appropriateness and politeness norms in a given society or context (Kasper & Rose, 2002).

Furthermore, according to Thomas (1983), the acquisition of pragmatic competence requires the absorption of two types of knowledge: pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge. The former refers to a language user's knowledge of how to use the linguistic forms available for performing a language function, and the latter to the knowledge of the context in which linguistic forms are used. Pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competences are closely linked, as L2 learners need to learn linguistic forms, and also to understand the layers of contextual information present when those forms are used (see Kasper & C., 2005; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983). Thus, in this study, the examination of the groups' pragmatic knowledge integrates both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge.

To date, many studies on the relationship between pragmatic knowledge and SLA have underlined the importance of pragmatic competence to allow L2 learners to use language

effectively (see Allami & Naeimi, 2011; Bardovi-Harlig, 1996, 2013; Bardovi-Harlig & Dornyei, 1997; Barron & Inc., 2003; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). Likewise, the subfield of Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP), which concerns how learners use L2 pragmatics, has reported that understanding and replicating L2 pragmatic rules, and then achieving successful communication with native speakers requires learners have a certain level of pragmatic competence (see Barron, 2003; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). However, learning the pragmatic aspects of an L2 to achieve pragmatic competence has been regarded as "the most difficult aspect of language to master in learning a second language" (Blum-Kulka & Sheffer, 1993, p. 219), because it combines knowledge of linguistic units with the ability to use this knowledge in accordance with the sociocultural context that envelopes it. Linguistic and grammatical development "does not guarantee a corresponding level of pragmatic development" (Bardovi-Harlig & Dornyei, 1998, p. 234), and even advanced L2 learners might fail to comprehend or convey intended intentions and politeness values. Indeed, many L2 learners exhibit pragmatic competence when using limited linguistic resources (See Thornbury & Slade, 2006, pp. 230-231) while others with a more extensive range of linguistic resources fail to do so (See Bardovi-Harlig, 2013). Thus, research into the pragmatic competence of L2 learners' reveals its acquisition can be influenced by several factors (besides differences in the learning-environment), such as learning and teaching styles, exposure to L1, involving L1 in daily life, duration of learning, and amount of communication with native speakers or knowledge of the target culture (see Al-Eryani, 2007; Al-Issa, 2003; Beebe & Takahashi, 1989; Felix-Brasdefer, 2007; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2003; Martínez-Flor, 2009; Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2006; Otcu & Zeyrek, 2008; Rose, 2000; Scarcella, 1979; Trosborg, 1995).

Although pragmatic competence is a complex measure since it covers various situations and functions, it has been traditionally studied in ILP research through the lens of speech acts. Speech Act Theory (SAT), a language use theory developed by Austin (1962)

and his student Searle (1969, 1975, 1979), provides the greatest abundance of examples of interactions between pragmatics and SLA (see Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). According to SAT, speech can be systematically divided into minimal functional units of communication (speech acts), such as requests and refusals, which have outwardly pragmalinguistic features (see Austin, 1962; Searle, 1979, p. 10). SAT has made it easier for researchers to observe norms of politeness strategies and the social rules of speaking within a speech community. Thus, speech acts have been widely used as an entry point from which to access and study the pragmatic competence of L2 learners (see section 2.5).

In this regard, speech act studies have clearly demonstrated how pragmatic successes or failures can be traced as components of speech acts (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984), especially when these are Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs), such as requests and refusals, which require more pragmatic skills to maintain smooth communication without embarrassment or misunderstanding (see P. Brown & S. Levinson, 1987; Fukushima, 1996). For L2 learners, performing FTAs successfully is more important than performing other target language speech acts, since pragmatic failure in FTAs can cause serious communicative misunderstandings, sometimes placing interlocutors in a position of conflict, due to remarks being perceived as offensive, rude, or confusing (Thomas, 1983, p. 97). Pragmatic failure, is generally viewed as more embarrassing than linguistic errors per se, and has been reported as less excusable by native speakers who might judge a learner's personality or attitude due to pragmatic errors (Diez Prados, 1998; Hassani, Mardani, & Hossein, 2011).

In this study, the language used for *requests* and *refusals* were chosen to assess the targeted groups' pragmatic competence. Firstly, requests were selected as a considerable proportion of the interactions that take place in language take the form of requests (Green, 1975, pp. 121-123; Trosborg, 1995), which means that this area is a rich vein for study. Moreover, it has been argued that request threatens the face of the addressee (Koike, 1989, p.

280); this requires speakers to have certain levels of pragmatic competence in order to minimize the imposition perceived when they make requests, and then save interlocutors' faces to avoid embarrassment (see section 2.8 for a more detailed description, with examples, of what these terms are). In addition to this, in terms of language learning, competence when making requests indicates proficiency as it requires learners to have a certain level of sensitivity, expertise and sociocultural awareness of power, social distance and context (Ellis, 1994, p. 168).

Secondly, refusals were also assessed, as they form another group of FTA; typically refusals threaten the face of both interlocutors and can be perceived as rude or discourteous (Barron, 2007; P. Brown & S. Levinson, 1987), requiring them to be framed thoughtfully. Furthermore, refusals are considered more challenging for learners than initiating speech acts (such as request) (Gass & Houck, 1999), as the form and content of refusals varies depending on the type of speech act that elicits them; i.e. whether requests, invitations, or offer (Beebe et al., 1990, p. 56). Additionally, the phrasing of refusals requires sensitivity to social variables (Aliakbari & Changizi, 2012; Beebe & Takahashi, 1989), demanding a certain degree of cultural awareness from learners (Hassani et al., 2011). By combining the speech acts of *requests* and *refusals* in this study it is anticipated that it will be possible to enrich understanding of the participants' pragmatic knowledge.

The data for this study (utterances of requests and refusals in English) was gathered using a discourse-completion task (DCT) and a role-play task (RPT) – see section 3.4 for information on the data collection methods used in the ILP research. The pragmatic features of the requests were then analysed based on the CCSARP classifications set out by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), whilst the pragmatic features of refusals were analysed according to the Universal Refusal Strategies Taxonomy of Beebe et al. (1990, pp. 72-73) –see sections 2.8.1 and 2.9.1 for information on these coding schemes.

1.3 Significance of the Study

As noted previously, English is gaining in popularity worldwide, and effective use of English, indeed of any language, requires pragmatic competence from L2 learners. The present study provides clarification of and insight into this important topic, by comparing differences in the pragmatic competence of two groups of English language learners (i.e. EFL and ESL learners). Within the field of interlanguage pragmatics, this study is significant, as it may be the first such study to address this specific issue, as mentioned above. The study will also advance understanding of English instruction in Saudi Arabia in general, and of the teaching and learning of pragmatic competence within EFL and ESL education contexts in particular, as it is the first of its kind in this context. This research also has the potential to assist English teachers and learners in Saudi Arabia to comprehend the extent of the role of pragmatics in SLA, with a focus on Saudi EFL and ESL learners. The study also examines several common pragmatic features of English, as spoken by Saudi EFL, ESL and NSE participants (more specifically predominant forms and norms for making requests and refusals in English) that Saudi researchers, teachers and learners of English might benefit from in terms of teaching/learning contexts, and also build on in their future research projects. Finally, it also explores the extent to which Saudi EFL and ESL participants are aware of the sociopragmatic rules constraining language use in English, to minimize cross-cultural and interlanguage communicative breakdowns between Saudi users of English as a foreign/second language and NSE. Hence, as outlined below, this thesis aims to achieve a number of set objectives and answer some specific questions.

1.4 Research Questions

To investigate the pragmatic competence of Saudi EFL and ESL learners, this research focuses on pragmatic features, directness levels, politeness norms, and the internal/external manipulative and supportive words used by participating groups when performing the speech

acts of requests and refusals. Moreover, it seeks to investigate the importance of two contextual variables, social status and level of imposition, when accounting for variations in the use of particular requests and refusals between the groups. A further focus of the study is on determining whether the length of time spent learning English, and the level of communication with native speakers has a role to play in the pragmatic competence of non-native participants. To fulfil the above objectives, the study was designed to answer the following five research questions:

1. How do Saudi ESL and EFL learners produce the speech acts of requests and refusals in contrast with British NSEs?
2. Are there any pragmatic differences between the three groups when making requests and refusals with high and low impositions?
3. Are there any pragmatic differences between the three groups with regard to making requests and refusals when interacting with interlocutors from higher, equal and lower statuses?
4. Are there any pragmatic differences between the two non-native groups based on the length of time spent learning English?
5. Are there any pragmatic differences among the ESL participants based on the intensity of communication with native speakers?[1]

The first question seeks to broadly explain the pragmatic strategies that the participating groups use when producing the speech acts of requests and refusals, and also aims to uncover the extent to which the two non-native groups' language use might differ from that of the native speakers. The rest of questions seek to attain a detailed understanding of the pragmatic differences between the groups accounting for several factors and variables. The next section provides an overview of the whole thesis, chapter by chapter, highlighting the focus of each chapter.

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[1] Only ESL speakers are considered here, because the EFL participants had not been in contact with NSEs before participating in the study.

1.5 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters; the present chapter introduced the study. **Chapter Two**, the Literature Review, provides a brief overview of the history of English and its worldwide status, as well as how it is used as a native, second and foreign language. The chapter then introduces the field of pragmatics, including relevant pragmatic theories (e.g. speech acts and Politeness Theories), and previous studies of the acquisition of the pragmatic aspects of English. It then examines and compares the comprehension and production of the speech acts of requests and refusals for EFL and ESL learners. Additionally, Chapter Two provides essential background theoretical knowledge to scaffold the analysis of the collected data and highlight new avenues for exploring the potential applications of the study, both inside and outside Saudi Arabia. **Chapter Three**, the methodology chapter, discusses the research paradigm, and provides information about the coding schemes for the two speech acts under investigation. It also presents the study participants and the data collection methods, outlining the motivations and justifications for the choices made. The chapter also discusses the data analysis procedures, and explains how the results were analysed and presented to answer the research questions. Following this, the reliability and validity of the study, and associated ethical issues are discussed. **Chapter Four** presents the data analysis for the requests, examining and analysing the pragmatics of requests across the three groups, while **Chapter Five** is mainly devoted to evaluating the respondents' refusals. The principal purpose of **Chapter Six** is to thoroughly discuss the results presented in chapters 4 and 5, and also offers conclusion of the study. This also includes providing the implications of the findings, strengths and limitations of my study, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

2   Chapter Two: Conceptual Background and Literature Review

2.1 Introductory Remarks

Since this thesis centres on the pragmatic competence of EFL and ESL learners, the current chapter reviews concepts, theories, and previous empirical findings relevant to this area to develop a thorough understanding of the pragmatic competence of non-native speakers. It begins by defining the significance of English as a Global Language (EGL), providing essential information concerning the context of the present study (section 2.2). The chapter then presents detailed theoretical background information regarding pragmatics and its role in SLA (section 2.3), and then focuses on the notion of pragmatic competence, why it is important for L2 learners to master, and how it has been studied previously (section 2.4). This is followed by a review of several pragmatic frameworks of language use that are essential to research on pragmatic competence (i.e. speech act theory in section 2.5, Grice's theory of conversation in section 2.6 and politeness theories in section 2.7). Next, a more comprehensive discussion of the speech acts being investigated is conducted, focusing on the pragmatics of requests (section 2.8) and refusals (section 2.9). In both these sections, relevant studies are reviewed to inform this research and highlight the gaps in the literature that this study aims to bridge. Finally, the chapter ends with concluding remarks in section 2.10.

2.2 English as a Global Language (EGL)

The description of English as a *global language* refers to its use as a common language (lingua franca), which people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds employ for communication, diplomatic relations, education, trade, and business (Jenkins, 2003). Similarly, the notion of a global language can be used to signify that a language performs an important function, being recognized worldwide, irrespective of whether it is used as a first language, a second language, or a foreign language (Crystal, 2003, p. 2). Additionally, a global language is recognized internationally as the most disseminated, read, used, and

routinely learned language (Crystal, 1990). Based on these premises, English can be seen as *the* global language, as there has never been a language as widely spread, spoken, learned, and used as English (Baker & Jones, 1998; Baugh & Cable, 2002; Brutt-Griffler, 2002; Cheshire, 1991; Crystal, 1990, 1995, 2003; Durham, 2014; Görlach, 1998, 2002; Graddol, 2006; Jenkins, 2003; Schneider, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2011). This globalization of English is relevant in several respects to the present study; in particular, it is of interest whether or not English successfully retained all its unique pragmatic characteristics while spreading. Crucially, it is apparent that English spoken as a global language has many variants; thus, it is valuable to shed light on differences in the use of English pragmatics between users. These and other issues are explored in the following subsections.

2.2.1   The Spread of English across the Globe

The global spread of English has largely been attributed to the political, military, cultural, economic, and technological power of its native speakers (Baugh & Cable, 2002, pp. 3-5; Crystal, 2003; Jenkins, 2003). The relationships between a language's dominance and the military, political, and economic power of its people is apparent in the history of all languages that developed international status; i.e. Latin, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, and English (Baugh & Cable, 2002; Crystal, 2003). English, in particular, acquired global status as it spread militarily with the rise of the British Empire between the 16th and 20th centuries, before being promoted by the United States, once it developed to become the world's leader after World War II continuing this role until the present day (Baker & Jones, 1998, p. 311; Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 1997; Seidlhofer, 2011). An additional factor playing a leading role in the popularity of English during the 20th and 21st centuries has been globalization, and the associated dominance of the British and American media and their cultural influence in terms of science, education, and art.

The term *global language* has also grown in importance since the mid-20th century, with the influence of globalization, the advent of international organizations (e.g. the United Nations in 1945, the World Bank in 1945, UNESCO and UNICEF in 1946) and the development of international businesses and trade transactions (Crystal, 2003). Technologies in the domains of transportation and telecommunications, in particular, have also affected all aspects of life, making it possible for people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds and from various geographical locations to communicate. Consequently, there has been an increasing need for a common language to ensure more efficient, diplomatic, administrative, economic and social communication. English was already the de facto international language in the 20th century, and seen as a promising language for facilitating worldwide communication (Crystal, 2003; Jenkins, 2003; Kachru, 1992b), despite the different cultural and linguistic challenges facing learners of English.

As a consequence of various factors, English has undergone complex historical and sociolinguistic processes (see Jenkins, 2003), spreading throughout the world in phases (see Kachru, 1996) to become the language most widely spoken across the world (Brutt-Griffler, 1998). The globalization of English has given rise to the emergence of many English varieties (*Englishes*), which have been traditionally grouped into three broad categories: English as a Native Language (ENL), English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Although all three categories have been in place for a considerable length of time, they are controversial groupings that raise several issues that need addressing. To assess the significance of the groupings, this study adopts one of the most influential models for classifying English varieties: Kachru's model (1982, pp. 37-39), which is detailed below.

2.2.2 Kachru's Classification of EGL

Kachru (1982, pp. 37-39) developed an influential model classifying varieties of English by identifying three distinct geographical regions in language use terms: (1) the inner, (2) outer, (3) and expanding circles (see figure 2.1). First, *the inner circle* represents those ENL countries where English is used natively as a mother tongue, or a first language, such as the United Kingdom (UK), the United States of America (USA), Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. This circle is generally represented as the "norms providing" model for non-native users. Meanwhile *the outer circle* represents countries where English is used for official purposes and by institutions as a second language, such as India, Nigeria, and Singapore (see Crystal, 2003, pp. 46-71 for a full list of countries). Kachru (1982, p. 38) characterized this circle as providing "an institutionalized variety", as English plays a leading role in such countries because it is officially used by governmental institutions, courts and the media. Finally, *expanding circle* countries are those where English is routinely taught as a school subject (EFL countries), but is used only for specific purposes, such as tourism, diplomatic relations or trade. Within this circle, EFL is learned and used as a "performance variety" with no official or institutional status (e.g. in China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Iran, and Egypt).
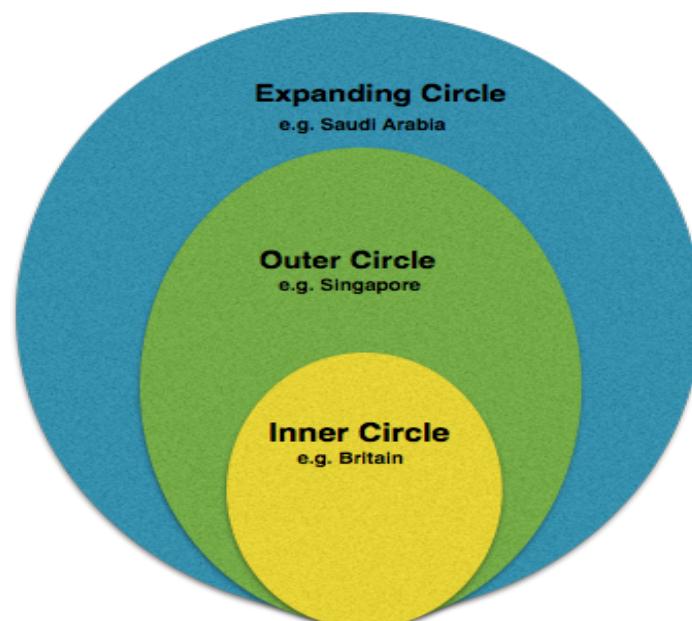
Figure 2.1 Kachru's (1982) model of English as a Global Language

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As mentioned previously, the inner circle represents all the countries in which English is spoken as a native/first language. England was the first native homeland of modern English, but the language spread to Scotland, Wales and Ireland during the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries. This was quickly followed by its arrival (with NSE populations) in North America in the 17th century, Australia in the 18th century, and New Zealand in the 19th century. During this phase of the spread of the English language, the different dialects of migrants evolved into distinctive varieties of English, coined *Englishes* by Kachru. These migrants also made contact with large numbers of people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and arrived in stages, contributing to the formation of the current varieties (Jenkins, 2003, pp. 5-7). Although the inner circle refers to traditional distinctive varieties of English spoken as a native/first language, and despite the fact that NSE share many common sociocultural values, their varieties differ markedly phonologically, structurally, lexically and socio-linguistically within this inner circle (Jenkins, 2003, p. 17).

The number of NSE in the inner circle was estimated to be around 400 million people in 2003, and that of non-native speakers (in the outer and expanding circles) had exceeded 1.2 billion (Crystal, 2003, pp. 66-69). It should be considered, however, that since the number of English speakers has dramatically increased since that time, the figures for non-native speakers are likely to have been significantly surpassed (see Jenkins, 2009, p. 4; Schneider, 2011). This suggests English is no longer the sole property of native speakers, as the majority of those using it are non-native speakers from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Thus, non-native users have influenced the language at the phonological, structural, lexical, cultural, and pragmatic levels (Kachru, 2005).

As Kachru (1996) explains, the spread of English to the outer circle began when the British Empire first ruled highly-inhabited areas, such as South Asia, Southeast Asia, and South, West, and East Africa, where no English-speaking communities had previously existed. This phase, as Kachru argues, had a marked effect on the sociolinguistic profile of

English, with the institutionalized use of English as a second language; hence the concept of ESL emerged. Since the period of British colonization, English has been adopted as an official language in over seventy countries; thus, around 430 million people use ESL within government institutions, law courts, parliaments, administration, education, mass media, commercial and industrial organizations, among other contexts (Crystal, 2003). ESL learners must use English inside and outside school, and a good command of English typically facilitates access to better social and economic prospects (Broughton et al., 1988).

The number of ESL countries bestowed a privileged status upon the English language, leading it to dominate other internationally spoken languages; however, arguably, it was the rising number of English users in countries where English has no official use that transformed it into a truly global language (Durham, 2014; Jenkins, 2003). As mentioned above, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has been introduced into the educational systems of over one hundred countries in the expanding circle, where English does not play a leading social or institutional role (Crystal, 2003, p. 69); for example in China, one-third of the population were reported in 2012 to be learners/speakers of English as a Foreign Language (Bolton & Graddol, 2012). Widespread use of EFL has also occurred in other countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Russia, Spain, Iran, and Egypt where the numbers of EFL learners have noticeably risen in response to political, educational and economic factors. Outside the classroom, EFL learners generally have less exposure to English and its pragmatic and cultural aspects than ESL learners.

Kachru's model has been widely cited by sociolinguistics, and in SLA studies addressing varieties of English (e.g. Al-Abed Al-Haq & Smadi, 1996; Bolton & Graddol, 2012; Crystal, 2003; Durham, 2014; Graddol, 2006; Hopkins, 2013; Jenkins, 2003; Kachru, 1982; Kachru, Kachru, & Nelson, 2006; McKay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008; Melchers & Shaw, 2003; Mesthrie & Bhatt, 2008; Seargeant, 2012; Seidlhofer, 2011; Smith, 1987). Although Kachru clearly defines inner circle countries, the distinction between the outer circle and the

expanding circle is blurred and has come under further scrutiny over time with technological advances. Indeed, the "performance variety" that characterizes Kachru's expanding-circle English (see Kachru, 1982, pp. 38-39) has evolved into a different form, as English use is becoming "an institutionalized variety" in some contexts. In addition, a transition from expanding circle to outer circle can occur as variables such as length of time in use change, underlining the functional importance of the language and its sociolinguistic status (Durham, 2014; Kachru, 1982, p. 39). Additionally, under the influence of globalization, EFL in expanding circle countries and ESL in outer circle countries seem to be merging. The distinction between the two circles is, indeed, breaking down, since "globalization has made it difficult to differentiate between second language and foreign language speech communities" (Modiano, 2009, p. 38).

Moreover, Kachru's classification focuses on countries, and not on the specifics of the people within those countries, as it is challenging to classify all the complex ways in which English is used culturally and learned with a concise geographical model. A large number of NSEs, for example, settled permanently in several outer circle countries, such as India and Hong Kong after colonization, and so speak English natively in outer circle settings (see Jenkins, 2003). Likewise, a many people from outer and expanding circle countries have migrated to inner circle countries with their families to live, study, or work and have become bilingual or multilingual speakers, making it impossible to put such communities into a specific circle. This changing picture clarifies why the sociolinguistic and multicultural uses of English cannot be concisely classified according to Kachru's model (for more examples see Crystal, 2003; Seidlhofer, 2011). This has prompted several researchers to develop new models to better consider its complexity (e.g. Görlach, 1988; McArthur, 1987; Modiano, 1999; Tripathi, 1992; Yano, 2001). However, despite the considerable criticisms of Kachru's model (see Modiano, 1999), it is the most cited and the most appropriate classification to use as a starting point for the majority of socio-demographic studies, addressing issues related to

variations in the terms of use of English or the communicative functions of English worldwide.

This study also departs from Kachru's model, as it helps contextualize how English has been introduced and used in the world as well as in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. As outlined in this model, L2 learners of English can study English in three primary English learning contexts: (1) ESL contexts in the inner circle, (2) ESL contexts in the outer circle and (3) EFL contexts in the expanding circle (see Figure 2.2).
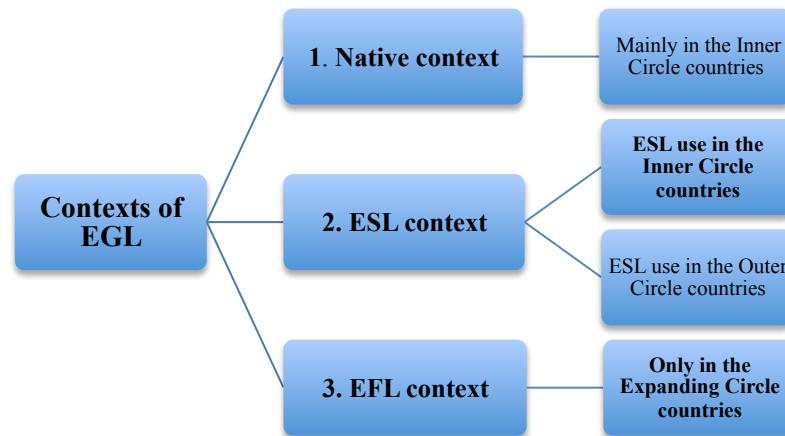
Figure 2.2 The learning contexts of the English language

For the purpose of this research, and also because, as discussed earlier, the distinction between use of ESL in the outer circle and use of EFL in the expanding circle is not seem rigid, I will briefly discuss ESL use in the inner circle, and EFL use in the expanding circle. Generally speaking, learners are known to create their own repertoire of linguistic and pragmatic utterances, resulting from several factors, such as learning environments, L1 sociopragmatic and linguistic influence, overgeneralization of L1 rules, grammatical ability, the influence of textbook instruction, and resistance to using pragmatic norms that depart from learners' native culture (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010).

Regarding the influence of learning environments, the day-to-day needs and uses of a language vary between its at-home and abroad contexts. Sociocultural-pragmatic

appropriateness has been broadly explored in the context of EFL environments (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig & Dornyei, 1998; Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1993; Rose & Kasper, 2001), and such studies have provided useful information about the pragmatics of EFL students. It has further been reported that EFL learners make inappropriate or limited use of certain speech acts, act too directly at times but too indirectly at others, underuse or overuse politeness conventions, and transfer linguistic and pragmatic aspects from their L1 into their L2 (Ellis, 1994). Learners in EFL contexts are less exposed to socially accepted ways of using English; therefore, EFL learners in expanding circle countries might not be aware of the pragmatic aspects of English in the same way that ESL learners in inner circle countries are. Furthermore, EFL learners often study English in monolingual mono-cultural schools, where they share the same mother tongue and the same culture as other learners, and have very limited exposure to native-speaking culture, which limits their exposure to other sociolinguistic uses of English. Additionally, in traditional societies where English is used as a foreign language, including Saudi Arabia, the focus of English education is merely on the application of grammatical rules in oral and written practice, which can lead to major miscommunication problems.

By contrast, learning English as a second language in English-speaking environments has been widely reported to influence learners' linguistic and pragmatic competence towards that of NSE (Bardovi-Harlig & Dornyei, 1997, 1998; Bouton, 1994; Hinkel, 1997; Koike, 1996; Schauer, 2006; Taguchi, 2008). Studies suggest that ESL learners within the inner circle, typically have more immediate English needs, which requires them to focus more on effective and appropriate use of English than on grammatical accuracy, thereby encouraging them to consider the pragmatics of English more closely than those without such needs. ESL learners in inner circle countries have to use English in settings where it is the dominant language, and therefore, they have the opportunity to be exposed to practical ways of using it, as well as being immersed in English-speaking culture and social norms. Thus, ESL

environments are thought to be helpful for improving pragmatic, social, and communicative skills, since learners have the opportunity to communicate daily with a wide range of speakers and to discuss a variety of topics in different social and cultural contexts.

As briefly mentioned in the introductory chapter, the role of the learning environment in the development of English language learning has been discussed in the literature regarding the acquisition of speech acts. However, the bulk of these ILP studies on the English language have generally focused on how English is learned and used by EFL or ESL learners relative to native speakers (e.g. Abdul Sattar, Che Lah, & Raja Suleiman, 2010; Al-Ammar, 2000; Al-Eryani, 2007; Al-Kahtani, 2005; Beebe et al., 1990; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Collentine, 2004; DeKeyser, 1991; Dewey, 2004; Diaz-Campos, 2004; El-Shazly, 1993; Freed et al., 2004; Schauer, 2006; Taguchi, 2008). The present contrastive study focuses on both speech communities (EFL and ESL speakers) when comparing them to NSE. More specifically, this study focuses on two groups of Saudi English learners: Saudi EFL learners in Saudi Arabia, and Saudi ESL learners in English speaking countries who would be expected to be somewhat familiar with the target language's cultural and social norms. For greater clarification, an introduction to the status and use of English in Saudi Arabia is provided below to introduce both groups of Saudi English learners.

2.2.3 English in Saudi Arabia

The large region now known as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was divided and governed by traditional Arab tribal rule until the start of the 20th century. In 1902, the founder of modern day Saudi Arabia, King Abdul-Aziz Al Saud (Ibn Saud), started unifying the local Bedouin tribes to form a modern state. The Saudi King received the support of Great Britain until the 1930s, and that of the United States following the Second World War (Faruk, 2013; Niblock, 2006, pp. 27-29). These two inner circle countries supported Ibn Saud against the other regional powers in the Middle East, and this explains the early adoption of English as a

foreign language within the formal education system, in order to assist the new state's integration with the rest of the world (Al-Abed Al-Haq & Smadi, 1996; Faruk, 2013; Niblock, 2006). English became even more relevant to Saudi Arabia after the Second World War, when the Kingdom was recognized as a geographically and strategically important ally for the United States (Niblock, 2006). The two countries signed several security, educational and political agreements during the period of the Cold War (Faruk, 2013; Niblock, 2006), making the use of English vital within the country, specifically at the administrative level. However, the expansion of English throughout Saudi Arabia came after the early 1940s and the discovery of oil with the assistance of the American oil companies (Niblock, 2006; Zuhur, 2011).

The Saudi oil company (Aramco), now the largest oil company in the world, was initially established, run and secured by thousands of Americans (Zuhur, 2011, p. 117), who lived in the country for more than four decades prior to the nationalization of the company. The United States, the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia also secured numerous economic partnerships and oil-for-arms treaties during this period (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014), with the result that American and British varieties of English became the most dominant in the country. English was, and remains, an official language besides Arabic at Aramco, as well as in industrial cities such as Jubail and Yanbu, where non-English employees, including Saudis and Arab expatriates, are required to have a good command of English before being employed in the oil industry (Zughoul, 1978, p. 215). Furthermore, thousands of non-Arabic workers from different countries regularly come to the country to work or engage in religious tourism, resulting in the use of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in the country (Al-Rawi, 2012). Thus, ELF has established itself as a significant tool for communication among non-native speakers of Arabic and English living in Saudi Arabia.

It is important to note here that Arabic is the dominant language in Saudi Arabia, as it is the only native language and is formally used throughout the country. It is also the mother

tongue of around 250 million people across the Arab World, and is the language used for religious purposes throughout the Islamic World. Conversely, English can be considered as the second most used language for communication in the country, and the only foreign language taught in the formal education context. As noted previously, it is extensively used in international institutions, by industry and in international companies. It is also used alongside Arabic in the media, on road signs, at airports, universities, hospitals, and ministries. Additionally, the need for, as well as the status of the English language has recently expanded in Saudi Arabia, due to the economic changes taking place there. For example, Saudi Arabia has recently been included in the Group of Twenty Countries (G20), which represent the twenty major global economies. Aware of the importance of the economy to the country's future, the Saudi Government launched an economic reform project (Saudi Vision 2030) in 2016, aiming to strengthen the economy by reducing its dependence on oil, supporting diversity, and developing health, infrastructure, education, recreation and tourism.

These recent economic changes in the country have increased the need to develop the English language proficiency levels of all Saudi citizens, as it is no longer possible to ignore the fact that the demand for qualified Saudis fluent in English has increased dramatically recently, especially when the Saudi government adopted its nationalization scheme (officially called *Saudisation*) aimed at gradually substituting the expatriate workforce with a qualified and well-trained national one (Looney, 2004; Ramady, 2010). The above-mentioned reasons, alongside the global spread of technology and the media, have significantly contributed to the expansion of English in Saudi Arabia as an important language, specifically in the context of education. However, although English now plays a significant role in the country, Saudi EFL learners have encountered challenges learning and using English effectively. The following subsection provides details about how English was introduced into the Saudi Education Systems and discusses some of the problems facing Saudi learners of English.

2.2.3.1   EFL in the Saudi Education System

Obligatory formal education in Saudi Arabia began in 1923 after the establishment of the Knowledge Directorate, which later became the Ministry of Education. Formal education at that time comprised of two educational stages, spanning seven years: three years for preparatory education, and four years for primary education. After 1942, formal education was made available in three educational stages over twelve years: six years of primary education, three years of intermediate education, and three years of secondary education. Although the formal education system in Saudi Arabia provides education mainly in Arabic, the English language is increasingly present. English was first introduced into the primary education setting with four forty-five-minute classes weekly (1928-1942) (Al-Seghayer, 2014; Elyas & AlGrigri, 2014). It was later introduced at intermediate level with twelve forty-five minute classes per week (1942-1980), and at the secondary level with eight forty-five minute classes (1980-2003) (Al-Salloum, 1991; Elyas & AlGrigri, 2014). Since the initial introduction of EFL in schools, educational policies and plans have been amended several times (see Figure 2.3) responding to various factors. As mentioned above, the status and function of English has expanded rapidly in the education system, in response to the rapid growth and development of the Saudi economy.

The historical development of English in Saudi Formal Education

1928-1942

Preparatory Stage (3 grades)	Primary Stage (4 grades) • four 45 min classes per week

1942-1980

Primary Stage (6 grades)	Intermediate Stage (3 grades) • twelve 45 min classes per week	Secondary Stage (3 grades) • eight 45 min classes per week

1980-2003

Primary Stage (6 grades)	Intermediate Stage (3 grades) • four 45 min classes per week	Secondary Stage (3 grades) • four 45 min classes per week

2003-today

Primary Stage (6 grades) • two 45 min classes per week in the 3 higher grades	Intermediate Stage (3 grades) • four 45 min classes per week	Secondary Stage (3 grades) • four 45 min classes per week

Figure 2.3 The Historical development of English in Saudi Formal Education

Despite the tremendous efforts of the Ministry of Education, English teaching is suffering seriously at many levels, and outcomes have not been satisfying. Typically students learn English simply to pass exams, and so the written and verbal communication levels of the majority of formally educated secondary school graduates who have studied English for about

nine years are insufficiently advanced; most are unable to engage in a basic conversation, and their level of English is well below satisfactory (see: Al-Seghayer, 2005, 2011, 2014; Al-Zahrani, 2008; Elyas & AlGrigri, 2014; Shah et al., 2013). Therefore, one of the focuses of English education programs going forward needs to be improving the pragmatic competence of learners. Over the last decade, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approaches have been implemented by the Ministry of Education in state schools in an attempt to overcome these shortfalls and enable Saudi EFL learners to engage meaningfully in learning English. Certainly, a range of language functions have been developed in the syllabi, with the addition of contexts that learners would be expected to encounter. Nevertheless, students still struggle to participate in basic communication, especially with NSEs, who continue to abound in the economic, industrial and military cities of Saudi Arabia.

Higher education institutions, by contrast, have strived to play a leading role in improving English education in the country. The higher education sector dates to the 1930s, and the Scholarship Preparation School, founded in 1936 in Mecca, was the first high school to teach EFL in the country, to prepare Saudis wishing to continue their studies abroad after completing formal education (Al-Ghamdi & Al-Saddat, 2002). King Saud University established its first English department in 1957, and EFL departments were quickly added to Saudi higher education institutions (Al-Abed Al-Haq & Smadi, 1996; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). Today, all Saudi universities (around 35 registered universities) teach English as a subject in EFL departments, teach EFL courses in different departments, and also adopt English as a medium of instruction for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines. English departments at Saudi universities deliver four-year first degrees in EFL, requiring students to take intensive English language instruction in addition to courses in translation, linguistics, and literature. In other academic disciplines, students usually take five to ten semester courses in English throughout the duration of their studies. EFL departments are, in most cases, also responsible for teaching EFL courses to the other

departments and colleges. However, the majority of Saudi EFL departments rarely teach pragmatics, which is one area that this study suggests higher education providers would benefit from considering.

Generally speaking, higher education institutions have attempted to assist in providing Saudi students with satisfactory communicative competence in English and to compensate for the poor levels of English instruction in formal education. However, a number of fundamental challenges continue to face the teaching and learning of English in Saudi Arabia; including the lack of daily relevance of English to people's lives and needs, the components of the curriculum itself, the lack of qualified and committed teachers, and the use of poor teaching methods (see Al-Seghayer, 2014). One of the main difficulties, raised recently, has been that Saudi learners of English lack the knowledge to determine the appropriate uses of linguistic forms for different situations (See Rouissi, 2014). They have shown a relative inability to use English effectively in context, which causes cross-cultural miscommunication, which is pragmatic failure, as further discussed in the coming sections. To overcome the above-mentioned shortfalls in local education, and to help execute economic policies and improve English instruction in the country, the Saudi government has established ESL scholarship programmes, as detailed below.

2.2.3.2   ESL Scholarship programs

Several educational and non-educational governmental bodies in Saudi Arabia have developed their own scholarship programmes to improve the English levels of Saudis, and to ensure they are adequately qualified. Institutions offering scholarships include the Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, Saudi universities, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Civil Service, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Defence and the Saudi National Guard, for example (Al-Abed Al-Haq & Smadi, 1996; Al-Ghamdi & Al-Saddat, 2002; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). Another important scholarship programme is The King's

Scholarship Programme (KSP), which is run by the Ministry of Education and targets students interested in studying abroad.

The KSP, which started in 2006, is one of the largest scholarship programmes in the Middle East. It sends thousands of male and female Saudis to study abroad every year, mostly in English speaking countries. Its aim is to produce graduates who will become instrumental in the sustainability and success of Saudi universities, as well as of benefit to the public and private sectors. The programme is also intended to bring to fruition recent economic policies, by enabling Saudis who have completed their studies abroad to access jobs and positions within the governmental and non-governmental sectors, enhancing their social and economic prospects, and helping them communicate with expatriates, who represent around 30% of the population. It is a sample of this group of young Saudis studying English in the UK that comprise the ESL group studied for this research. Following the above discussion about English in Saudi Arabia, this chapter now turns, in more detail, to introducing the field of pragmatics, and its role in SLA.

2.3   The Field of Pragmatics

The term pragmatics originates from the philosophy of language and dates to the late 1930s. Charles Morris (1938), being influenced by the work of Charles Sanders Peirce (1905) on the *philosophy of pragmatism*, first introduced pragmatics as one of three branches of the science of signs −which are syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (Leech, 1983; Levinson, 1983; Mey, 2006; Morris, 1938). In relation to pragmatics, Morris (1938) clarifies that this branch examines the relation between signs (i.e. linguistic expressions) and their users (as individuals and communities). Prior to the 1960s, pragmatics was thought of as an area in the philosophy of language dedicated to issues relating to uses of language that could not be integrated into the field of linguistics (Leech, 1983, p. 1). However, in the late 1960s and early 1970s,

language usage and context attracted growing interest, and pragmatics was gradually accepted as a branch of linguistics.

Nevertheless, many scholars have found it difficult to define the term pragmatics and its scope (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Horn & Ward, 2004; Levinson, 1983; Thomas, 1995). The field of pragmatics is traditionally held to encompass, a minimum of five loosely-related broad areas: speech acts, deixis, presupposition, conversational implicature, and conversational structure (Levinson, 1983). Moreover, in the literature, pragmatics covers a wide range of research topics, ranging from politeness in business meetings, to ethnic verbal stereotypes in sociological studies. This diversity and multiplicity of pragmatic domains and topics complicates attempts to delimit its scope (Sperber & Wilson, 2005). Levinson (1983) was one of the first researchers to seek to do so; in his book entitled *pragmatics*, he tries to describe pragmatics over 30 pages and concludes that satisfactorily defining pragmatics is challenging given its extensive range of relevance. However, a great number of the definitions of pragmatics (see below) include a reference to *language use* and *meaning* in context, both of which are essential components of communication. Leech (1983, p. 6), for example, defines pragmatics as "the study of meaning in relation to speech situations". Likewise, Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993, p. 3) describe pragmatics as the study of "people's comprehension and production of linguistic action in *context*". Thomas (1995, p. 22) simply refers to pragmatics as the study of "meaning in interaction" suggesting:

> Meaning is not something inherent in the words alone, nor is it produced by the speaker alone, nor by the hearer alone. Making meaning is a dynamic process, involving the negotiation of meaning between speaker and hearer the context of utterance (physical, social, linguistic) and the meaning potential of an utterance.

Also emphasizing the role of pragmatics in communicating meaning, O'Keeffe, Clancy, and Adolphs (2011, pp. 2-3) define it "as the study of the relationship between context and

meaning", adding that pragmatics is concerned with "accounting for the processes that give rise to a particular interpretation of an utterance that is used in a particular context". As can be concluded from the above definitions, pragmatics is concerned with the study of how language is used, integrated, meant and interpreted by users in reference to context. Thus, it differs from syntax, which abstractly deals with the form of language, and semantics which is concerned with the meaning encoded in language (Ninio & Snow, 1996).

The chief characteristic of pragmatics then is that it concerns both language use and meaning in *context*. Thus, questions such as what the concept of context means, and the types of relationship possible between meaning, use of language and context, are major concerns of scholars interested in pragmatics (Levinson, 1983; O'Keeffe et al., 2011). However, context is as multifaceted a term as pragmatics itself, and has also been defined variously according to different criteria (see Leech, 1983; Levinson, 1983; Lyons, 1968; Richards, Platt, & Platt, 1992). Several researchers, for example, view context as a psychological construct, a subset of the hearer's assumptions of the world (see Sperber & Wilson, 1986, pp. 12-18). This means that context is exclusively mind based (not physical or social), with no independent existence in the outside world. However, it is safe to say that the majority of researchers define context as the immediate linguistic, non-linguistic and social situation and setting in which an utterance takes place, demanding consideration of the interlocutors, and their beliefs and assumptions about temporal, spatial, and social settings (see Cutting, 2008; Duranti & Goodwin, 1992; Fetzer, 2007; Hurford & Heasley, 1983, pp. 67-70; Ochs, 1979; Searle, 1969). In this sense, in other words, context can be referred to the linguistic, non-linguistic, cognitive, sociocultural, and social knowledge that influence the use and interpretation of the utterance under examination.

Despite the above, broader descriptions of pragmatics are useful when understanding what this field is generally about, as they do not appear to account for all the topics researched in the field of pragmatics, such as *conversational implicatures* for example. Yule (1996, p. 3)

offered a description for pragmatics that intended to include all aspects of pragmatics, by suggesting that pragmatics is "concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader). It has, consequently, more to do with the analysis of what people mean by their utterances than what the words or phrases in those utterances might mean by themselves." This allows Yule (1996) to summarize pragmatics as the study of:

- Speaker meaning,
- Contextual attributions to meaning,
- Listener's inferences and interpretation of utterances, and
- Relative distance between interlocutors.

In addition to highlighting the above four main concerns of pragmatics, Yule (1996) listed and discussed, in his book entitled *pragmatics*, all the research areas studied in the field, including: reference and inference, deixis and distance, presupposition and entailment, speech acts and events, cooperation and implicature, politeness and interaction, conversation and preference structure, discourse and culture. This is significant, because, listing areas to define the scope of pragmatics demonstrates the difficulties associated with providing a clear and precise definition. Moreover, by stressing the inclusion of all these elements, Yule (1996) emphasizes the obscurities inherent in the concept of pragmatics.

Nevertheless, since Yule's (1996) definition offers a relatively broad view of pragmatics, reflecting a variety of areas of research in the domain of ILP, it is used as a starting point herein, from which to develop the scope of the literature review. Based on this understanding of pragmatics, this field is necessary to gain "a fuller, deeper and generally more reasonable account of human language behaviour" (Mey, 2001, p. 12). In particular it is vital to understand the nature of the language commonly used in communication by examining its communicative context and the interlocutors involved (Leech, 1983, p. 1). Pragmatics is also the only field of linguistics that considers the human variable when

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analysing language (Yule, 1996, p. 4), thereby encouraging the study of the linguistic choices of users (speakers) when interacting, reflecting on their intended meaning, the influences of other non-linguistic factors on their choices, and the impact of their utterances on listeners.

Before moving to the next section, it is vital and relevant to elucidate two important subfields of pragmatics, i.e. interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) and cross-cultural pragmatics (CCP). ILP, the area in which this study is situated, is diverse and belongs to two linguistic disciplines: (1) *Second Language Acquisition* (SLA) since ILP concerns the acquisition of the communicative aspects of language, and (2) *Pragmatics* as ILP shares common interests, concepts and theories with pragmatics (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). Although the ambiguities associated with the notion of pragmatics influenced understanding of the scope of ILP, the scope of pragmatic topics within ILP is narrower than in the field of pragmatics, including in relation to the investigation of speech acts, and to a lesser extent conversational implicature and conversational structure (see Bardovi-Harlig, 2012). Since the study of speech acts dominates the subfield of ILP, this subfield is widely defined as the study of "non-native speakers' comprehension and production of speech acts and the acquisition of L2 related speech act knowledge" (G. Kasper & M. Dahl, 1991, p. 215).

A significant number of ILP studies have focused on the pragmatics of L2 learners when engaged in L2 speech acts, suggesting that pragmatic competence is vital to using an L2 properly (see Abdul Sattar et al., 2010; Al-Ammar, 2000; Al-Eryani, 2007; Al-Kahtani, 2005; Beebe et al., 1990; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Collentine, 2004; DeKeyser, 1991; Dewey, 2004; Diaz-Campos, 2004; El-Shazly, 1993; Freed et al., 2004; Schauer, 2006; Taguchi, 2008). Additionally, the role of culture in SLA and the effect of L1 culture on the acquisition of L2 pragmatics have been also extensively discussed in ILP studies emphasising that understanding the cultural aspect of language is important for successful communication. Thus, ILP studies are interrelated with Cross-Cultural Pragmatics (CCP) studies in many respects; however, CCP, which started gaining prominence in the realm of pragmatics in the

1980s, investigates certain aspects of language use (such as speech acts) across different cultures, and many studies have been conducted in this regard (e.g. Abdul Sattar et al., 2010; Al-Eryani, 2007; Al-Issa, 2003; Al-Kahtani, 2005; Aliakbari & Changizi, 2012; Allami & Naeimi, 2011; Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1991; Beebe et al., 1990; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Chang, 2009; Chen, 2006; Felix-Brasdefer, 2004; Gass & Houck, 1999; Henstock, 2003; Ikoma & Shimura, 1994; Li, 2007; Liao & Bresnahan, 1996; Nelson, Carson, Al-Batal, & El Bakary, 2002; Ramos, 1991; Sadeghi & Savojbolaghchilar, 2011; Stevens, 1993; Wierzbicka, 1985, 2003, 2006). In CCP studies, as well as in ILP studies, it was observed that cultural norms −including sociolinguistic rules of speaking, politeness strategies, common social space, and also ideas, skills and customs that characterize a given group of people − in a speech community are reflected in the performance of speech acts (see D. Brown, 2000; Kramsch, 1998; Lee, 2009; Wierzbicka, 1985, 2003, 2006), and that speech communities share detectable patterns of speech including cultural ways of speaking (cf. Katriel, 1985; Yule, 1996).

In summary, the area of pragmatics investigating the acquisition of speech acts by L2 learners is termed as ILP, which emphasizes that the acquisition and development of pragmatic knowledge about a target language is one of the most important aspects of successful communication (see Place & Becker, 1991). Pragmatic competence, a key concept evaluated in this study, is thoroughly investigated within ILP, as it describes how L2 learners investigate language meaningfully in context, bridging the gap between conventional sentence meaning (what is said) and the speaker's meaning (what is implicated).

2.4 Pragmatic Competence

Since the idea of pragmatic competence stems from the notion of communicative competence, the discussion begins with a brief introduction of the latter. Hymes' introduced the concept of *communicative competence* in the late 1960s, transforming the face of L2

teaching, through the integration of pragmatics. Hymes' concept of communicative competence was introduced in reaction to Noam Chomsky's (1965) notion of 'linguistic competence', connecting a speaker's knowledge of language (i.e. linguistic competence), with the ability to use this knowledge appropriately and successfully in communication. In Hymes' words (1972, p. 283), communicative competence is considered a general term "for the capabilities of a person [….] Competence is dependent upon both (tacit) knowledge and (ability for) use. Knowledge is distinct, then, both from competence (as its part) and from systemic possibility (to which its relation is an empirical matter)". Hymes thus included the linguistic, cultural and sociolinguistic aspects in his theory of 'communicative competence' (see D. Brown, 1994, p. 227, for more on this). Canale and Swain (1980, pp. 29-30) elaborated on Hymes' theory, suggesting that it is comprised of three competences: 1) *grammatical competence*, which is the knowledge of lexical items, rules of syntax and semantics; 2) *sociolinguistic competence* referring to the sociocultural rules informing language use; and 3) strategic competence, which involves verbal and non-verbal communication strategies. Despite the lack of an explicit mention of pragmatic competence in Hymes' concept of communicative competence, or in Canale and Swain's classification of this concept, Kasper (2001, p. 503) suggests pragmatic competence was an inherent part of the definition of sociolinguistic competence as introduced by Canale and Swain. This highlights that pragmatic competence is largely drawn from communicative competence (see Kasper, 2001; Savignon, 1991), which is implicitly thought of as a form of sociolinguistic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980) and more specifically as rules for language use (Canale, 1983).

Pragmatic competence has been also elaborated upon and reformulated into various conceptualizations. For example, Thomas (1983, p. 92) defined it as "the ability to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context". Taguchi (2009, p. 1) also describes pragmatic competence as "the ability to use

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language appropriately in a social context". Offering a more targeted definition, Fraser (2010, p. 15) describes pragmatic competence as "the ability to communicate your intended message with all its nuances in any socio-cultural context and to interpret the message of your interlocutor as it was intended". All the above definitions, and those used elsewhere in the literature, suggest that pragmatic competence can be understood as comprised of four fundamental elements: (1) the ability to use and interpret language in the right social contexts for the right purposes (see Bialystok, 1993; Kasper, 1997), (2) the capacity to understand and use rules of appropriateness and politeness that affect the formulation and understanding of speech acts (see Koike, 1989), (3) the skill to comprehend and produce pragmatic aspects successfully (see Ellis, 1994, p. 719), and (4) the ability to understand speakers' intentions (see Sperber & Wilson, 1986). Consequently, pragmatic failure can occur if learners violate any one of these elements. Nevertheless, L2 learners might use the target language 'differently' (from NSE) without necessarily being 'wrong'; for example, they might overuse a form that would still be regarded as acceptable, demonstrating that pragmatic competence is present (this will be highlighted in chapters 4 and 5).

Undoubtedly, pragmatic competence in communication is essential for ESL and EFL learners. This is because, as explained previously, pragmatic errors, unlike linguistic ones, can have serious consequences, such as causing offence, and potentially resulting in failure to obtain employment, promotions, or good grades. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986, p. 168) provided an example of a pragmatic misunderstanding that occurred in Hebrew between a Norwegian teacher (1) and a Hebrew technician (2):

> (1): If it is not too much bother, could you please make a
> videocassette of this lesson?

> (2): When have I ever refused to prepare a cassette for
> you? I'm really surprised at you!

The miscommunication here arises because the teacher's request is too elaborate and falls

outside the pragmatic norms for requesting in Hebrew, leading the technician to perceive it as a complaint or criticism.

On a related note, two components of pragmatic competence have been distinguished in the field of pragmatics: *pragmalinguistic* and *sociopragmatic* competences (Kasper & C., 2005; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983). Pragmalinguistics, in general, can be applied to the study of the more linguistic aspects of pragmatics, as it refers to "the range of resources from which speakers of language have to choose when using that language" (Barron, 2003, pp. 7-8). These resources are consequently used for "conveying communicative acts and relational or interpersonal meanings" (Rose & Kasper, 2001, p. 2), and so include pragmatic strategies (e.g. directness, indirectness, and politeness), pragmatic routines, and modifications that are used in communication to soften, justify or intensify speech. Based on this, pragmalinguistic competence concerns selecting the right language function or correct linguistic form to convey a particular illocutionary force. On the other hand, sociopragmatics forms the "sociological interface of pragmatics", which examines how pragmatic principles and pragmatic performance are subject to certain social conditions, such as interlocutors' social distance, power, rights, and the level of imposition involved in speech (Leech, 1983, p. 10). Thus, sociopragmatic competence is more related to understanding social distance, power, and impositions in certain events (P. Brown & S. Levinson, 1987), and also includes the understanding of conventional practices within communities, including taboos, rights, and obligations (Thomas, 1983). Hence, the notions of pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics, and the distinctions between them, are critical for understanding language in social use. At the pragmalinguistic level, the current study examines differences between groups in terms of their use of pragmatic strategies, and modifications made when performing requests and refusals. Meanwhile, at the sociopragmatic level it investigates whether or not participating groups vary their answers along contextual parameters, namely, relative to the degree of imposition and social status.

Thomas (1983, p. 95) also coined the term of 'pragmatic failure' to explain the lack of pragmatic competence, and Barron (2003, pp. 36-60) suggested that 'pragmatic failure' by L2 learners often occur for several reasons:

- Pragmatic overgeneralizations, where L2 learners sometimes apply pragmatic norms to all contexts that are only used in specific contexts.

- Transference from L1, where L2 learners might lack knowledge of target pragmatic rules and transfer knowledge resulting from their own cultural norms.

- Teaching or textbook related errors, where false information is given, or where textbooks do not reflect authentic language use.

The literature also debates a number of significant factors known to influence the development of learners' pragmatic competence, such as the availability of pragmatic input, methods of instruction, learners' L2 proficiency, the length of exposure to an L2 and pragmatic transfer (see Bardovi-Harlig, 2001, p. 24) – all these issues are covered in the results and discussion chapters..

Since the notion of pragmatic competence owe their development to key theories such as the SAT, Gricean theory of conversation and politeness theory, these key theories are thoroughly reviewed in the following sections. First, the concept of speech act, specifically Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1979) works on speech acts, are discussed in section 2.5. This is followed with Grice's (1975, 1978, 1989) theory of conversation in section 2.6. The Politeness Theory of Brown and Levinson (1987) then are presented in section 2.7.

2.5 Speech Act Theory (SAT)

SAT, as a language use theory, is a central consideration in the domain of pragmatics, and "one of the most compelling notions in the study of language use" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p. 1). Austin (1962) introduced SAT to examine utterances from the perspective of their functions, rather than their forms. According to Austin, SAT is predicated on the assumption that any minimal functional unit of communication not only involves the expression of an

idea but also the performance of a certain type of action, such as requesting, warning, refusing or apologizing. Therefore, according to Austin, a speech act is an utterance with a performative action in language or communication; when a speaker says "*I warn you*" for example, she is not expressing a warning, but carrying a warning (utterance with performative action). Austin (1962) also proposed that any speech act can be broken down into three elements: (1) locution, (2) illocution and (3) perlocution:

- *Locution* refers to the actual words uttered by the speaker, including their verbal, syntactic and semantic characteristics. For example, the literal meaning of '*It's hot in here!*', which is a comment on the weather, is the locutionary act.

- *Illocution* refers to the intended functional meaning of the speaker's words, i.e. the action the speaker intends by saying these words. For example, the illocutionary act or force in the previous example might convey a request, i.e. '*Could you please open the window?*'

- Finally, *perlocution* refers to the actual impact of the utterance on the recipients, i.e. the listeners' interpretation or reaction to the speech act.

The notion of illocution is central to SAT, and is thoroughly discussed in the literature examining pragmatics and ILP, because it is a vital component of successful communication. The illocutionary act is a term associated with level of illocution, and it refers to the speaker's intention to produce a particular speech act (Leech, 1983, p. 200), such as promising, advising or warning.

Austin clearly considered speech acts as *performative utterances* referring to the actual act that is being - or which is intended to be - performed through the use of particular words. Moreover, he considered certain verbs in certain speech acts as performative, such as the verb *request*, in the utterance "*I hereby request you to give me the house keys*". Likewise, *refuse* is a performative verb when used in the speech act of refusal, and *promise* is a performative verb in the speech act of promising. However, performative verbs are often used atypically and are not always socially acceptable when performing speech acts. Rather their functions

are performed indirectly in dissimilar ways using different words, based on several constraints; such cases are known as indirect speech acts, and these are suggested by Searle (1979) in his approach of SAT that greatly contributed to this theory.

Searle (1979) proposed the term *indirect speech acts*, and thereby expanding Austin's illocutionary acts. Searle (1979, pp. 31-32) argued that the speaker sometimes "communicates to the hearer more than he actually says by way of relying on their mutually shared background information, both linguistic and non-linguistic, together with the general powers of rationality and inference on the part of the hearer". In direct speech acts, speakers say exactly what they mean (e.g. Open the window!), whereas in indirect speech acts, speakers intend to convey something beyond what they say (e.g. Would you mind opening the window?) to convey politeness, or something intended to imply the need for a non-specified action (e.g. It is hot in here). In reference to this, Searle suggests that illocutionary force, as suggested by Austin, can be denoted by linguistic features, and so linked conventionally or unconventionally to force. For example, "*I will do the chores today*" can be taken as a *promise*, because of the presence of the future modal *will*.

Additionally, Searle (1979) emphasized that illocutionary force could be reduced and increased in speech acts through the use of different linguistic forms. Taking the example of the speech act of requests; either of the utterances, "*Could you please open the window?*" and "*Open the window!*" can be used for the same function. However, they have distinct pragmalinguistic features, which requires the speaker to have adequate pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competences to use them successfully, and to match the utterance to the situation by reducing or increasing the illocutionary force (Searle, 1979, p. 3). Searle also added that the direct use of a request, or a refusal implicating a high illocutionary force, for example, would not be appropriate in some speech communities. For example, people from English speaking cultures often avoid imperatives (e.g. "*Open the window*"), avoiding using direct speech acts to request things (see Wierzbicka, 1991). Instead, speakers are more likely

to use indirect speech acts, such as "*Do you mind opening the window*?" which is perceived as more polite, according to Brown and Levinson (1987). However, degrees of directness, as well as the pragmalinguistic and sociolinguistic features used depend on context, as mentioned earlier.

Searle (1979, pp. 8-12) also proposed a revised taxonomy of speech acts, grouping them into five classes, according to their illocutionary forces: (1) representatives, such as boast, assert, conclude, or deduce, (2) directives such as request, command, question, or beg, (3) commissives, such as promise, offer, refuse or threaten, (4) Expressives, such as thank, complain, congratulate, welcome, or apologize, and (5) declaratives, such as to declare war, marry, christen, fire, or appoint. This taxonomy of speech acts has been widely used, and is accepted as the basis for classifying speech acts in many ILP studies (see sections 2.8 & 2.9).

Although the two approaches taken by Austin and Searle to illuminating SAT are still widely referred to in reference to the domain of pragmatics, several pragmaticians (especially conversational analysts) have criticized SAT for not providing a comprehensive treatment of all types of speech and interaction in language. Mey (1993, p. 207), for example, points out that SAT provides "a kind of mini-scenario for what is happening in language interaction and [speech acts] suggest a simple way of explaining the more or less predictable sequences of conversation". Additionally, since language is multifunctional, and a particular utterance might be intended to perform several acts simultaneously, it can be difficult to assign a single function to an utterance (see Leech & Thomas, 1990; Levinson, 1983). This theory has been also criticized for not offering a clear mechanism that we can use to determine what speech act is being performed in some cases, as the coding schemes of speech acts are quite subjective and there may not exist a natural universal taxonomy for each speech act (cf Leech & Thomas, 1990). Despite these valid criticisms, it is safe to say that conceptualizing categories of speech act has made an important contribution to the study of communication in general, and to the examination of pragmatic competence in particular (see Cohen, Morgan, &

Pollack, 1990). Moreover, there have been other pragmatic theories and frameworks that complement this theory, illustrate how people interact with one another, and address how people generally behave in communication. Such work includes Grice's (1975, 1978, 1989) theory of conversation (including his *Cooperative Principle* and its *attendant maxims*), and the Politeness Theory of Brown and Levinson (1987), which are all discussed below.

2.6 Grice's Theory of Conversation

Since Grice's views about communication have influenced most recent approaches to pragmatics, this section is devoted to briefly shed light on his ideas that are relevant to this study. Grice (1975, 1978, 1989) noted that ideally, in an interactive communicative situation, people mutually collaborate following universal communication principles, providing one another with enough information to establish mutual understanding (see also Leech, 1983; Brown and Levinson, 1978). This was captured by Grice's Cooperative Principle, which brought about a significant development in the field of pragmatics (especially in the area of speech acts). Since requests and refusals (the analytical focus of this study) demand cooperation from both speakers and hearers to be successful, it is important to explain how cooperative communication occurs between interlocutors. The cooperative principle, in Grice's (1975, p. 45) words, seeks to "make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged". In this regard, the cooperative principle is elaborated according to four sub-principles called *conversational maxims* or Gricean Maxims: (1) quantity, referring to the idea that one's conversational contribution (i.e. utterances) needs to convey a message that is sufficiently informative (no more or less informative than necessary); (2) quality, which relates to the fact that utterances have to convey a message of truth affording adequate evidence; (3) relation, which means utterances have to be relevant to the context of the conversation; and (4) manner, which implies utterances have to be clear,

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orderly, to the point and unambiguous (Grice, 1975, pp. 46-47). However, speakers sometimes consciously flout these maxims, to align their utterances with boundaries establishing social appropriateness and politeness; the notion of politeness was never explicitly introduced in Grice's work on communication, but his research has nevertheless been used as a basis for developing principles of politeness (see the following subsection).

In his elaboration of the maxims, Grice coined the term *implicature* to refer to what is suggested in utterances (what is unsaid). This is contrasted with his notion of 'what is said', which, aside from reference assignment and disambiguation, relates entirely to the conventional meaning of the words uttered –something similar to what modern pragmaticians might call an *explicature* today. Indeed, as expressed by Horn (2005b, p. 3) "what a speaker intends to communicate is characteristically far richer than what she directly expresses; linguistic meaning radically underdetermines the message conveyed and understood". Consider, for instance, the following utterance given in the table below and the propositions it may implicate.

WHAT IS SAID	CONVERSATIONAL IMPLICATURE
Are you really watching this program?	• This programme bores me. • Can we turn the television off? • Could you please move and clean the house now?

Table 2.1: Examples of 'what is said' and 'what propositions it may implicate'

As mentioned earlier, Grice showed that to recover the speakers' intended message as well as to bridge the gap between *what is said* and *what is implicated*, hearers need to relate utterances to the context of conversation and involve other non-linguistic aspects taking sentence meaning as a vehicle for this. For example, if the speaker is yawning, the programme is boring (Expressive Speech Act) – that information is in the context. Or if the hoover is out and the room is dusty, it is salient in the context that you need to do some housework (Directive Speech Act). These issues captured from Grice's work on communication and his cooperative principle –that became the groundwork for modern pragmatics (e.g. Gazdar,

1979; Horn, 1984, 1996; Horn, 2005a; Horn & Ward, 2004; Levinson, 1983, 2000)– is referred to in the current analysis of refusals and requests wherever relevant. Following the discussion undertaken here, another fundamental element of pragmatic competence, the ability to understand and use politeness rules that affect the formulation of speech, will be further examined when discussing the politeness theories set out below.

2.7 Politeness Theory

In order to communicate effectively in a target language, it is necessary for the language learner to adjust to the way its native speakers think, perceive and behave. Competent L2 learners are expected to know, for example, the boundaries delimiting the requirement for politeness when communicating with native speakers. Researchers have argued that interlocutors need to adopt native speaker politeness strategies to promote successful use of a new language, to avoid conflict and to maintain successful interactive relationships (P. Brown & S. Levinson, 1987; Lakoff, 1973; Leech, 1983). Politeness has been one of the most researched areas of pragmatics, as it is an important socio-behavioural norm regulating communication, and is generally understood in speech acts studies as a "pragmatic mechanism" by which a variety of structures work together according to the speaker's intention to achieve smooth communication (Mey, 1993, p. 23).

One of the earliest attempts to provide a detailed account of politeness and its varied manifestations was the framework provided by Goffman (1967), who considered politeness as a theory of behaviour, introducing the concept of face as a "positive social value a person effectively claims for [him or herself]" (p.5). Since then, face has been elaborated upon in most theories of politeness that followed. Lakoff (1977, p. 87) also conducted early work on politeness, suggesting that successful communication between people should fulfil two chief conditions: *clarity* and *politeness*. With regard to politeness, she explained that the more imposition reduces in speech, the more politeness increases, and she further proposed three rules for politeness from the perspective of speakers: (1) formality: do not impose, (2)

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hesitancy: give addressees a choice, and (3) camaraderie: make the hearer feel good. Similarly, Leech (1983, p. 82) proposes another framework for politeness theory, stating that politeness is important to "maintain the social equilibrium and the friendly relationships which enable us to assume that our interlocutors are being cooperative in the first place". He claims politeness results from the minimization of cost and the maximization of benefit to the hearer, and that FTA (such as requests and refusals) are by nature impolite. However, the majority of researchers have opposed this claim, stating that FTA require the utilization of politeness strategies, as the more threatening an act is to the hearer's face, the more pragmatic the skills demanded from the speaker (see P. Brown & S. Levinson, 1987; Fukushima, 1996).

Brown and Levinson's (1987) research contributed significantly to the study of politeness, developing the most influential model of politeness in the field of pragmatics and ILP, both of which have flourished over the last two or more decades. Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory, which draws principally upon Goffman's (1971) notion of face, argued that politeness in speech arises when both interlocutors work to preserve each other's faces, defining the term *face* as "the public self-image that every member [of a community] wants to claim for himself [or herself]" (P. Brown & S. C. Levinson, 1987, pp. 61-64). They also further conceptualize the face that individuals attribute to each other as having two aspects: negative face and positive face:

- An individual's negative face refers to his/her desire to be independent in reference to freedom of action, and not to be coerced or imposed upon. Negative face is threatened, for example, by impositions on a hearers' autonomy, and thus can be preserved by using conventionally indirect speech acts, employing sweeteners with the FTA, or minimizing the extent of the imposition.
- An individual's positive face refers to their desire to be acknowledged, connected, accepted and to have his/her wants shared by others. This kind of face is threatened when overlooking a hearer's wants or feelings, and can be saved by attending to and acknowledging the interlocutor's demands.

Base on this classification of face, some specific speech acts (such as orders and requests) are considered to be FTAs, as they impose upon the hearer's negative face, since these speech acts impede the hearers' freedom and impose upon it. Other speech acts (such as refusals) are more likely to prove to be FTAs, challenging the hearer's positive face, because they threaten the hearer's desire to be acknowledged, connected and accepted. In that sense, Brown and Levinson (1987) consider politeness as primarily a strategy to mitigate the imposition inherent in FTAs, to distinguish between polite and impolite behavior. They also list several strategies to avoid threatening positive face, such as avoiding disagreement, paying attention to a hearer's needs, joking, assuming reciprocity, and giving (or asking for) explanations. To avoid threatening an individual's negative face, Brown and Levinson (1987) also suggest strategies that acknowledge the hearer's freedom of action and avoidance of imposition on the hearer's negative face-wants.

Additionally, according to Brown and Levinson, speakers have three options when performing a FTA. First, they can "go bald on record", meaning they perform the speech act without mitigating or softening its illocutionary force; this is a strategy linked to the power of the speaker over the hearer. Speakers can also "go on record" using politeness markers, such as mitigation strategies (e.g. using *please* in requests, or hedging). Finally, speakers can "go off record" to minimize the imposition on the hearer, by relying on more indirect speech acts. In reference to this strategy, indirectness in the performance of FTAs, and politeness have been much discussed and connected in the domain of pragmatics (Márquez Reiter, 2000). In terms of the speech acts of requests, for example, research suggests indirect request strategies (e.g. *Would you mind opening the door, please?*) are most frequently used, and that these are considered more polite than direct requests (e.g. *Open the door, please*), because the illocutionary force is downgraded affording the interlocutors a variety of options (see Al-Ammar, 2000; Al-Gahtani & Roever, 2012; Alcón-Soler, Safont-Jordá, & Mártinez-Flor, 2005; Blum-Kulka & House, 1989). Furthermore, Brown and Levinson state that the degree

of threat in FTAs is dependent, in almost every culture, on three sociopragmatic factors: relative power, social distance and the ranking of imposition. For instance, a request from a close friend is generally perceived as less face threatening than that from a subordinate.

In general, many studies have employed Brown and Levinson' model as a theoretical framework in ILP research, aiming to compare L2 learners' politeness strategies when engaging in a FTA, with those produced by native speakers of the target languages (e.g. Bella, 2011; Blum-Kulka & House, 1989; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Byon, 2004; Carrell & Konneker, 1981; Faerch & Kasper, 1989; Nelson et al., 2002). Recent research in this area has also highlighted several limitations of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory (e.g. Culpeper, 2011; Dippold, 2009; Kasper, 1990; Locher & Watts, 2005; Mao, 1994; Watts, 2003). For example, Locher and Watts (2005) claim that Brown and Levinson's theory serves mainly as a theory of facework, identifying strategies to mitigate FTAs, rather comprising a comprehensive theory of politeness. Furthermore, Meier (1995) claimed that the theory is lacking because it ignores the speaker's face and focuses only on the hearer's face when defining and identifying FTAs. Expanding on this, Culpeper (2011, p. 409) pinpoints five main criticisms of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory: (1) claims of universality, (2) ignoring the layperson's conception of politeness, (3) failure to articulate context adequately, (4) models biased towards the speaker and the production of language, and (5) failure to adequately address impoliteness. These five points have all been discussed relatively frequently in recent literature regarding politeness theory; for example, with regard to the universality of the concepts of negative and positive face, several speech act studies in Polish, Japanese, and Chinese revealed negative politeness might prove irrelevant within these cultures (see Gu, 1990; Matsumoto, 1988; Wierzbicka, 1985).

These issues raised in reference to Brown and Levinson's theory have motivated several researchers to reconceptualize their theory, adding new ideas pertaining to face and politeness strategies (see Culpeper, 2011; Dippold, 2009; Kasper, 1990; Locher & Watts,

2005; Mao, 1994; Watts, 2003). It is generally agreed that while some of the most recent politeness theories have contributed to ILP research, it is impossible to consider the notion of politeness in depth without recourse to Brown and Levinson's theory. Thus, Brown and Levinson's politeness theory undoubtedly remains a very useful analytical framework for assessing and understanding politeness norms, and is considered the most authoritative framework for defining politeness in the area of pragmatics, especially within ILP research. Taken all the above-discussed issues into consideration, the thesis moves now to provide a more comprehensive discussion of the speech acts being investigated, focusing on the pragmatics of *requests* in section 2.8 and *refusals* in section 2.9.

2.8   The Speech Act of Requests

As mentioned previously, speech has been classified in pragmatics into several minimal functional units of communication (i.e. speech acts), and the study of these units has helped researchers to achieve a clearer understanding of the cultural values, pragmatic aspects, politeness strategies, and social rules governing speaking in speech communities. Of the many speech acts, *requests* have been extensively examined in ILP. Bouton (1988) defined a request as the act of asking someone to perform an action for your benefit when having no authority over them, and Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 61) classify a request as a "face-threatening" speech act, since the speaker is imposing on the hearer's "freedom of action". As such, requests in all languages are constrained by several sociocultural factors, and require the utilization of specific pragmatic strategies to soften the act, and minimize the threat to face (see Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; House & Kasper, 1981; Scarcella, 1979).

The concept of *imposition* is an important element in the speech act of request, and also in politeness theory. The degree of imposition varies when making requests in accordance with several factors, such as the actual action of the request itself, the level of

familiarity between the interlocutors and their respective social status (Scollon and Scollon, 1983, Brown and Levinson, 1987). For example, asking for a loan of ten pounds is less imposing than asking for 100 pounds. Likewise, requesting ten pounds from a close friend is relatively easier than requesting the same amount from a manager. Additionally, as observed by Brown and Levinson (1987) and confirmed in subsequent studies by other researchers, the weightiness of an imposition varies cross-culturally; therefore, an act that is highly imposing in one culture may not by imposing at all in another. Such cross-cultural variation is an important factor in communication breakdown between interlocutors from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, highlighting why research into the cross-cultural and ILP of the speech act of requests is valuable.

To examine and compare how requests are performed among individuals from different cultures and languages, a variety of studies have been conducted (since the commencement of speech act theory) to do so through investigating authentic patterns of requests (see Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Fukushima, 1996; House & Kasper, 1981; Scarcella, 1979; Scarcella & Brunack, 1979). However, the most influential study on requests was Blum-Kulka's and Olshtain's (1984) Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP). In CCSARP, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) investigated the sociocultural norms of requests (and apologies) in several languages, contributing significantly to the development of a coding schema to analyse how requests (and apologies) are made within different speech communities. Five years later, Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) released a revised draft of their CCSARP in book format, which has since become an influential tool for analysing requests across cultures and languages.

In CCSARP project, Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) collected requests from different groups of native speakers of English incorporating different varieties: British English, American English and Australian English. In addition, requests were included from learners of English from different linguistic backgrounds (i.e. Danish, French Canadian, Hebrew, Russian and

German). The CCSARP data was collected using a Discourse Completion Test (DCT), comprising eight incomplete requesting dialogues (missing the request) (section 3.4 contains detailed information about the DCT). The CCSARP dialogue situations incorporate different social constraints, such as social distance and social power, as well as several individual variables, including sex, age, and level of education. Having collected and examined the data, Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) confirmed that two basic components of requests can be identified in every culture: (1) the head act of the request, and (2) adjuncts to the head act, as illustrated in the following example:

- Excuse me, **would you be able to fill in my survey, please?** Don't worry if you don't have time.

- I apologize but unfortunately, I have something at the same time as our meeting this Wednesday. I know we have had to reschedule already, but I cannot change my other commitment. **I'm wondering if we are able to change our meeting to Thursday instead?**

The sentences underlined in bold are the head act of the request, while the remaining sentences/clauses are adjuncts to the head acts. In the head act of the request, two further elements were identified: request strategies (the actual requests) and internal modifications to mitigate the force of the request. In the adjuncts to the head act, additional external modifications were used to further soften the head act, as illustrated in the following graphic.
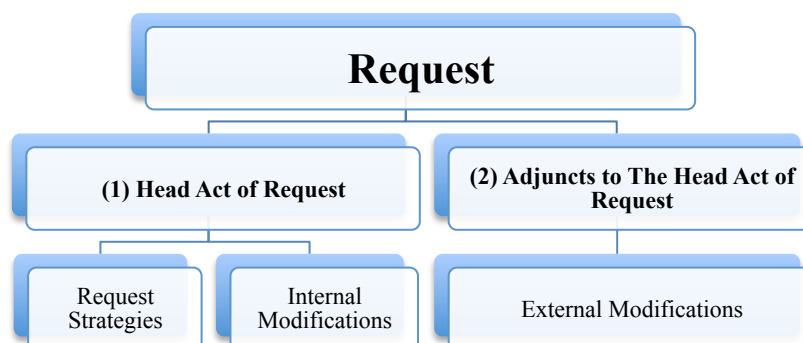
Figure 2.4 Parts of Requests

Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) claimed that the three elements of the speech act of request (i.e. request strategies, internal and external modifiers) are universal in every culture. With regard to request strategies, Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) stated that requests are realized in three major universal categories: (1) direct request strategies, (2) conventionally indirect request strategies, and (3) non-conventionally indirect request strategies (see also Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; House & Kasper, 1981; Searle, 1975, 1979). The first category of request strategies is the most direct (e.g. containing imperatives, as in the utterance, *"Open the window."*) and thereby the least polite, especially when making highly imposing requests. The second category includes conventionally indirect requests, including conventionalized requests observed within contextual preconditions, as in the utterance *"Could you open the window?"*. In the case of non-conventionally indirect requests (hints), these include requests reliant on interpreting contextual clues, as in: *"It's hot in here!"*, to hint that the hearer should open a window. It is noteworthy that the use of direct requests is more likely than the other strategies to violate the politeness norms of speech as mentioned by P. Brown and S. C. Levinson (1987), while the use of non-conventionally indirect requests could violate the maxim of relation and its attendant maxims, as discussed in Grice's work on the Cooperative Principle (1975, 1978, 1989).

In addition to the above classifications of request strategies in the head act of requests, Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) also presented a fine classification system for evaluating the internal and external modifiers that are used to modify the illocutionary force of request strategies. For example, the internal modifiers were subdivided into tow types: 1) internal downgraders used to reduce and soften the force of the request and 2) internal upgraders used to intensify the situation of requests. The external modifiers were also subdivided into several types such as: linguistic *alerters* for attracting requestees' attention, utterances to prepare interlocutors for requests, providing reasons or explanations for the request, sweeteners promise of reward (see chapter three for detailed descriptions of these types and subtypes with examples).

Although the CCSARP analysis focussed more on creating a systematic universal classification of requests (rather than on the pragmatic competence of participants), the following paragraphs afford a brief summary of the major findings in CCSARP of relevance to the present study. With regard to request strategies, common patterns in the use of request strategies were identified in all the cultures studied; for example, the results showed that direct requests (with different distributions of use across the languages examined) were used significantly less frequently than conventionally indirect requests, although more often than non-conventional request strategies (e.g. hints). Within the realm of conventionally indirect requests, question words concerning ability (can/could) were used with high frequency across all the languages studied, accounting for around 45% to 65% of request strategies. *Can/could* were thought of as a clear example of conventional indirect requests in terms of clarity and politeness. It was also apparent that direct requests were used more frequently in certain social situations, specifically when making requests from people of equal status (roommates), or requesting from those with a lower status (i.e. when a policeman requests something of a driver) (for more results on request strategies, see Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, pp. 37-95). With regard to internal and external modifications, all types and subtypes of these modifiers proposed were found in the collected requests (see chapter 3 for detailed descriptions with examples of these types and subtypes). Overall, internal downgrader modifiers were used in most languages and situations more frequently than upgrader modifiers were. Within the category of internal downgrader modifiers, the marker *please* and its equivalent appeared with high frequency in the languages studied, although with different distributions of use. Regarding external modifiers, *grounders* (i.e. explanations or reasons for requesting) were the commonest supportive move in all languages studied. In most instances, learners were reported to overuse external modifiers more than native speakers. For example, learners of English and German used considerably more external modifications than German and English native speakers. Additionally, it became apparent that cultures vary significantly in the use

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and distribution of external modifications when issuing requests, and that a considerable number of requests in all cultures were carried out without any external modifiers (for more results on CCSARP internal and external modifications, see Faerch & Kasper, 1989). Following the above summary, the following section reviews pertinent ILP studies on requests.

2.8.1 Pragmatic Studies on Requests

A review of the literature suggests ILP studies covering the speech act of requests can be classified according to two types: cross-cultural studies and interlanguage studies. Firstly, cross-cultural studies compare request strategies and request modifications made in different cultures (e.g. Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Cenoz & Valencia, 1996; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008; Faerch & Kasper, 1989; Hassall, 2001; House, 1989; House & Kasper, 1981; Hutz, 2006; Tanaka, 1988; Yu, 1999). Although such studies have been largely concerned with pragmatic differences affecting the performance of requests across cultures, some have examined the influence of L1 cultures on the performance of L2 requests by learners with different backgrounds. Additionally, some of these studies have focussed on how requests are made by different groups of English language learners relative to one another and/or to native speakers, highlighting cross-cultural issues. Secondly, interlanguage studies have focused on the development of pragmatic performance and comparing groups of learners from a target language community based on several variables such as proficiency level, study discipline, or learning environment. Interlanguage studies of requests have been conducted either *cross-sectionally* or *longitudinally*. Cross-sectional studies focus on groups of learners of the target language, generally from the same population, comparing their usage with that of native speakers (e.g. Felix-Brasdefer, 2007; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2003; Martínez-Flor, 2009; Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2006; Otcu & Zeyrek, 2008; Rose, 2000; Scarcella, 1979;

Trosborg, 1995), while longitudinal studies examine the same groups' production of requests over a period of time (Barron, 2000; Ellis, 1992; Schauer, 2009; Schmidt, 1993).

The subsection below reviews the most relevant ILP request research, with particular emphasis on cross-cultural and interlanguage studies produced in EFL and ESL contexts; including studies that focus on learners from Arabic-speaking countries. EFL studies are reviewed in subsection (2.8.2.1), while ESL studies are reviewed in subsection (2.8.2.2). Each of the studies reviewed is outlined, along with consideration of the groups of learners involved, the data collection instruments used, and a summary of the main findings, of relevance to request strategies and modifications. To conclude each subsection, I summarize and evaluate the studies and explain the relevance of the findings to this study and its research questions.

2.8.1.1   EFL Studies on Requests

Many EFL studies on requests have been conducted in the European context, in western cultures (e.g. House & Kasper, 1987; Cenoz & Valencia, 1996; Faerch & Kasper, 1989; Trosborg, 1995). These studies have generally examined how requests are made by EFL learners of English, in contrast with those made by NSE. Such studies generally employ situations drawn from, or similar to those of the CCSARP, employing DCTs or role-play tasks (RPTs) to collect data. The findings of these studies suggest that requests are likely to vary between L2 learners in terms of conventions of form and distributions of use, according to factors such as influence of L1 culture, English proficiency levels, length of time spent learning English, age, gender, and exposure to the L2 culture. However, in the majority of studies, competent EFL learners with a considerable long time of learning English used relatively less direct requests, assigning direct strategies to low imposition requests, and to requests addressed to lower status hearers; indirect requests with proper internal and external

modifications were widely introduced in these studies as a socially acceptable way of issuing requests, especially in the context of high imposition requests, as detailed below.

House and Kasper (1987) examined how German and Danish EFL learners framed requests in English, in contrast to those of NSE. They adopted five situations from the CCSARP and used DCTs to collect data, applying Blum-Kulka's and Olshtain's (1984) coding schemes. Their results showed that indirect requests (specifically query preparatory questions: modals of ability, willingness and possibility of requesting something) were the most frequently used by all learners and native speakers, supporting the findings set out in the CCSARP. However, although L2 learners successfully varied their strategies to align with specific social situations, they preferred strategies that were more direct than those used by native speakers when making high imposition requests of people of higher and lower status. As mentioned earlier, using more direct strategies for high imposition requests triggers a failure in terms of performing appropriate politeness requests. Regarding key modifications, House and Kasper (1987) concluded that EFL learners used fewer internal modifiers (especially *please*) and less softening pragmatic resources compared to the native group, and their requests were consequently perceived as less polite. The learners also drew upon more external modifiers (especially explanations, reasons or justifications for requesting), and so had a tendency to combine two external modifications in some situations (usually linguistic devices and grounders), a finding that correlates with several studies conducted in various EFL environments (e.g. Cenoz & Valencia, 1996; Hassall, 2001; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2003; Yu, 1999). The overemployment of external modifiers by L2 learners was attributed to their lack of confidence in their linguistic and sociopragmatic ability to make appropriate requests using fewer words.

In another, larger EFL research context, Cenoz and Valencia (1996) examined requests made by EFL learners from different European countries, with various L1s (Spanish, Swedish, Italian, Norwegian, Greek, French, German, Portuguese and Danish) studying at a

Basque university, comparing them to American NSE's requests. Employing DCTs as a data collection method, it was found that EFL learners used more conventional indirect strategies than American NSE, something not observed in several other studies, such as those by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) or House and Kasper (1987). With regard to modifications, the EFL learners in Cenoz and Valencia's (1996) study generally overused external modifications, including grounders, resulting in lengthier utterances, affirming House and Kasper's (1987) findings and the general results reported by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). However, in another study comparing Danish EFL learners and NSE, Faerch and Kasper (1989) used CCSARP data, and reported with regard to the use of modifiers in requests, that L2 participants used fewer external modifiers, overusing internal ones relative to native speakers. This result differed from the majority of previous studies, including the two studies reviewed above. Faerch and Kasper (1989, p. 232) explained why the use of internal modifiers was perhaps inflated in their study, reporting that the learners overused the politeness marker *please* (an internal modifier) but used other internal and external modifiers generally far less often. The authors attributed overuse of *please* to its ease of use, since it did not pose a syntactic challenge, as learners were able to use it doubly as both a request mitigator and a politeness marker.

The EFL studies on requests also show that different EFL speakers apply different pragmatic features (from native speakers and from other EFL speakers) depending on several factors, including the role of English in the country in question, the influence of the L1 on the performance of the L2, differences in data collection methods, and learners' proficiency levels. For example, Trosborg (1995) used RPTs to collect requests from Danish EFL learners who had been divided into three groups according to their proficiency levels (low, intermediate and advanced). The study aimed to investigate the effect of proficiency levels on the pragmatic competence of learners, using a British English-speaking group as a control group. Considering request strategies, both learners and native speakers favoured the use of

indirect strategies (specifically conventionally indirect strategies). However, the three Danish subgroups, especially the low level subgroup, were more direct about their mode of expression in some scenarios. Regarding the modification of requests, EFL learners employed fewer internal and external modifiers, including grounders, than the native speaker group, who generally employed a wider variety of internal modifiers particularly favouring syntactic past tense downgraders. For example, the use of *please* by lower level EFL learners was far less frequent, than by native speakers or the other Danish EFL learners (Faerch and Kasper, 1989). However, Trosborg (1995) used RPTs, suggesting that different data collection methods can produce different results. Nevertheless, Trosborg's (1995) study did also examine the impact of proficiency on the performance of requests, and found proficiency levels affect the performance of requests, with the use of internal downgraders increasing gradually in accordance with greater proficiency.

Additional to the above studies, there have also been several relevant studies on requests from Arabic-speaking countries (i.e. Scarcella and Brunack's, 1979; Al-Ammar, 2000; Umar, 2004; Al-Gahtani and Roever, 2009; Sattar, Lah and Suleiman, 2009; Sattar and Lah, 2011). Scarcella and Brunack's (1979) study, for instance, is one of the earliest ILP studies to examine how beginner and advanced Arab EFL learners studying at an American University made requests. The groups' responses were contrasted with those of native speakers of American English, using a role-play questionnaire (RPTs) with three scenarios, focussing specifically on politeness features that included levels of directness and request preparators (e.g. the use of *please* and *I'm sorry*) based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory. The study showed learners of both proficiency levels used more direct request strategies (with limited variations of strategies) than NSE, and that the beginners' requests were generally the most direct. The tendency of L2 learners to prefer direct strategies was sometimes due to linguistic deficiencies, as they wanted to deliver accurate messages irrespective of whether those messages would be worded in a socially acceptable way. When

the non-native groups were compared with the native group it was apparent that learners used negative politeness when addressing subordinates, which could possibly be due to transfer from their L1 culture, indicating that the EFL Arab learners in this study had not acquired sufficient understanding of L2 sociopragmatic norms to deploy strategies in a native-like manner.

In another EFL Arabic-speaking context, Al-Ammar (2000) studied linguistic strategies and request behaviour in spoken English and Arabic for a sample of forty-five Saudi female students enrolled in an English department. Data were collected using DCTs. Although the researcher did not use NSE for comparison in this study, the findings demonstrated the informants varied their request strategies according to social situations, including the status of interlocutors and the degree of imposition made in requests. It was also apparent that directness increased with a reduction in social distance and power between interlocutors, indicating that politeness is less necessary between people who are intimate. Although the results of EFL learners were not contrasted with NSE to determine how they produced requests differently in this regard, the findings show that EFL learners were sensitive to some degree to social distance and power between interlocutors.

A similar study carried out by Al-Gahtani and Roever (2009) examined the requests made by Saudi Arabic-speaking students, focusing on instances where the hearer treated the speakers' utterance as a request. The study addressed particular attention towards the relationship between second language proficiency and pragmatic transfer. Learners were divided into four levels of proficiency, and the researchers carried out three role plays in which power was a constant, reporting that learners resorted more to pragmatic transfer the higher their proficiency levels. High-intermediate and advanced learners negatively transferred considerably more L1 pragmalinguistic and socio-pragmatic norms into the L2 context than beginners and low-intermediate level learners did. The findings of this study correspond with Takahashi and Beebe's (1987) findings concerning increased pragmatic

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transfer into L2 contexts at higher proficiency levels. This may happen because higher proficiency learners are more confident and want to do more, so attempt to do so, sometimes failing.

In their study, Sattar, Lah, and Suleiman (2009) conducted a pragmatic and sociolinguistic analysis of requests in English produced by ten Iraqi Arabic native speakers studying on a postgraduate programme at a Malaysian university. Their data were collected using DCTs, and a multiple-choice questionnaire including eight different scenarios and a rating scale. The collected data was categorised according to Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), and Byon's (2004) and Lin's (2009) taxonomies. The results showed variations in the frequency and content of the semantic formulas used by the group, in relation to the situations presented. For example, the ten Iraqi learners varied in their use of indirect and direct request strategies, and the study did not employ NSE or other learning groups for the purpose of comparison. However, the chief findings suggested the participants were able to produce different pragmatic features from within the same group. In a similar context, Sattar and Lah (2011) examined intercultural communication between Malaysian and Iraqi postgraduates at the Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), focusing on requests in English. Data was collected via a multiple-choice questionnaire and an open-ended DCT comprising six situations shared with forty Iraqi and Malaysian postgraduates. The results highlighted the cross-cultural differences between the two groups, although they observed more similarities than differences. The Iraqi learners in the study were generally more direct than the Malaysian group when issuing requests.

Before moving on to review the studies of the requests made by learners in ESL contexts, I will summarize the major findings from the above studies. All the research examined confirmed the validity of the CCSARP categories for requests in all the languages studied. The findings also established that the nine request strategies vary in terms of the conventions of form and distributions of use across languages, and that lack of awareness of

how request strategies are used in a particular language might result in pragmatic failure. It was also confirmed that request speech acts, similar to other speech acts, are ruled by a systematic set of sociolinguistic norms, and so violating or ignoring these norms generally causes a number of misappropriate uses of the language being learned. Such studies have also emphasized the usefulness and significance of tracing request speech acts to assess the pragmatic performance of speakers from a particular community.

With regard to directness strategies, that majority of the studies revealed that EFL learners tend to use direct request strategies more frequently than NSE (see House & Kasper, 1987; Scarcella & Brunack, 1979; Trosborg, 1995; Umar, 2004; Wang, 2011; Woodfield, 2008). This tendency was generally attributed to the complexity of the structures required when implementing indirect requests (Taguchi, 2012; Tanaka, 1988) and the sociolinguistic and learning contexts in which those requests were being made (Hutz, 2006). The majority of the above studies further revealed that conventional indirect strategies (in particular, query preparatory) were dominated among learners' preferences. They also suggested several factors that influenced choices made by learners; e.g. social distance, degrees of impositions in requests, language proficiency, and learning environments. Different findings emerged between studied concerning the internal/external modifications used in requests, as explained above. However, more than half the reviewed studies concluded that EFL learners overused external modifiers, especially grounders and linguistic devices, and, consequently, had a tendency to underuse internal ones when compared to NSEs.

2.8.1.2   ESL Studies on Requests

In the ILP field, a number of researchers examined the pragmatics of requests in the ESL context. However, ESL studies on requests seem to be fewer in number, addressing a smaller number of language backgrounds than the comparable EFL studies. This subsection discusses the studies of relevance to this research. The first study of interest is Tanaka's (1988) study, which examined requests made by Japanese ESL learners, comparing them with

those made by native speakers of Australian English using a role-play instrument. The results revealed that Japanese learners were more direct than the native speakers when making requests (similar to the findings reported in relation to EFL studies as discussed in the previous subsection). Tanaka (1988) concluded that, as Japanese learners found it more challenging and more complex to use indirect request strategies, they preferred more direct strategies instead. When examining the directness of strategies when making requests, it became apparent that the conventionally indirect category (particularly, the strategy of query preparatory) dominated in all groups.

A further study in an English-speaking context (USA), focused on the relevance of the context of the requests. To achieve this, Felix-Brasdefer (2007) gathered requests using open role-plays with forty-five Spanish learners, divided into beginner, intermediate and advanced groups. The collected data was analysed for directness, perspective, and internal and external modifications. The researcher identified several levels of pragmatic development; a) using *please* to mitigate direct requests, b) showing a preference for want/need statements, and use of imperatives when making conventional indirect requests with some modifications and, finally, c) using more internal and external modifications. The overall findings support the hypothesis that sociopragmatic knowledge developed before grammatical competence in reference to performing requests, and that learners' grammatical competence gradually evolved to match their existing pragmatic competence.

Yu (1999) investigated requests made by Chinese ESL learners of English, native Chinese speakers in Chinese, and native speakers of American English in English. The results suggested that all three groups frequently employed conventionally indirect requests, although the Chinese learners used more external modifiers in English requests than the NSE and Chinese group, aligning with the findings reported in House and Kasper's (1987) study. In the context of an English-speaking country, Hassall (2001) examined the modifications made to requests by Australian learners of Indonesian, citing a native group of Indonesian students as

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a control group. In terms of strategies employed, learners and native speakers frequently used query preparatory requests. As for modifiers, *please* used as an internal modifier had no direct equivalent in Indonesian, and, in this study, it emerged that the Indonesian students did not use it. Conversely, the learners used external grounders excessively, differing from native speakers. The researcher attributed this tendency to overuse external grounders to the use of grounders in the students' L1, confirming the influence of L1 on the production of L2 pragmatics.

Generally speaking, the ESL studies reviewed revealed that ESL learners typically implement direct request strategies more frequently than NSE, although some researchers pointed to a more native-like usage. A great number of the above studies revealed that conventionally indirect strategies (in particular query preparatory) dominated. Additionally, with regard to the use of modifications for requests, the ESL studies reviewed concluded that the learners were successful at replicating modifiers in a manner that was similar to native use. However, when compared to NSE usage, they overused external modifiers in some studies (especially linguistic devices and grounders), and underused internal ones. In concluding this section, it is important to re-emphasize that since the majority of the request research has investigated either EFL or ESL learners' requests in comparison to native speakers, it is significant that the current study evaluates three groups in a single comparative study, outlining use of two different speech acts as the focus of analysis (requests and refusals), and using two data collection methods (DCTs and RPTs). To the best of my knowledge, to date no similar large-scale work on requests has been conducted in an Arabic speaking context, including Saudi Arabia. This project, assessing the pragmatic knowledge of English learners, aims to detect the pragmatic competence of learners when speaking English, and so will not only focus on the acquisition of linguistic features by speakers.

This chapter continues by exploring the evidence available on the other speech act of interest herein (i.e. refusals), and the following section examines key research on the typology of refusals, and relevant ILP refusal studies.

2.9 The Speech Act of Refusals

The speech act of refusal was defined as one of the "negative counterparts to acceptances and consentings" (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985, p. 195), and it generally comes in response to speech acts initiated by others (e.g. requests, offers, suggestions or invitations). Making appropriate refusals poses difficulties for a large number of learners, as refusing someone demands consideration of the interlocutor's expectations. How best to say *no* is more important in the majority of speech communities than the rejection itself. As mentioned previously, refusing someone outright, by only saying *no*, is seen as awkward and can be taken as an insult in some situations. Therefore, engaging in relevant and appropriate refusal strategies in a given language and culture is paramount to support successful communication. Additionally, saying *no* in an appropriate way requires awareness of the pragmatics of the intuitive speech acts (i.e. requests, offers or invitations) in response to which people construct approval and refusals. This can contribute significantly to the successful performance of refusals, thereby, reducing potential gaps (for example between request and refusal techniques) putting both interlocutors in a comfortable communication zone (Nelson et al., 2002).

Previous studies of refusals reveal that they are culture-specific and sensitive to the interlocutors' relations to each other (lower, equal and higher status); thus, highlighting that sociocultural factors need to be taken into consideration to reduce breakdowns in communication. As such, the face-threatening act of refusals is worthy of study, because performing refusals may cause numerous cross-cultural and cross-linguistic miscommunications (Aliakbari & Changizi, 2012; Beebe & Takahashi, 1989). When

reviewing refusal studies, the extremely influential study of refusals conducted by Beebe et al. (1990) should be mentioned first. The classification of refusals developed for Beebe et al. (1990) study was adopted in many subsequent refusal studies, and has been used and tested with a wide variety of languages in diverse cultural contexts (Aliakbari & Changizi, 2012).

This classification of Beebe et al. (1990) was intended to determine refusal strategies, including level of directness, as used by people of different cultures and language backgrounds. It also examines the specific adjuncts to refusals used to mitigate upset (these two features are also examined in the present study). Under this classification system, the speech act of refusal itself was divided into two main parts: (1) a refusal head act and (2) adjuncts to refusals, as in the following example:

This sounds really interesting and I would really like to come, **but I'm off this Sunday with my family.**

The underlined and bold part of the utterance is the head act of the refusal, while the first part of the utterance constitutes the adjuncts to the refusal. *Refusal directness strategies* are found in the head act of refusal, while several types of mitigations and justifications, given before or after the head act, are described as adjuncts. To precisely identify the directness levels of refusals, Beebe et al. (1990) divided refusals into two types: 1) Direct refusals including non-performatives and performatives, and 2) indirect refusals including excuses, wishes, statements of regret/apology/alternative, promise of future acceptance, and statement of principle – see chapter three for detailed descriptions of Beebe et al.'s (1990) classification of refusals with examples from my own data. To conclude, this study developed by Beebe et al. (1990) contributed substantially to understanding the pragmatics of refusals, and provided an intuitive influential taxonomy of request strategies, which became popular in the pragmatic studies of refusals that followed (see examples of these studies below).

2.9.1 Pragmatic Studies on Refusals

The speech act of refusals, as one of the most regularly performed and most delicate speech acts in the communication process, has become the subject of increased interest in pragmatic and sociolinguistic research in a wide range of linguistic and cultural contexts (see Abdul Sattar et al., 2010; Al-Eryani, 2007; Al-Issa, 2003; Al-Kahtani, 2005; Aliakbari & Changizi, 2012; Allami & Naeimi, 2011; Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1991; Beebe et al., 1990; Chang, 2009; Chen, 2006; Felix-Brasdefer, 2004; Gass & Houck, 1999; Henstock, 2003; Ikoma & Shimura, 1994; Li, 2007; Liao & Bresnahan, 1996; Nelson et al., 2002; Ramos, 1991; Sadeghi & Savojbolaghchilar, 2011; Stevens, 1993). The studies listed include interlanguage pragmatic and cross-cultural studies in both EFL and ESL contexts. As noted in Beebe et al.'s (1990) work, the majority of these studies examined how the speech act of refusal takes place cross-culturally between individuals from different cultures, with particular focus on how *pragmatic transfer* from L1 affects the production of refusals. There are few studies explicitly focussed on the pragmatic competence of L2 learners when making refusals in their L1. This issue will be discussed in the following subsections, highlighting how the focus of this study contributes to the data available by covering a new area. As with the studies I reviewed on requests, I first explore the most relevant studies, starting with EFL studies pertaining to the framing of refusals (in subsection 2.7.2.1), and moving on to present the findings from ESL studies (in subsection 2.7.2.1). Each EFL and ESL study is reviewed by presenting the groups of learners involved, the instruments of data collection used, and the chief findings. At the end of each subsection, I summarize and evaluate the studies and re-explain the relevance of the findings for the study and its research questions.

2.9.1.1   EFL Studies on Refusals

Lauper (1997) researched the use of refusal strategies in English by Spanish language learners. The refusal strategies were compared with those produced by native speakers of

American English, and a monolingual group of Spanish speakers. The researcher observed that the three groups employed different refusal strategies when sequencing the semantic formula, establishing the frequency of the semantic formula, and the content of the utterances. However, the study also reported that there were more similarities than differences found between the refusal strategies of the two groups of Spanish speakers when refusing. Additionally, there were more differences than similarities between the refusal strategies of the Spanish participants in both groups and those of native English speakers. The monolingual group of Spanish speakers used more direct refusal strategies, applying fewer adjuncts, as followed by the group of Spanish learners of English.

In another cross-cultural study of refusal strategies, Nelson et al. (2002) examined refusals in American English and Egyptian Arabic following the same methodology as that used by Beebe et al. (1990) and Lauper (1997). Their results revealed more similarities than differences between the two cultures. The American and Egyptian participants used more indirect strategies than direct strategies when refusing people of equal social status, compared to when refusing interlocutors of either higher or lower social status. However, the researchers also discovered that the Americans made use of a greater variety of refusal strategies than the Egyptians, who relied on a limited range of refusal strategies, such as performatives and excuses.

In a different context, Genc and Tekyildiz (2009) studied the refusals of 101 Turkish EFL learners from urban and rural areas in Turkey, and fifty NSE from urban and rural areas, with the aim of ascertaining whether or not regional varieties affect the refusal strategies used. Using DCT scenarios with interlocutors of different statuses, the study revealed the participants in all groups relied on similar refusal strategies, and seemed to refuse in a similar way when speaking to interlocutors of a different social status. In a further study comparing the refusal strategies of American speakers of English, with those of native speakers of Arabic, and EFL learners, Qadoury Abed (2011) used a DCT detailing twelve scenarios,

including refusals to higher, equal, and lower status interlocutors. The study focussed on pragmatic transfer in the refusal strategies employed by Iraqi EFL learners, Iraqi native speakers of Arabic and American NSE. The results showed that the frequency of use of refusal strategies among Iraqi EFL learners differed to some degree from that of Americans, with some similarities. In general, the Americans were more sensitive to whether their interlocutors were of higher or equal status. On the other hand, Iraqi EFL learners favoured statements of regret, offering reasons, and expressing wishes as refusal adjuncts more frequently than the Americans did.

Al-Kahtani (2005) examined how learners of English from different cultural backgrounds differ when performing refusals in the English language. He recruited three groups of participants: Arabs, Japanese people and Americans, all of whom were given a DCT in different situations, including to establish different interlocutor statuses. The results revealed that the three groups varied in terms of their preferred content and the frequencies of the refusal strategies they used, but not in all situations. The researcher, finally, recommended that language teachers should assist L2 learners by improving their pragmatic knowledge when performing speech acts in the target language. Barron (2007) investigated how thirty-three Irish learners of German improved upon their refusal strategies in L2 over a period of ten months spent in Germany. Barron used a DCT to collect data from the learners, from German native speakers, and Irish NSE. Over time, the learners' refusals were normalized towards L2 conventions. This development correlated with a reduction in negative pragmatic transfer from Irish English, when refusing offers at the end of the ten-month period abroad. This suggests Irish learners of German improved their L2 refusal strategies over time.

Hassani et al. (2011) compared the refusal strategies preferred by Iranian learners of EFL when refusing in English, and when refusing in their native language (Persian). The authors also focussed on the effect of the interlocutors' social status and gender on the content of their refusals. The study was conducted with sixty students, who were evenly divided in

terms of gender and social status, using a DCT in Persian and another in English to collect data. Each participant completed both versions, and the test was repeated with the same participants after two months. The findings revealed that participants were more indirect when using the Persian language than the English language, and that the refusal strategies of males and females were similar. With regard to social status, the Persian strategies were more indirect when refusing people of a higher status.

There are several important EFL studies from Arabic-speaking countries to include here; these studies had the greatest influence on the data analysis stage of the present study. These are cross-cultural studies conducted to investigate the production of refusals in English and Arabic (e.g. Al-Eryani, 2007; Al-Issa, 2003; Morkus, 2009). All the studies mentioned used a DCT for collecting the data (except Morkus, 2009 who used Role plays). Although the present study investigates refusals in English, the above-mentioned studies investigated refusals in English, as well as in different Arabic dialects including Egyptian, Yemeni, and Jordanian. All of the studies adopted the classification scheme described above, from Beebe et al. (1990), to assess the various refusal strategies they identified.

Al-Issa (2003) studied the performance of refusals by Jordanian EFL learners (the target group), Jordanian native speakers of Arabic (a reference group), and American NSEs (an additional reference group). Al-Issa (2003) used a DCT to search for evidence of pragmatic transfer from Arabic, and the factors causing this transfer. The DCT situations were designed based on fieldwork observations for naturally occurring refusal data. The open-ended DCT situations were followed by a space, so that the participants were not limited to producing a certain speech act. This study is important because of the rigor of its design. However, in common with many studies on speech acts, it was limited to data collected in writing and not orally. The current study attempts to overcome this limitation by collecting data in writing and oral form. Al-Issa's (2003) findings revealed pragmatic transfers in the refusal strategies employed by the EFL groups, noting that Jordanian EFL learners used

refusal strategies from their native language/culture apparent in the content and frequency of the semantic formulas employed. They were also more indirect when refusing in English, and used several statements of excuses common to their L1 culture.

In another study of twenty Yemeni learners of English, Al-Eryani (2007) used DCTs in six different situations, comparing participants' answers to those of native speakers of Yemeni Arabic and native speakers of American English. All the Yemeni participants were males, which was a noted limitation of the study. The DCT used consisted of six situations, and participants were expected to refuse requests, offers, suggestions, and invitations from people of higher, lower, and equal in status. All the data collected via DCT on refusals was categorised according to Beebe et al.'s (1990) classification, and the results pointed to limited resemblance between the groups in terms of the range of refusal strategies they employed. However, cross-cultural variations in terms of content and the frequency of the communicative formulas produced by each language group were apparent in relation to initiating acts (i.e. requests, offers, suggestions and invitations), and in terms of the status of interlocutors in given scenarios (higher, equal, or lower). To explain this, native speakers of Yemeni Arabic were observed to be less direct when making refusals in Arabic, through providing "explanations" or "reasons". Due to their high proficiency levels in English, Yemeni EFL learners showed excellent pragmatic competence when issuing refusals in the target language. For example, they showed pragmatic competence in the ordering of semantic formulas, and their use of excuses in all positions. However, EFL learners also drew on their cultural background and L1 norms when refusing in English. Additionally, the frequency with which semantic formulas were integrated into their refusal strategies varied according to the social status of those involved in the scenarios. Findings from this study are similar to those reported in other studies (Al-Issa, 2003) examining the Arabic preference for indirect refusal strategies.

Morkus (2009) undertook a study which utilised role play in its research design, including six refusal situations, examining the production of the speech act of refusal in Egyptian Arabic by two subgroups of American learners of Arabic in Egypt, divided according to their proficiency in L2 (ten intermediate participants and ten advanced participants). The aim was to determine whether there was a relationship between the American learners' language proficiency in Arabic and their pragmatic competence. The study also sought to uncover similarities or differences in the refusal strategies in Arabic between native speakers of Egyptian Arabic and native speakers of American English. Thus, Morkus compared the refusal strategies of two subgroups of American participants to those of ten native speakers of American English and those of ten native speakers of Egyptian Arabic. In comparison, the study focussed on the relationship between the degree of pragmatic transfer from L1, and the level of L2 proficiency, as well as the correlation between the language proficiency of learners and their pragmatic competence. The findings revealed important differences between the two subgroups of American learners and the native speakers of Egyptian Arabic in terms of choice and the frequency with which they used direct and indirect strategies. For example, the American learners from both subgroups used more direct strategies than indirect strategies when interacting with people of higher status than the Egyptian native speakers of Arabic did. Additionally, the American learners used expressions of regret more often than postponement strategies when refusing the Egyptians. Regarding L2 proficiency, the advanced participants also used fewer direct strategies, relying on more indirect ones relative to their intermediate counterparts. Finally, although the transfer of L1 strategies was apparent in the two American groups, advanced American learners of Egyptian Arabic exhibited a higher degree of pragmatic transfer.

To conclude this section, the above EFL studies generally revealed that differences between EFL participants' refusal strategies and adjuncts and those of NSEs, in terms of content and frequency, can be attributed to a number of factors. Indeed, several variables

reportedly affect the performance of refusals, such as the level of imposition involved in the context of the refusal the, statuses of the interlocutors, the learners' levels of proficiency in the target language, and transfer from L1 pragmatic norms. It was also reported that differences performing refusals cause pragmatic failures when EFL learners are interacting with native speakers. These EFL studies also confirmed the efficiency of Beebe et al. (1990) classification as a method for clarifying the differences in use of refusals between different groups. When reviewing research into the speech act of refusals, it became apparent that there is minimal discussion of how EFL and ESL learners perform the speech act differently. The next subsection elucidates several ILP studies carried out on ESL refusals.

2.9.1.2   ESL Studies on Refusals

As was true of the request studies, there are fewer studies of the speech act of refusal as produced by ESL learners in English-speaking environments, than of EFL learners. This is because, as mentioned earlier, the majority of refusal studies have focussed on cross-cultural differences as displayed through the preference for specific refusals across languages. This is one of the research gaps that this study seeks to bridge. One of the few ESL studies on refusals was by Sasaki and Beamer (2002), and it examined the relationship between the length of residence in an English-speaking environment, and the transference of refusal strategies from the native language (Japanese) to the target language. Data were gathered from: (1) Japanese learners of English living in the US, (2) Japanese native speakers living in Japan, and (3) native speakers of American English. Their findings revealed that the duration of residence reduced negative transfer from L1 to L2 in Japanese learners of English. In the same vein, Bella (2011) examined how native speakers and non-native advanced learners of Greek use politeness strategies when refusing invitations from close friends, focusing on the impact of length of residence and the amount of interaction with native speakers, to assess changes in pragmatic competence. The study data collected in role plays completed by three different groups: (1) native speakers of Greek, (2) non-native speakers with an extended

period of residence but minor communication with native speakers of Greek, and (3) non-native speakers with a less extended period of residence but significantly more opportunities for social interactions with native speakers. The findings showed that length of residence could not predict pragmatic competence in the speech act of refusing an invitation from a friend, but that engaging in more social interaction with native speakers delivered better results. Thus, this study concluded that migrants should not rely on length of residence alone to develop pragmatic ability in the use of speech acts. Rather, it appears that actual opportunities for communication are more important.

Generally speaking, the studies of refusal strategies adopted by EFL and ESL learners confirm that the performance of speech acts differs between cultures and languages. The studies reported that EFL and ESL learners diverge from native speaker usage in terms of levels of directness, and the selection of adjuncts to refusals, as these were found to be more direct than native speakers according to certain studies (e.g. Beebe et al., 1990), less direct according to other studies (e.g. Al-Eryani, 2007; Kwon, 2004), and similar to native speakers in others (e.g. Chang, 2009; Genc & Tekyildiz, 2009). L2 learners were also reported to be influenced by their L1 culture when constructing refusals in the target language (e.g. Al-Eryani, 2007; Al-Kahtani, 2005; Barron, 2007; Morkus, 2009). Certainly, the refusal strategies performed by learners in the target language context were reported to become more native-like over time than those of learners in L2 environments (see Bella, 2011; Sasaki & Beamer, 2002). As mentioned earlier, and similar to studies about the speech act of requests, the majority of research on refusals has investigated either EFL or ESL learners' requests in comparison to those of native speakers. However, this study, as emphasized earlier, combines the three groups into a single comparative study, focusing on two different speech acts and employing two data collection methods in the hope that this will yield comprehensive and profound results.

2.10 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has discussed the contexts of this research study, and afforded an overview of pragmatics, pragmatic competence and related pragmatic concepts (e.g. speech acts and Politeness Theory) to allow for a better understanding of the concept of pragmatic competence and its importance in SLA. The chapter then discussed the speech acts of requests and refusals highlighting how they are classified and researched in the field of pragmatics. Finally, the discussion was narrowed down to reviewing previous studies on how EFL and ESL learners generally acquire, comprehend, and produce these speech acts. The next chapter provides information about the methodology adopted in this study, addressing the participants, data collection methods, analysis procedures, the validity and reliability of the research, and ethics.

3 Chapter Three: Methodology

The previous chapter introduced a conceptual framework for this research, examining the concept of pragmatic competence, and explaining how it has been studied in the area of speech acts in general, and in reference to the speech acts of requests and refusals in particular. The thesis now moves on to describe how this research was designed and conducted to answer the research questions. This methodology chapter begins by presenting the research paradigm in detail (section 3.1), and then restates the research questions in section 3.2. The research settings and subjects of the study are outlined in section 3.3, as are the data collection methods employed (section 3.4). The coding schemes adopted to analyse the collected data are highlighted in section 3.5, and the data collection procedures explained in section 3.6. Finally, the chapter closes with concluding remarks in section 3.7.

3.1 Research Design

As noted, the primary purpose of this study is to examine appropriacy, as defined in reference to British NSE norms, as well as the speech acts of requests and refusals produced by Saudi EFL and ESL learners. The research problem was inspired by a perceived gap in the pragmatic knowledge of Saudi learners of English, causing challenges when using context-appropriate forms of speech in English (see section 2.2.4). The study stems from the assumption that pragmatic differences in the performance of speech acts arise from different types of variability, such as cross-cultural variability, and intra-cultural variability (situational and individual variability) (see Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). In other words, there might be differences in the performance of L2 speech acts, because of cultural differences, or due to individual differences occurring among members of the same group, affecting the learning setting, length of time spent learning a language, level of education, intensity of communication in the target language, gender or age. Therefore, the design of this study is intended to account for some of these cultural, situational and

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individual differences between speakers of English, as will be detailed shortly. Since the research focus seeks to identify the actual competence level of Saudi learners of English when issuing requests and refusals, the research was designed to collect written and verbal statements pertaining to request and refusals using two quantitative data collection methods: namely, DCTs and RPTs. The study then quantitatively analyses the pragmatic features that arise from different groups' responses using relevant classifications (see section 3.4). Data was then subsequently presented in raw numbers and percentages, and thoroughly discussed to answer the research questions and achieve the research objectives of the study as detailed below.

3.2   Research Questions

As discussed earlier, this study aims to contribute to the existing body of research, focusing on the pragmatic competence of non-native speakers (as such studies have yet to be conducted in the Saudi Arabian context), and discussing several factors that influence learners' acquisition of pragmatics. Thus, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do Saudi ESL and EFL learners produce the speech acts of requests and refusals with comparison to British NSEs?
2. Are there any pragmatic differences between the three groups when making requests and refusals with high and low impositions?
3. Are there any pragmatic differences between the three groups with regard to making requests and refusals when interacting with interlocutors from higher, equal and lower statuses?
4. Are there any pragmatic differences between the two non-native groups based on the length of time spent learning English?
5. Are there any pragmatic differences among the ESL participants based on the intensity of communication with native speakers?

3.3   Research Settings and Participants

In this study, recruiting a representative sample of respondents to accurately reflect the targeted groups is vital for successful analysis of the data. The EFL participants were all advanced Saudi learners of English studying at Taif University (Taif University was chosen because I work there and have access to its facilities and students). They had all learned English in Saudi Arabia with no study abroad experience, and none had ever lived in an English-speaking country at the time this study was conducted. To participate in the study, all the participants had to demonstrate a good level of English, and several had completed the International English Language Test System (IELTS) scoring at least 6.5, the minimum score most British universities require from international students to further their postgraduate studies. Those who were not able to take the IELTS before inclusion in the study were selected based on having scored on the Standardized Test for English Proficiency (STEP), a score that roughly corresponds to 6.5 in the IELTS or more. STEP is a Saudi test for English proficiency provided by the Ministry of Education, and as such is more accessible for Saudi EFL learners. It was anticipated that the participants would have taken a variety of courses such as general English courses, introductory courses in English literature and several courses in linguistics and translation from/to English and Arabic during their academic study. The EFL informants comprised ninety students, equally distributed by gender, and aged between eighteen and thirty.

The ESL participants were Saudi students who had travelled to the UK to continue their education to study for a BA or MA at a British university. All the ESL participants stated that they had come to Britain with very limited knowledge of English, and so had been enrolled on English courses for at least one and half years before achieving a score of at least 6.5 in the IELTS examination and commencing their BA or MA studies. Ninety ESL informants were recruited with the help of the Saudi Society at Cardiff University. Half of these were male, and half were female, aged between eighteen and thirty. Finally, the NSE

informants were recruited at Cardiff University to create a control group; they comprised sixty students, half of whom were male and half female, aged between eighteen and thirty. The NSE participants were recruited via email, flyers, and in-person visits to classrooms. Table 3.1 below summarizes the study participants.

Groups	Methods	Number of participants
EFL Group	Discourse-Completion Task (comprising **9** request situations and **9** refusal situations).	**60** students completed questionnaires comprising **540** requests and **540** refusals. Half were completed by men, and half by women.
	Recorded Role-Play Task (comprising **6** request situations and **9** refusal situations).	**30** students made **180** recorded requests and **270** refusals. Half were male, and half female.
ESL Group	Discourse-Completion Task (comprising **9** request situations and **9** refusal situations).	**60** completed questionnaires comprising **540** requests and **540** refusals. Half of the DCT were completed by men, and half by women.
	Recorded Role-Play Task (comprising **6** request situations and **9** refusal situations).	**30** students made **180** recorded requests and **270** refusals. Half were male, and half female.
NSE Group	Discourse-Completion Task (comprising **9** request situations and **9** refusal situations).	**40** completed questionnaires comprising **360** requests and **360** refusals. Half were male, and half female.
	Recorded Role-Play Task (comprising **6** request situations and **9** refusal situations).	**20** students made **120** recorded requests and **180** refusals. Half were male, and half female.

Table 3.1 Details of the data collection for the different groups of participants

3.4 Data Collection Methods

A wide range of data collection methods have been used in speech act studies, including interviews, rating tasks, multiple-choice questionnaires, DCTs open and closed role-plays and authentic discourse observation (Gabriele Kasper & Merete Dahl, 1991, p. 217). While interviews, rating tasks and multiple-choice questionnaires are often used for pragmatic perception and comprehension research, DCTs, and open and closed RPTs are commonly employed in pragmatic production studies (Gabriele Kasper & Merete Dahl, 1991, p. 217). It can be safely stated that there is no completely right or wrong method for collecting data, as each has unique strengths and weaknesses. For example, although an observation of authentic discourse could be considered the most accurate and desirable method, it might also be the most difficult to use, especially in a limited project such as a PhD study. It is also

challenging to control for age groups, social relations, power status, educational levels, gender and many other variables that influence authentic discourse. In addition, DCTs or open RPTs, for example, in certain cases, might be preferred to authentic discourse, as the latter offers fewer deliberate contextual variables affecting speech.

DCTs have been extensively used to elicit speech act realizations, since Blum-Kulka (1982) first used them in the field of ILP. This method can be considered an appropriate elicitation method, which can yield relevant pragmalinguistic data in the form of speech acts, especially in specific contexts, such as EFL contexts where naturally occurring data cannot be gathered, is inaccessible, or has proven very hard to collect (Nelson et al., 2002). As the social situations and contextual variables in DCTs can be easily controlled and manipulated, in a study such as this one, they are preferable to naturally-occurring data (Schauer & Adolphs, 2006, p. 131). Furthermore, DCTs are broadly seen to provide model or stereotypical responses for spontaneous speech, and thus reflect informants' pragmatic norms (Beebe & Cummings, 1996). Data obtained through DCTs has also been seen to both represent pragmatic norms (Hinkel, 1997) and to reflect learners' pragmatic competence (Al-Eryani, 2007), which is precisely what the current study focuses on. As this study also aims to examine potential differences between two different groups of English learners in terms of their level of directness and the pragmatic modification strategies used for requests and refusals, the DCT is ideal, as it supports the gathering of pragmalinguistic features, enabling "the collection of formulas and strategies which reflect the content of formulas or strategies used in everyday speech and which are comparable across cultures and languages" (Barron, 2003, p. 84).

Arguably, however, DCTs can produce more formal responses than participants might expect in reality, as writing is generally perceived as a more formal activity than speaking (Rintell & Mitchell, 1989). Indeed, in DCTs participants might sometimes produce artificial, unnatural and more formal responses than they would normally do, in reality this is mainly

because they might tend to "bias the response toward less negotiation, less hedging, less repetition, less elaboration, less variety and ultimately less talk" (Beebe, 1985, p. 3). Therefore, open RPTs were also adopted for this research as a complementary data-gathering tool, to compensate for deficiencies in the DCTs and thereby enhance the validity of the study, since open RPTs require interaction between interlocutors.

Nonetheless, DCTs and RPTs share many common features, such allowing the researcher to tightly control contextual variables, such as the age or status of the interlocutors, and the fact that the tools used are easily replicable in different contexts at different times, differing from ethnographic studies. Furthermore, DCTs and RPTs can also reveal participants' accumulated experience concerning a given situation. For the above-mentioned reasons, DCTs and RPTs have been widely used in studies of ILP, and have been found to be useful and appropriate. In addition the integration of both the DCT and RPT in a single study strengthens the research design, adding to the overall methodological robustness of the current study. However, despite the above-mentioned advantages of using DCTs and open RPTs, several drawbacks also need to be reflected upon. Indeed, such methods can put participants in hypothetical situations where there are no negative consequences for producing unnatural utterances. Therefore, to address this challenge, and limit the participants' reliance on their imagination, the scenarios used in this study were intended to accurately reflect scenarios in both British and Saudi cultural contexts.

Finally, it is worth mentioning here that the weaknesses and limitations of DCTs and RPTs have been studied and discussed in several previous works, although relatively little attention has been paid to the limitations of natural data collection methods (Beebe & Cummings, 1996, p. 80). In this respect, Beebe and Cummings (1996, p. 80) declared "many studies on natural data have not given speech samples that represent an identifiable group of speakers and do not give situational controls", and consequently, "sufficient instances of cross-linguistically and cross-culturally comparable data are difficult to collect through

observation of authentic conversation" (Gabriele Kasper & Merete Dahl, 1991, p. 245). Thus, DCTs and RPTs remain a viable choice for researchers, in the absence of a better alternative.

3.4.1 Discourse-Completion Tasks (DCTs)

The DCTs used in this study were arranged into two parts: (1) nine unfinished request scenarios, and (2) nine unfinished refusal scenarios. For each scenario, the participants were provided with a specific social situation and a conversational gap, for them to add what they would say in the given situation. The scenarios were intended to be as realistic as possible, and applicable to both British and Saudi cultural contexts, to limit the participants' reliance on their imaginations. The language of the questionnaire itself was also intended to be simple and clear, as ambiguity might cause different participants to interpret the tasks differently, producing unreliable data (see appendix 1). All nine request scenarios in the DCT varied in terms of both degree of imposition (low/high) and the interlocutor's status (lower/equal/higher) as these two constraints had been reported in previous studies as influencing the pragmatic strategies employed.

	LOW IMPOSITION	**HIGH IMPOSITION**
Lower status	Requesting students step aside from the door	Requesting help from a busy student
		Requesting a valuable book from a student
Equal status	Asking for directions	Requesting that another student fill out your long questionnaire
		Requesting a book with high monetary value from a classmate
Higher status	Requesting a professor open the window	Requesting that a very busy professor reschedule a crucial meeting with you
		Requesting a book with high monetary value from a lecturer

Table 3.2 The classification of the 9 request scenarios in accordance with the two variables

The nine refusal scenarios presented in the DCT also varied in terms of the degree of imposition (refusing offers and invitations and refusing requests), and in the interlocutor's status (lower/equal/higher), as these two variables had been identified in previous studies as having an impact on how participants express refusals.

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	Refusing Offers and Invitations (LOW)	Refusing Requests (HIGH)
Lower status	Refusing your student's offer of a drink	Refusing a worker's request to use your car
Equal status	Refusing a friend's invitation to the beach Refusing a friend's offer of a drink	Refusing a colleague's request to use your laptop
Higher status	Refusing your boss' invitation to have dinner together Refusing your boss' offer of drink	Refusing a lecturer's request to help with the freshers week orientation Refusing to help with choosing books

Table 3.3 The classification of the 9 refusal scenarios in accordance with the two variables

The following extract gives two examples of a request and refusal in a DCT scenario:

Scenario (1): You have a crucial meeting with your professor this Wednesday, but you cannot attend for some reason. This is the second time this has happened this month. You need to ask your professor to reschedule your meeting. You say: "…………………………………"

Scenario (2): Your colleague's laptop has been infected by a virus while downloading files from the company's website. He has tried some new anti-virus software, but it is not sufficiently effective. Then, he asks for your laptop to finish the work. However, you decline his request.

Colleague: "Oh!! I have to finish these files today. Can I use your laptop please?"

You: "………………………….……………………...……………………………"

In scenario (1), the respondent (a student of lower status) has to ask their professor (higher status) to reschedule a crucial meeting for the second time (high imposition). There is a high social distance between the student and the professor. However, in scenario (2), the respondent and his/her colleague have equal status. The respondent needs to refuse his or her friend's request to use the laptop. All the DCT scenarios were developed and modified purely for the purpose of this study (see appendix 1), although several of the scenarios are similar to those used in previous studies (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig & Dornyei, 1998).

3.4.2 Open Role-play Tasks (RPTs)

For the RPTs, pairs of participants were given cards with descriptions detailing unfinished scenarios. In each of the scenarios, one student had to request something and the

other student has to refuse it, following the guidelines on the card (see appendix 2). The conversations were audio recorded and students given a few minutes to prepare before the recording. Similarly to the DTCs, the request and refusal scenarios in RPTs covered different levels of imposition and specified social status. Examples from the RPT scenarios are presented below:

> **Card 1** (requesting from a worker): You work in a coffee shop as a manager. You are outside your shop calling your mother, and your mobile phone battery dies before she has finished speaking. You enter the shop and ask one of your workers if you can use his or her mobile phone so you can call your mother back (who lives in the same city) for only one minute.
> **Your Role:** You ask a worker if you can use his or her mobile phone.

> **Card 2** (refusing a request from a manager): You work in a coffee shop. You are waiting for a very important call this morning. You put your mobile phone in front of you and keep checking it regularly. Your manager is outside calling someone on the phone, they then enter and asks for your mobile to make a short call. You have to refuse your manager's request.
> **Your Role:** You listen to your manager's request and you will have to refuse it.

In the above interactive scenario, the first participant is of a higher status (the manager) and must ask one of his workers (lower status) to borrow his/her mobile phone, while the second participant (the worker) is awaiting a call and so has to refuse the manager's request.

When participants engage in a RPT, they are permitted to speak at length, to ensure there is sufficient space for interaction to take place between the interlocutors in a way that is close to reality and authentic discourse. On this subject, Turnbull (2001), for example, compared the results of refusals from written and oral DCTs, open RPTs and authentic discourse. He found that data from written and oral DCTs differed from that for open RPTs and naturally occurring results, namely a wider range of pragmatic features emerged during open RPTs, producing more natural utterances. Once the material has been collected, the next stage is to code it to allow for analysis. Section 3.5 presents the coding schemes employed in this thesis.

3.5 Coding Schemes

After collecting the data for this study, it is then crucial to adopt a clear approach to its coding and analysis to identify how speech acts are used and to make inferences about

participants. Since the literature review chapter discussed the coding categories, requests and refusals in detail, this section briefly reminds us of the strategies adopted herein to code and analyse the data. Therefore, the following two subsections outline: (1) coding taxonomies for request acts, and (2) coding taxonomies for refusal acts.

3.5.1 Coding of Requests

As discussed thoroughly in the literature review chapter, pragmatic studies on requests have typically focused on three aspects of requests (i.e. request strategies, internal modifications and external modifications), and these three elements have been lengthily defined, coded and analysed. In the present study, Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) coding schemes of these three elements are adopted. According to these schemes, with regard to request strategies, three major universal categories were identified in the case of requests: (1) direct requests, (2) conventionally indirect requests and, (3) non-conventionally indirect requests. These three major levels of directness were then further subcategorized by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) as depicted in the table below.

	DIRECTNESS STRATEGY	Explanation & Examples
I. Direct requests	1. Mood derivable	The imperative is used to determine illocutionary intent: *Clean up this mess, please.*
	2. Unhedged performative	Naming illocutionary intent by using a relevant illocutionary verb: *I'm asking you to clean up this mess.*
	3. Hedged performative	The illocutionary intent is modified by using certain modals/verbs: *I must/have to ask you to clean the kitchen right now.*
	4 Locution derivable	The illocutionary intent is directly derivable from stating the hearer's obligation: *You'll have to clean the kitchen.*
	5. Scope stating	Expressing your intentions, desires, or feelings*: I really wish you'd clean the kitchen.*
II. Conventionally indirect requests	6. Suggestory formula	The illocutionary intent is impeded in a suggestion to do x: *How about cleaning the kitchen?*

	7. Query preparatory	The illocutionary intent is conventionalized in the models of ability and willingness: *Could you clean up the kitchen?*
III. Non-conventionally indirect requests	8. Strong hints	The illocutionary intent is derivable from hints with partial reference to a request: *You've left the kitchen in a right mess.*
	9. Mild hints	The illocutionary intent is derivable from hints with no reference to a request: *I couldn't cook.*

Table 3.4 Shoshana Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) Directness Category

These nine request strategies, reflecting a scale of directness, were apparent in all the languages studied, and are anticipated to occur in all cultures. The first five strategies belong to the direct category, while strategies six and seven fall within the conventionally indirect category. Strong and mild hints (8 and 9), are the final and most indirect strategies, which fall under the non-conventionally indirect category (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p. 18). In CCSARP, conventionally indirect requests (specifically the Query Preparatory strategy) are associated most with clarity and politeness, as they maintain literal and requestive interpretations as well as the interlocutors' face-saving options. The preparatory query (conventionally indirect strategy) was found to be the most preferred request strategy used by respondents in the CCSARP project (as well as in most ILP studies on requests). Indeed, the evidence collected showed that the responses in previous studies fell largely into the query preparatory strategy (the 7th level). Since the CCSARP did not use orderly sub-strategies for query preparatory when analysing this conventionally indirect strategy, the present study adopts Lin's (2009) sub-strategies of query preparatory as a supportive element to investigate precisely how this strategy can be used by the participating groups. Lin's (2009) query preparatory sub-strategies were numbered according to the function of the modals employed, as illustrated below.

The Sub-Strategies of Query Preparatory	Examples
1. Can/Could I/You	*Could you move?*
2. Will/Would I/You	*Would you move?*
3. May I/You	*May you move?*
4. Mind (Do/Would you mind)	*Do you mind moving?*
5. Possibility	*Is it possible to move?*
6. I was wondering	*I was wondering if you just moved?*

Table 3.5 Lin's (2009) modals scheme

These sub-strategies of query preparatory assist in yielding more fine-grained differences or similarities between the groups in terms of the request strategies present in the head act of request. In addition to request strategies, Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) CCSARP taxonomies were also used to code the internal and external modifications used in combination with request strategies. The following table describes this taxonomy, focusing on (1) the internal modifications used in the head act of the request, and (2) the external modifications present in supportive words/sentences.

(1) Internal modifications used in the head act of requesting.
1. Internal Downgraders:
1.1 Lexical downgraders: used in the head act to reduce and soften the force of the request:
• Downtoner: e.g. Could I *maybe* have.....?
• Politeness marker: e.g. ...., *please*?
• Understater: e.g. Can you speak up *a bit*, please?
• Hedge used to make the request vaguer, such as: How about meeting at the weekend *somehow*?
• Appealer: *We are going in the same direction, aren't we?*
1.2 Syntactic downgraders: syntactic items used to reduce the force of the request:
• Conditional Clause: If you could just ......
• Subjunctive: Might be better if you were to leave now.
• Appreciative Embedding: It would be nice if…
• Tag question: I don't suppose you could help, could you?
• Tense (e.g. want/wanted was wondering): The past tense is seen as downgrading (making the request more polite) when used with present time reference: e.g. *I wanted you to pass me....?*
• Negation: You couldn't do me a favour, please?
2. Internal Upgraders:
• Intensifier: e.g. I have got such *a huge headache*, could...
• Time Intensifier: e.g. I have urgent meetings at the same time…
• Expletive: e.g. I can't understand this *bloody* classification, could you...
• Exaggerated utterances: e.g. I am really desperate to get this...
• Lexical uptoner: A marked lexical choice gives negative connotations: clean up that *mess*!
• Determination marker: A marked lexical choice indicates a heightened degree of determination: I've explained myself and *that's that!*
• Orthographic/suprasegmented emphasis: Underlining/using exclamation marks in writing or using marked pauses, stress and intonation in speaking: Cleaning the kitchen is your business!!!

(2) External modifications in supportive words/sentences.

- <u>Linguistic devices (alerter)</u> For attracting requestees' attention: e.g. Excuse me, er, hello, Ali.
- <u>Pre-request (preparatory)</u> Utterances used to prepare interlocutors for requests: e.g. May I ask you something?
- <u>Head (getting a pre-commitment)</u>: e.g. Can you do me a favour?
- <u>Grounder</u>: Providing reasons, explanations or justifications for the request e.*g. because it's hard to do this.*
- <u>Disarmer</u>: Trying to predict and negotiate any excuses or objections hearers may use, *e.g. I know how busy you are but...*
- <u>Imposition minimizer</u>: e.g. Would you give me a lift, but only if you are going my way.
- <u>Sweeteners</u>: e.g. You are the right person to help with....
- <u>Promise of reward</u>: e.g. I'll help you if you ever need me.
- <u>Aggravating supportive moves:</u> Insulting, threatening, or moralizing e.g. *I don't have to ask for this, it's your responsibility.*

Table 3.6 The internal and external modifiers used in the project by Shoshana Blum-Kulka et al. (1989)

As explained and discussed in the literature review chapter, the internal modifiers sit within the request head act, while the external modifiers, called adjuncts to the request head act, appear in the vicinity of, before, or after the head act. The internal and external modifiers neither alter the proposition initially made in the head act of the request, nor change the level of directness. Indeed, the level of directness remains fixed (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). However, the modifiers, as described earlier, mitigate or aggravate the context in which the illocutionary force is embedded; hence being referred to as softeners and aggravators (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989).

One of the limitations of the CCSARP project is its lack of inclusion of speakers of non-western languages and cultures. However, the CCSARP coding schemes have been applied in research on norms in non-western languages and cultures, furthering understanding of the speech act of requests across diverse languages and cultures (see chapter two). The majority of these studies have used the CCSARP coding schemes without modification, although some have adapted coding schemes to fit their data and the languages studied (e.g. Alcón-Soler et al., 2005; Sifianou, 1999; Trosborg, 1995). The majority of these studies conducted after this study of Shoshana Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) have confirmed that the CCSARP classifications can still provide a comprehensive analysis of requests, and this

explains why they are still in use today. Since English was one of the languages studied in the CCSARP project, and since the present study focuses on appropriate ways of preforming requests in English, Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) coding schemes have been selected for this study, as they represent the data best; making it possible to examine the pragmatics of requests across groups, and to answer the research questions posed in this study relating to the speech act of requests. Before moving on to coding refusals, the following table provides several examples of requests collected for the present study.

SAMPLES	Directness strategies	Query Preparatory Sub-strategies	Internal Modification	External Modification
EFL1: *Salamu Alaikum, could you please tell me where class B123 is? I don't know where it is.*	*Query Preparatory*	*Could*	*Politeness marker (please)*	*Alerter+ grounder*
EFL2: *move from here please!*	*Mood derivable*	*No QPS*	*Please*	*No external modifications*
EFL3: *Excuse me teacher, would you mind if we opened the window? Because it's very hot in here?*	*Query Preparatory*	*Mind*	*Conditional clause*	*Alerter+ Grounder*
EFL4: *Excuse me, can I ask you something? I have a survey and I want to ask you maybe to fill it.*	*Hedged performative*	*No QPS*	*Downtoner (Maybe)*	*Linguistic devices+ prerequest*
ESL1: *Excuse me professor, I know this is the second time this month, but I really need to reschedule our meeting?*	*Scope stating*	*No QPS*	*Intensifiers*	*Linguistic devices (alerters)*
ESL2: *Excuse me gentlemen you have to enter the class, could you?*	*Locution derivable*	*No QPS*	*Tag questions*	*Linguistic devices (alerters)*
ESL3: *I was wondering if you'd be able to help me a little bit in a task I need to complete, please.*	*Query Preparatory*	*Wondering*	*Understater+ Politeness marker*	*No external modifications*
ESL4: *Excuse me Mark, would you be able to lend me the Economics book please? I need it for the assignment but I cannot get it from the library because it is closed now! I'll be happy to help you later if you need me to.*	*Query Preparatory*	*Would*	*Politeness marker*	*Alerter+ Grounder+ Promise of reward*
NSE1: *Um, is it possible to open the window please?*	*Query Preparatory*	*Possibility*	*Please*	*Alerter*
NSE2: *Hi, can I ask you a favour? I need some help to finish stuff this week.*	*Scope stating*	*No QPS*	*No internal modifications*	*Alerter+ pre-request*
NSE3: *Excuse me, the book (.....) is the only copy and I think it's the one you have, when you've finished*	*Query Preparatory*	*Possibility*	*No internal modifications*	*Alerter+ pre-request*

with the book is there any possibility I could use it please?		
NSE4: *I'm so worried! I couldn't get X book today for my assignment.*	*Strong hints*	*No QPS*	*No internal modifications* *Intensifier*

Table 3.7 Examples of collected requests

3.5.2 Coding of Refusals

As discussed in the literature review, this study adopted the taxonomy proposed by Beebe et al. (1990) to examine refusal strategies as well as specific adjuncts to refusals used to mitigate their effects. In this classification, the speech act of refusal was divided into two main parts: (1) a refusal head act, and (2) adjuncts to refusals. The refusal strategies and the types of the adjuncts in the collected refusals were coded using Beebe et al.'s (1990) categories as follows:

1- LEVEL OF DIRECTNESS	**Direct refusals:** 1. Non-performatives: Bluntness (e.g. No/ I refuse) 2. Performatives: Negation of proposition (e.g. I can't/I don't think so) **Indirect refusals:** 3. Excuse, Explanation (e.g. *I have an exam*) 4. Wish (e.g. *I wish I could help you*) 5. Statement of regret/apology (e.g. *I'm sorry, I can't*) 6. Statement of alternative: Change of option or past/future time (e.g. *I could do it another time).* 7. Statement of principle/philosophy (e.g. *I never drink right after dinner or One can't be too careful*). 8. Attempt to dissuade interlocutors (statement of negative consequences or criticism to the requester –*e.g. It's an unwise suggestion*). 9. Avoidance: Non-verbal (silence, hesitation, doing nothing and physical departure) or Verbal (topic switch, joke, repetition of past request, postponement and hedge).
2- ADJUNCTS TO REFUSALS:	1 Statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement (e.g. *That is a great idea, but*). 2 Statement of empathy (e.g. *I know you are in a bad situation*). 3 Pause fillers: (e.g. *well, you know, actually, I mean*). 4 External justifications (e.g. I can't come. *I really have many things to do*) 5 Gratitude/appreciation (e.g. *Thank you so much, but*)

Table 3.8 Classification of Refusals by Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz (1990)

Generally speaking, while this 28-years-old taxonomy clearly has utility, it appears that a number of points need to be raised concerning this classification. For example, particular answers could fall into more than one category, such as *"I'm really sorry"*, which could be a statement of regret or one of empathy. Likewise, it is difficult to distinguish between a statement of principle (category 8) and a statement of philosophy (category 9). Additionally, the use of excuses and reasons to refuse are difficult to distinguish neatly, as they differ from one culture to another. Moreover, the directness strategies for refusals were divided into two broad categories (direct and indirect) without being put on a scale of directness, ranging from direct to indirect so we could not determine the directness norms underpinning the refusals in each group. The majority of refusal studies adopted this classification without modification, while others applied specific changes (e.g. Salazar, Safont-Jorda, & Codina-Espurz, 2009). The following table provides specific examples of directness strategies employed, and adjuncts to refusals, taken from all the three groups involved in this study.

EXAMPLES	DIRECTNESS STRATEGIES	ADJUNCTS TO REFUSALS
EFL1: *No I can't go + because I have things to do.*	Non-performative	Justification
EFL2: *I'd like to go with you, but I have to visit my father.*	Excuse/explanation	Positive opinion
EFL3: *I'm really sorry professor that I wouldn't be able to come. I will be busy with my grandmother, as she is having surgery at the same time.*	Regret	Justification
EFL4: *Oh, many thanks for your invitation, but I can't, I have no time to go out on Sunday.*	Non-performative	Gratitude+ justification
EFL5: *I wish I could help, but I don't have enough time that week, because lessons are difficult and need most of my time.*	Wish	Justification
EFL6: *I can send the driver to pick your children from school.*	Alternative	No adjuncts
EFL7: *No, thank you, I'm fine.*	Non-performative	Thanks
ESL1: *hey this sounds really interesting and I would really like to come, but I'm off this Sunday*	Excuse/explanation	Positive opinion

with my family.		
ESL2: *I wish I could, but really I have a lot to do.*	Wish	Justification
ESL3: *This is very kind of you, and I'd love to join you, but unfortunately I can't + because.... + thanks for the invitation.*	Non-performative	(Positive opinion + Gratitude + Justification)
ESL4: *No I'm sorry doctor, I have lectures at the same time, so excuse me.*	Non-performative	Justification
NSE1: *Oh I do fancy it, I can't do next Saturday, are you free any other days?*	Non-performative	Positive opinion
NSE2: *Thank you for the offer, but I'm really sorry I have to be here this evening so I'm not going to be able.*	Excuse/explanation	Thanks
NSE3: *As much as I would like to help, I'm not really a confident person around people I don't know well, sorry.*	Excuse	Positive opinion
NSE4: *Tell you what, drop me an email or book /hrǝ/ my office hours this week. I'm a bit too busy at the moment to give you good advice.*	Alternative	Justification

Table 3.9 Examples of some collected refusals

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

3.6.1 Ethics

First, it is noteworthy that after designing and revising the data collection methods, the research requirements were fulfilled and ethical approval obtained from the research ethics committee at Cardiff University prior to the commencement of field research. Despite there being no risk of harming the subjects in this study, it still involves human sensitivities, as the participants were asked to fill in face-threatening questionnaires and engage in face-threatening role-play tasks. Thus, ethical approval was sought to ensure the personal freedom and absolute safety of the participants would be guaranteed. Additionally, since the ethical dimension of the research extends beyond filling in a form and obtaining permission from schools, I assessed the ethical implications of DCTs and RPTs, evaluating the content of the

questions, and ensuring the participants' freedom of choice, anonymity and confidentiality. I asked the participants to carefully read the consent form before agreeing to participate, and made it clear that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time without needing to provide reasons for doing so (see appendix 1).

3.6.2 Pilot Study

After obtaining ethical approval, a pilot study was conducted in August 2015 with twenty ESL Saudi learners from Cardiff University and nine British NSE. All potential participants found to meet the conditions of participation and willing to participate were asked to read and sign a consent form, and were encouraged to ask questions to clarify concerns at any time. At this stage in the data collection process, several issues were identified. First, the pilot study revealed several of the scenarios and categories were not transparent to respondents. In addition, it emerged that the questionnaire took longer to complete than anticipated, which risks causing respondent exhaustion and loss of interest, potentially then yielding poor quality data. Moreover, a number of Saudi ESL participants perceived the DCTs and the RPTs as a language-proficiency test, and consequently reacted and responded accordingly. A further aspect that attracted my attention during the pilot study, was that certain participants did not identify with their roles in the RPT scenarios, which caused difficulties for some participants when ranking the level of imposition described on their role-play cards. It was also observed that the first page of the questionnaire (the personal information) needed to be reworked to encourage participants to complete the questionnaires. Finally, the pilot study also revealed that due to Saudi traditions and customs, recruiting female participants would be a challenging endeavour.

3.6.3 Main Study

Prior to conducting the main study, a number of changes and additions were made to both data collection instruments. First, extra instructions and detailed information were added,

where necessary, to make the scenarios more plausible and accessible. In addition, a line was added to the cards after setting out each role-play scenario to further clarify the task requirements. In addition, several scenarios from both instruments were re-designed and simplified to reduce completion time and manage the participants' mental effort. With regard to the difficulty recruiting female participants for the study, additional time was allocated on my PhD timetable to ensure more Saudi female participants could be recruited. The majority of the data was collected between November 2015 and March 2016 at two locations: Taif University in Saudi Arabia (for the EFL group) and in Cardiff (for the ESL and NSE groups). For the main study, each participant was asked about DCTs and RPTs, and all stated that they could follow the scenario descriptions readily, that the conversational prompts could be easily responded to, and the questions were well defined and clearly understood.

3.6.4   Factors Considered in the Analysis

It is important here to mention several issues that were considered during the data coding and analysis not discussed above. Firstly, the research design for this study considers several factors that might affect the non-native groups' production of speech acts, in addition to the degree of impositions and the social status of interlocutors. More specifically, it examined the role played by length of time spent learning EFL and ESL, and the intensity of the communication between the ESL participants and native speakers. Therefore, both the EFL and ESL groups were subdivided into two subgroups in accordance with the personal information they provided: (1) those who had spent less than two years learning English, and (2) those who have learned English for between two to four years. In this research, the notion of length of time spent learning relates to participants' enrolment in EFL or ESL programmes. The ESL group was divided into two additional subgroups, according to the extent of their communication with native speakers: (1) those communicating with native speakers for fewer than five hours a week, and (2) those communicating with native speakers for five hours a

week or more. The influence of the intensity of communication with native speakers has been infrequently discussed in previous empirical research on speech acts, but is likely to influence pragmatic use. Finally, it is important to conclude this section by mentioning that since this study focuses on the frequencies of specific pragmatic features by different speaking groups, I used the SPSS to perform the statistical data analysis, and the Chi Square (χ2) Test was applied to the data to measure the statistical significance of differences in the usages of the pragmatic features by the groups, as will be discussed in detail in the results chapters

To conclude this chapter, the approach followed in this research in terms of participants, data collection and analysis, the data collection instruments and the coding taxonomies employed here were provided in detail in this chapter to ensure valid findings and interpretations were generated from the data. Following this methodology chapter, chapter four presents the findings obtained in this research regarding the analysis of the speech act of requests.

4 Chapter Four: Analysis of Requests

4.1 Introductory Remarks

Having presented the methodology of the present study in the previous chapter, the current chapter aims to investigate similarities and differences in the pragmatics of requests between the three groups, to provide clear answers to the relevant research questions (as stated in section 3.2). To achieve this, 1920 requests were collected from the three groups as follows:

- The DCTs yielded 1440 formulated requests (EFL: 540 requests; ESL: 540 requests; NSE: 360 requests).

- The RPTs produced 480 requests (EFL: 180 requests; ESL: 180 requests; NSE: 120 requests).

These DCT and RPT requests comprise high and low imposition requests, some directed at people of lower status, and others at people of equal or higher status (see Appendices 1 and 2). In the analysis stage, these requests were categorized using Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper's (1989) taxonomy, as specified in section 3.5. This taxonomy distinctly divides the request speech act into two main parts: (1) the head act of the request, and (2) adjuncts to the head act. The head act incorporates two elements (namely *request strategies* and *internal modifiers*), whereas the adjuncts represent *external modifiers*, as illustrated in figure 4.1.
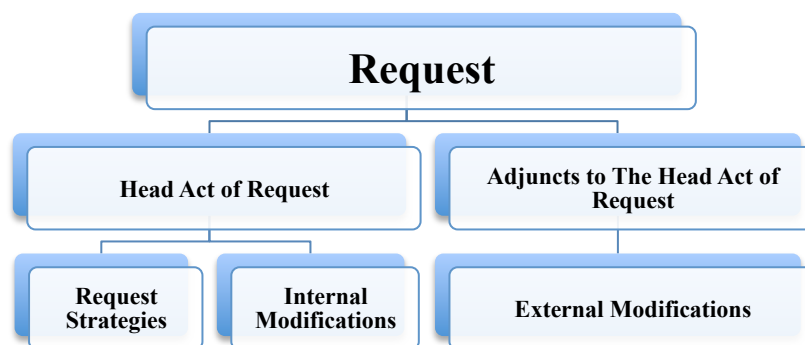
Figure 4.1. Parts of requests.

Of these three elements, *'request strategies'* describe actual requests that contain illocutionary force (i.e. the speaker's intention when producing the speech act), and determine the level of directness of requests; thus, the use of appropriate request strategies in accordance with the proper context constitute the most important features of polite requests (see Al-Ammar, 2000; El-Shazly, 1993; Fukushima, 1996; Trosborg, 1995). Despite internal and external modifiers being important for softening the impact of requests (and for mitigating the imposition associated with face-threatening speech acts), they do not alter the central proposition expressed through *'request strategies'*, and nor do they change the level of directness present (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). This being the case, the analysis of participants' requests in this chapter focuses on these three components: request strategies, internal modifications, and external modifications. First, an analysis of request strategies is provided in the next section (4.2), and this is followed by a detailed analysis of how request strategies are *internally* and *externally* modified according to politeness (internal modifications are discussed in section 4.3, and external modifications in section 4.4). Finally, the chapter briefly summarises the three elements together in the concluding section (4.5), offering a summary of the study's major findings.

4.2 Pragmatic Differences in the use of Request Strategies

One of the most important considerations when formulating appropriate requests is to minimise "the imposition involved in the act itself" (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 206), and an important way to diminish the imposition of a request (to preserve the interlocutors' faces) is to reduce level of directness (see Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; P. Brown & Levinson, 1978; House & Kasper, 1987). Consequently, requests can be classified by level of directness; i.e. direct requests, conventionally indirect requests, and non-conventionally indirect requests. These three levels were further subdivided by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) into nine request

strategies, moving from the most direct to the most indirect. Table 4.1 outlines each of these strategies to clarify the terms and format used in the forthcoming results tables.

Table 4.1. Examples of Request Strategies.

Levels of Directness	Request Strategies	Examples
Direct Requests	1. Mood derivable	• *Move from here - Open the window - Give me your book please!*
	2. Unhedged performative	• *I'm asking you to explain this for me - I request you step back!*
	3. Hedged performative	• *I must ask you to fill in this questionnaire - I want to ask you to...*
	4. Locution derivable	• *You have to enter the class - You'll need to add me to another group!*
	5. Scope stating	• *I wish you to do this for me - I really want to reschedule this!*
Conventionally Indirect Requests	6. Suggestory formula	• *What about changing this group - Why don't you give me the book?*
	7. Query preparatory	• *Would you mind if we opened the window? - Could you lend me this, please?*
Non-conventionally Indirect Requests	8. Strong hints	• *I'm so worried! I couldn't get X book today for my assignment.*
	9. Mild hints	• *I can't breathe (open the window)-It is closed! I'll fail this subject (Give me X book).*

As emphasised in the literature review, this classification enables the conversion of requests from members of different cultures into a directness system, helps ascertain the norms of request strategies within a particular speech community, and also informs understanding of the pragmatic competence of L2 learners when performing L2 requests.

The presentation of the results in this section (4.2) follows the order in which the thesis' research questions were formulated, and so is divided into five subsections. The first (4.2.1) presents and compares the overall similarities and differences in the use of request strategies between the three target groups. The remaining subsections provide specific results,

highlighting the different factors influencing the formulation of groups' requests. The degree of imposition (low/high), and its associated effect on requests, was examined (4.2.2), followed by a discussion of the role played by the interlocutor's status (lower/equal/higher) in their performance of requests (4.2.3). In addition, the responses of non-native groups were re-examined relative to the length of time the participants had spent learning English (4.2.4), and the intensity of their communication with native speakers (4.2.4) in an attempt to assess the influence of both variables on their acquisition of pragmatics. The above-mentioned factors have been reported in several studies in the literature evaluating the construction of speech acts (See Barron, 2007; Bella, 2011; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Sasaki & Beamer, 2002). Each of these variables is discussed in a separate subsection in this study, to enrich the findings and provide relevant and precise information. Finally, as the data was collected using two data collection methods, the results obtained from the DCTs and RPTs was presented separately for comparison purposes in each subsection.

4.2.1 Overall results for the groups' request strategies

As explained above, this subsection discusses how the three groups employed different request strategies when performing the speech act of request, but not considering modifications for politeness. For example, the following three utterances were classified as a single request strategy (i.e. *mood derivable*), although the illocutionary forces were modified differently:

1- *Move from here.*
2- *Move from here, please.*
3- *Move from here please! I'm sorry but it's dangerous to stay here.*

Hence, the DCT table below (4.1) shows how the three groups in this study produced their request strategies, relative to the subsequent RPT ones.

Table 4.2. Overall uses of DCT directness strategies in each group.

	EFL %	ESL %	NSE %
1. Mood derivable	5.7	3	0
2. Unhedged performative	1.3	0	0
3. Hedged performative	10.3	7.6	2.5
4. Locution derivable	0.7	0.4	1.4
5. Scope stating	4.2	6.1	3.6
6. Suggestory formula	0.2	1.3	3
7. Query preparatory	**74.6**	**76**	**77.2**
8. Strong hints	2.5	5.3	11.3
9. Mild hints	0.4	0.3	1
Total No. of Requests	540	540	360

Following table 4.2, figure 4.2 highlights discrepancies within the group relative to the

three main directness categories for request strategies:
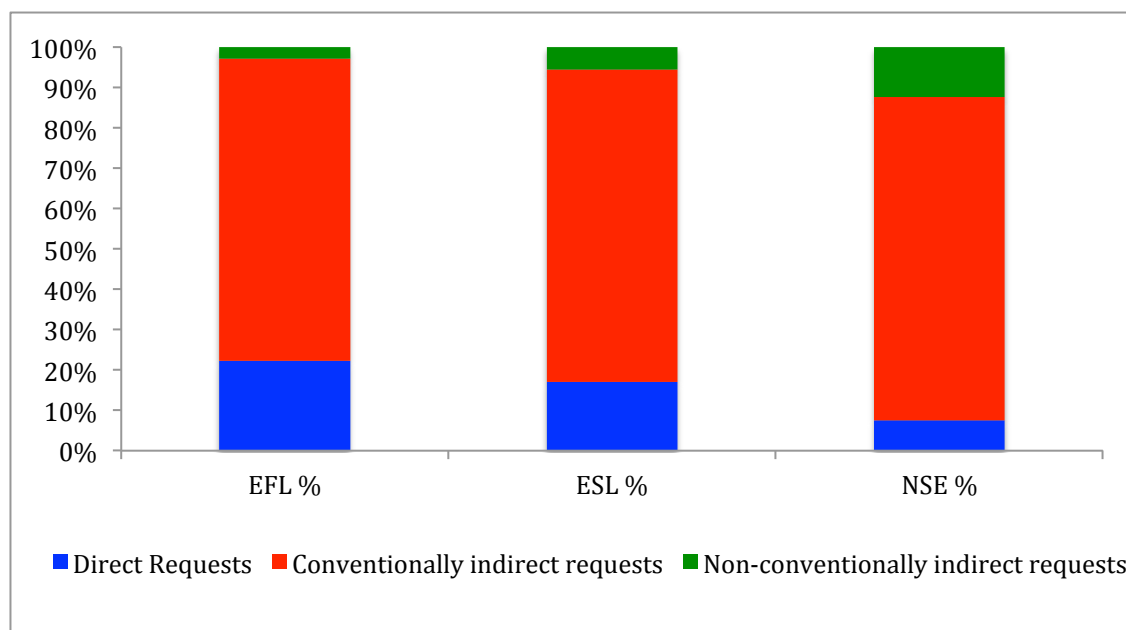
Figure 4.2. Overall uses of DCT request strategies in each group.

The above results reveal clearly that all three groups follow a common pattern when

performing requests; more specifically, they all employed conventionally indirect requests

(e.g. *Would you mind lifting this box for me?*) more frequently than direct requests (e.g. *Lift

this box for me.*) and non-conventionally indirect requests (e.g. *This box is heavy!*), a finding

that mirrors that reported in the majority of previous studies (See Cenoz & Valencia, 1996;

Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008; House & Kasper, 1987; Hutz, 2006; Scarcella & Brunack,

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1979; Taguchi, 2012; Tanaka, 1988; Woodfield, 2008). These results imply that both Saudi groups acquired a certain degree of pragmatic knowledge when using request strategies in English. However, as also found in many previous studies, the non-native groups (EFL & ESL participants) in this study used direct strategies more often than the NSE group. A Chi-square test reported a statistically significant difference in this regard between the NSE group and the EFL & ESL groups ($p < 0.01$ each time). This might indicate less awareness on the part of the non-native groups that direct request strategies are inappropriate in many cases and situations; this is because direct strategies have a high level of imposition, leaving the requestees with little freedom of choice, and more importantly reduce the level of politeness preferred when uttering face-threatening speech acts (see Al-Ammar, 2000; Alcón-Soler et al., 2005; Fukushima, 1996).

Indeed, as stated by Brown and Levinson (1987), direct requests are more likely than indirect strategies to violate politeness norms in speech, especially so when requests are highly imposing or addressed to higher status speakers (the connection between degree of imposition in requests and the role of the interlocutor's status will be examined in detail in the following subsections). Nevertheless, it is important to note that the tendency of non-native groups to use more direct strategies can be attributed to the difficulties formulating the structures used in indirect requests in an L2 (Taguchi, 2012; Tanaka, 1988), as L2 groups have a comparatively limited linguistic repertoire. It is reasonable to suppose that L2 learners' limited language repertoire means they may be more concerned with communicating their intended meaning than adhering to the sociocultural norms of L2 native speakers.

An additional factor mentioned to explain use of directness is the learning contexts in which L2 learners are taught the L2 (Hutz, 2006). In this study, when comparing the request strategies of EFL and ESL groups, the results confirm that the ESL participants used fewer direct requests than the EFL participants, and that there was a statistically significant

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difference between the EFL and the ESL groups in this regard ($p < 0.05$). Thus, this indicates that the ESL group generally has a more pragmatic understanding of request strategies compared to the EFL group (see also Blum-Kulka, 1987, p.136), which can be attributed to the differences in the learning environments between the two groups.

Reviewing in detail how the groups used the nine request strategies when making requests, it becomes apparent that the EFL group utilised the first three direct strategies as represented on the directness scale (i.e. *mood derivable, unhedged performative,* and *hedged performative*) in 17.3% of their requests, whereas the ESL group employed these three strategies in 10.6% of their requests (compared to 2.5% of NSE requests). These three request strategies are the most direct and so viewed as the least polite in the English-speaking cultural context (see Blum-Kulka & House, 1989; P. Brown & S. Levinson, 1987). They are traditionally used when giving orders; i.e. by speakers with power over their interlocutors, rather than when requesting someone to perform an action for the speakers' benefit with no authority to do so. This explains why the NSE group rarely used them. The final two request strategies (i.e. *locution derivable* and *scope stating*) are relatively less direct than the other strategies in the same category and so can be considered appropriate in several situations; however these were less frequently used by EFL speakers than the first three strategies.

Meanwhile, conventional indirect requests (the second category) represented 74.8% of EFL requests, 77.3% of ESL requests and 80.2% of NSE requests. From this conventionally indirect category, the groups rarely used a *suggestory formula*, but heavily used *query preparatory*. When presenting a request using a suggestory formula (e.g. *What about opening the window?*), the speaker is being very tentative, and down playing his/her own interest as a beneficiary of the action (Trosborg, 1995, p. 201). However, such a formula is frequently more likely to be associated with the speech act of suggestion, possibly explaining why participants rarely use this form. The heavy use of the query preparatory strategy by

participating groups (with different frequency rates are found between groups) corresponds with the majority of the studies previously reviewed in this thesis, thereby indicating that the 7th strategy on the scale of directness is a major strategy for issuing requests. It is worthy of mention that the query preparatory strategy can be realized through many different sub-strategies (i.e. can, could, will, would, mind, possibility, and wondering) as will be detailed and discussed below.

The last *non-conventionally indirect category* (i.e. hints) was the one least used by EFL (2.9% of their requests) and ESL participants (5.6%), but was more frequently visited than the direct category for the NSE group (12.3%). This non-conventional category is used to request something implicitly using *hints*, which are sometimes expressed with a clear reference to the illocutionary act of request (*strong hints*), and sometimes without (*mild hints*). The use of non-conventionally indirect requests might violate the maxim of relation discussed earlier in reference to Grice's work on the Cooperative Principle and its attendant maxims (1975, 1978, 1989), if not handled properly. Additionally, using hints to make requests requires participants to be confident in their sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic knowledge, which is why the NSE group's use was relatively higher. The fact that the ESL participants used more hints than the EFL group, suggested they were moving closer to the NSE group, potentially suggesting that a difference in terms of learning environment and exposure to the target language had influenced ESL use.

To gain insight into the patterns the three groups followed when requesting, each group's request strategies are presented in hierarchical order in Table 4.3, with percentages denoting rates of frequency.

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Table 4.3. Groups' request strategies based on the rates of frequencies.

EFL	ESL	NSE
1. Query preparatory (74.6%)	Query preparatory (76%)	Query preparatory (77.2%)
2. Hedged performative (10.3%)	Hedged performative (7.6%)	Strong hints (11.3%)
3. Mood derivable (5.7%)	Scope stating (6.1%)	Scope stating (3.6%)
4. Scope stating (4.2%)	Strong hints (5.3%)	Suggestory formula (3%)
5. Strong hints (2.5%)	Mood derivable (3%)	Hedged performative (2.5%)
6. Unhedged performative (1.3%)	Suggestory formula (1.3%)	Locution derivable (1.4%)
7. Locution derivable (0.7%)	Locution derivable (0.4%)	Mild hints (1%)
8. Mild hints (0.4%)	Mild hints (0.3%)	
9. Suggestory formula (0.2%)		

Based on the above hierarchy of request strategies, it became obvious that the sequence of request strategies differed between groups. For example, *hedged performative* (a direct strategy) was the second most used strategy among EFL and ESL groups, but fifth for the NSE group. Also, *mood derivable* (another direct strategy) was the third most used option among the EFL group, the fifth option for the ESL group, and was never used by the NSE group. Nevertheless, it is apparent that the order of the choices made by the ESL group was closer to the NSE group than the EFL group.

As noticed and noted above, the three groups mostly used the second category (conventionally indirect), and within this category they all used query preparatory heavily, as the percentages have shown. Thus, the groups' use of the *conventionally indirect query preparatory* strategy needs to be examined further. In this study, as mentioned in the methodology chapter, the sub-strategies of query preparatory specified by Lin (2009) were used in order to gain a more detailed understanding of the request options for the groups. Lin's query preparatory sub-strategies were not ordered according to a scale of directness, but were numbered according to the function of the modals (see section 3.5.1 for more on Lin's scheme). The following table (4.2) features the DCT results, and differences in terms of preparatory query across the three groups:

Table 4.4. Overall uses of DCT query preparatory in each group.

	EFL %	ESL %	NSE %
1. Can/Could I/you	76	68.6	43.2
2. Will/Would I/you	8.4	10	11.5
3. May I/you	5	2.2	0.7
4. Mind (Do/would you mind)	10	12	15.1
5. Possibility	0	2.7	19
6. I was wondering	0.5	4.4	10.4
Total No. of Query Preparatory	403	411	278

To clarify the variability between the groups, the data in this table is illustrated visually in the form of a bar chart below (Figure 4.3).
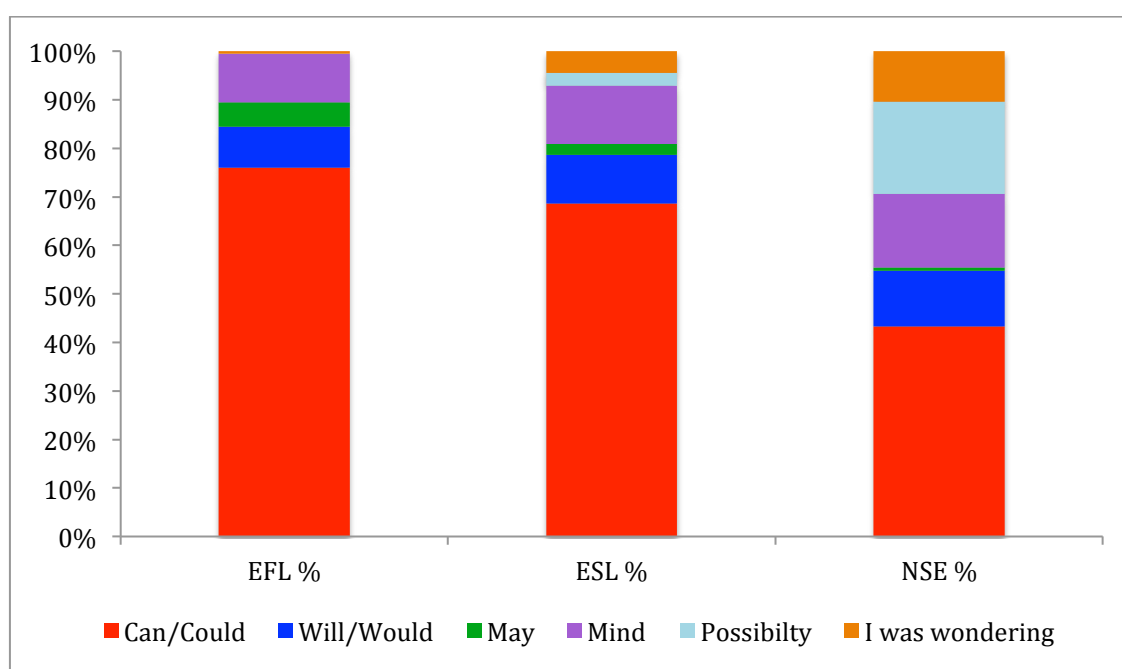
Figure 4.3. Overall uses of query preparatory in each group.

Within the query preparatory subcategory, further differences affecting the DCT request strategies can be observed and added to the differences elicited using the main categories set out by Blum-Kulka *et al*. (1989). For example, the ability modals (*can/could*) were the sub-strategy most used by all groups, although they represented a larger proportion of the responses of non-native groups (especially the EFL group). This means that although the EFL/ESL speakers generally used slightly fewer query preparatory sub-strategies than the NSEs, they were less varied, since *can/could* comprises 76% of the EFL and 68.6% of the

ESL query preparatory sub-strategies in comparison to 43.2% for NSE participants. The NSE group, on the other hand, exhibited far greater variety (except for the use of *may* which was low). Arguably, *may* is considered too formal/posh by NSE speakers and an unnatural request form to use; however, it is taught on Saudi and UK curricula. This lack of use by native speakers may explain why it is used more frequently by the EFL group than the ESL group, who might have observed its scarcity.

When comparing the use of *can/could* to other options, a statistically significant difference emerged between the three groups ($p < 0.01$), as well as between the two non-native groups ($p < 0.05$). If we examine how the three groups used the ability modals (*can/could*), the most apparent issue was the lack of use of *could* among the Saudi EFL participants. Indeed, the Saudi EFL participants used *could* for 32.1% of the can/could requests compared to 71% for the ESL group and 85.3% for the NSE group (see the following table).

Table 4.5. Distribution of *can* and *could* in ability requests.

	EFL %	ESL %	NSE %
Can	67.9	29	14.7
Could	32.1	71	85.3
Total No. of Ability Modals	306	282	120

The use of the ability modal *could* in place of *can* softens requests, making them sound politer. As indicated by Blum-Kulka *et al*. (1989), using *could* in questions erodes 'pragmatic duality', as *can* may be used either to ask about a hearer's ability to do something (the literal meaning) or to request something (the conventionalized meaning), whereas *could* serves only a requestive function. This also suggests the ESL group has demonstrated significantly more understanding of query preparatory sub-strategies than the EFL group. It is noteworthy that since there is a huge difference in the use of *can* and *could* in terms of the groups' responses, thus, although Lin's scheme puts them together, I investigate *can* and *could* separately in the tables below.

When examining the use of the other groups' options based on Lin's (2009) classification, the most casual strategies in the subcategory of query preparatory (i.e. possibility/I was wondering) were scarcely used by the EFL group, unlike those used by the other two groups (EFL: 0.5%, ESL: 7.1%, and NSE: 29.4%). This might be due to the complex structure of these sub-strategies, or because they conventionalise indirect meanings more. As the ESL group used them more frequently than the EFL group, this seems to suggest the ESL participants have acquired sub-strategies from their inner-circle environment; although, they are not approaching native rates of use, as the percentages show.

The above results detailing request strategies emerged from the DCTs, and since the data for this study was collected using two data collection methods (DCTs and RPTs), the following table and figures detail the RPT results for request strategies when identifying differences in the groups' choices according to type of data collection method used:

Table 4.6. Overall uses of RPT directness strategies in each group.

	EFL %	ESL %	NSE %
1. Mood derivable	4.3	1.6	0
2. Unhedged performative	2.8	0	0
3. Hedged performative	8.9	7.8	3.3
4. Locution derivable	0.6	0.6	3.3
5. Scope stating	8.9	8	4.2
6. Suggestory formula	0.6	1.1	5
7. Query preparatory	**73.3**	**76.7**	**80**
8. Strong hints	0	2.6	4.2
9. Mild hints	0.6	1.6	0
Total No.	180	180	120
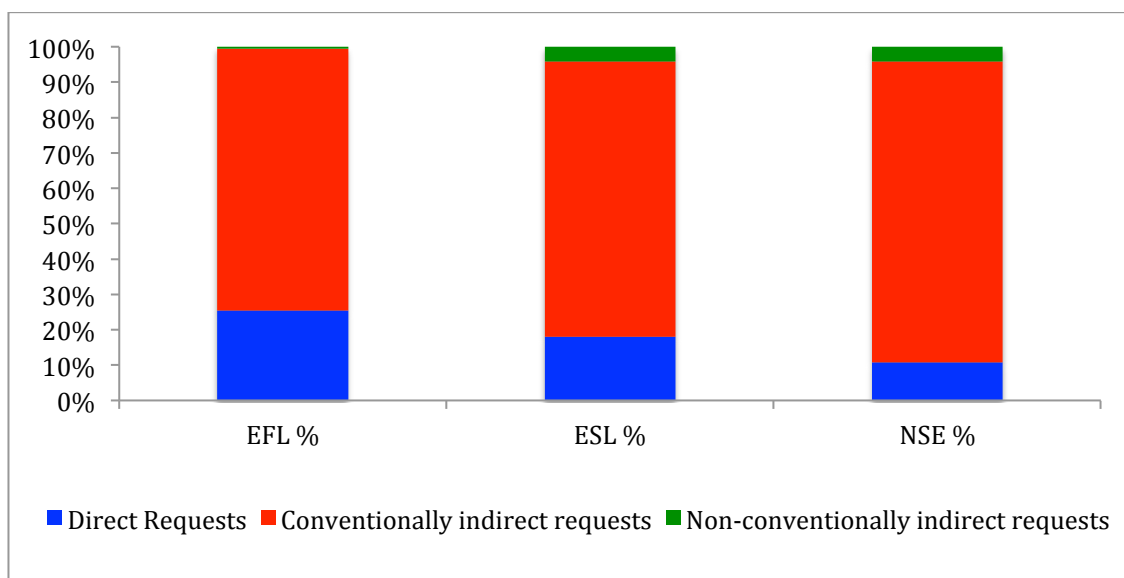
Figure 4.4. Overall uses of RPT directness strategies in each group.

Having presented the RPT results above, it is apparent that they are similar to the DCT results in terms of frequencies of request strategies. All the RPT groups employed more indirect strategies than direct ones in their requests. The NSE group were also the most indirect when making requests, and the ESL group were more indirect than the EFL group. In addition, a statistically significant difference was found in the use of direct request strategies when comparing the use of indirect request strategies across all groups, and between the non-native groups ($p < 0.05$). It was observed here that the three groups used slightly more direct strategies in their RPTs than in DCTs, as the numbers have shown; however, the difference in the use of direct requests relative to indirect requests between the RPTs and DCTs is not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$) for all groups. This slight increase in the use of direct requests in RPTs might be due to the interactive nature of this method, which allows for more non-linguistic features (e.g. facial expression or hesitations) to be included in the interaction compared to DCTs, since synchronic writing is considered to be a more formal and less immediate mode of communication (see section 3.4).

Another interesting difference emerged between the RPT and DCT results for NSE in terms of their use of request strategies. The NSE group used direct requests more than non-

conventionally indirect requests in RPTs, whereas the opposite pattern was observed for DCTs. Although these rates were generally low in both cases (see tables 4.2 & 4.6), they may imply that the NSE group considers *hints* less appropriate in the context of RPTs than DCTs, which may be due to the fact that nothing is genuinely face threatening on paper, as the situations are artificial. It is also notable that many researchers have concluded that role-plays deliver a closer reflection of authentic conversations (see section 3.4). Despite the above-mentioned differences between the DCT and RPT results, the overall uses of directness strategies were equivalent for all groups across both data collection methods. This strengthens the initial findings enhances the study's credibility.

Similar to the DCT results, the RPT results for the three groups' directness strategies could be further categorised using the sub-strategies of query preparatory set out by Lin (2009):

Table 4.7. Overall uses of query preparatory in RPT requests.

	EFL %	ESL %	NSE %
1. Can I/you	52	22.5	5.5
2. Could I/you	26	44.2	31
3. Will/Would I/you	5.3	10.9	13.5
4. May I/you	2.3	2.2	0
5. Mind (Do/would you mind)	13.6	10.9	13.5
6. Possibility	0	3.6	25
7. I was wondering	0.7	5.8	11.5
Total No.	132	138	96

The information presented in this table, the data has been presented visually in figure 4.5 below for enhanced clarity.
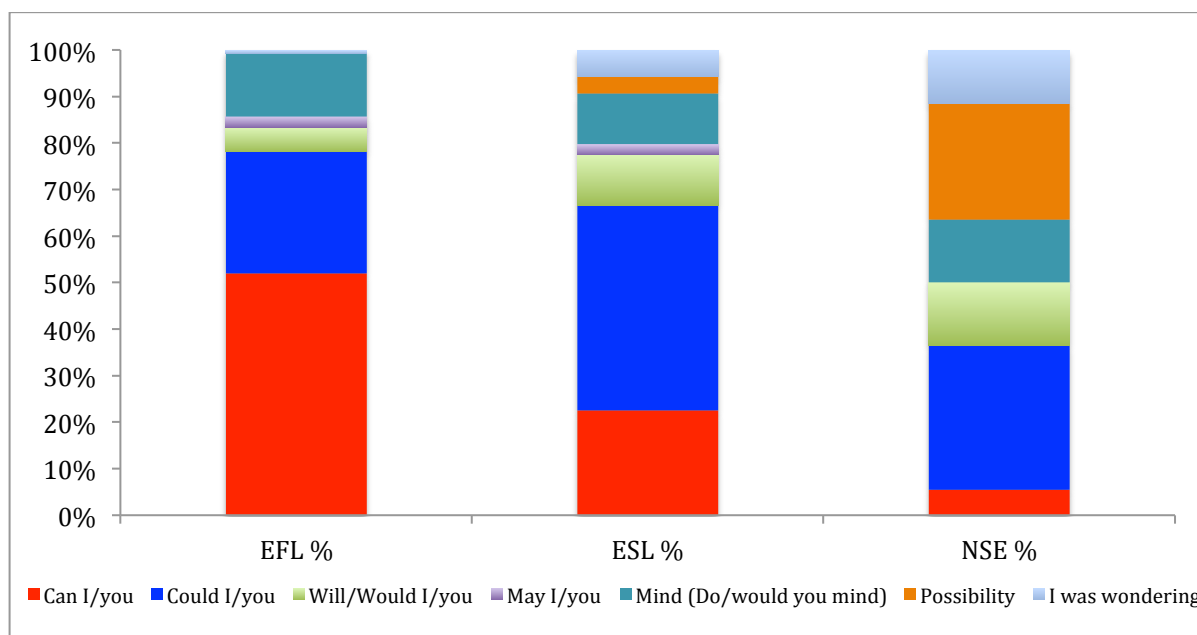
Figure 4.5. Overall uses of query preparatory in RPT requests.

The query-preparatory subcategory of request strategies used in the RPTs revealed clear variations between the three groups. As was the case with the DCT results, the NSE group preferred more casual query preparatory productions than the non-native groups, while the ESL group was less informal than the EFL group. For example, the possibility modals (*can/could*) were used most frequently by the EFL group, comprising 78% of their conventionally indirect requests. This compared to 66.7% of the ESL participants' requests, and 36.5% of the NSEs'. Additionally, as discussed in relation to the DCTs, differences in the use of *can* and *could* emerged between the three RPT groups; as the EFL group significantly overused *can* at the expense of *could* when compared to the ESL and NSE groups ($p < 0.05$). Thus, it can be suggested that the ESL group is closer to NSEs than the EFL group in terms of pragmatic competence, which is a recurrent suggestion thus far.

Taking *can/could* as an example from the RPTs, and comparing it to how the modals were used in the DCTs, we can observe that the NSEs used *can/could* significantly less in the RPTs (43.2% in DCTs and 36.5% in RPTs). However, this discrepancy was not witnessed in either of the non-native groups (ESL: 68.6% in DCTs and 66.7% in RPTs; EFL: 76% in DCTs and 78% in RPTs), implying that, non-native speakers choices of request strategy are

not influenced by the data collection method. To conclude this section, in reference to the first research question (how do Saudi ESL and EFL learners, and British NSEs produce the speech act of requests?), the above findings can be summarised as follows:

- The three groups mostly used conventionally indirect request strategies to formulate their requests, and within this category they heavily used the query preparatory strategy with different frequency distributions between groups. This means the non-native groups succeeded to some degree in replicating some NSE norms for requesting. However, when examining usage of the nine request strategies between groups, more differences were observed.

- Although the results suggest more indirect strategies than direct strategies were employed by all three groups when making requests, the NSE participants were by far the most indirect, and the EFL participants the most direct. Thus, EFL participants also made the least polite requests, as discussed above. The ESL participants appeared to be moving towards the NSE group in terms of usage, being less direct than the EFL participants but more direct than the NSEs. Thus, as the NSE responses were intended as a model for the non-native groups in terms of ideal request strategies, the non-native groups' responses were compared and contrasted with those of the NSE group. The results clearly showed the ESL group was closest to the NSE group in terms of their use of request strategies, although some differences remained.

- Based on the above points, the ESL group showed more pragmatic competence in their use of request strategies than the EFL group.

The above findings regarding request strategies will be further investigated in the following subsections according to the four factors mentioned earlier. This will help to establish whether there are any other differences between the groups so to provide further insights into the remaining research questions. Individual factors might also help better

explain the differences between the groups. Thus, the following subsection first examines the selection of request strategies, given the degree of imposition in the scenarios, before other factors influencing the use of request strategies are examined.

4.2.2 Request strategies based on degree of imposition

As discussed previously, the request scenarios in this study were designed to vary in terms of their degree of imposition between low and high. The low-imposition contexts included requesting something of small value, such as asking for directions, or asking a friend for a pen, while the high-imposition contexts involved, for instance, asking a busy person to reschedule a crucial meeting. It was anticipated that the high imposition requests would be more minimised and pragmatically softened through the use of indirect strategies, together with employing more specific modifiers to save face on the part of the interlocutors (see Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; P. Brown & S. Levinson, 1987; Trosborg, 1995). The following results of the DCT relate to the role of the degree of imposition, and these are compared with the results of the RPT later in this subsection.

Table 4.8. Impact of the degree of imposition on the DCT directness strategies.

| | | LEVEL OF DIRECTNESS % | | | | | | | | | Total |
		Mood derivable	Unhedged performative	Hedged performative	Locution derivable	Scope stating	Suggestory formula	Query preparatory	Strong hints	Mild hints	No.
Low	EFL	8.9	1.7	10.6	1.1	0.5	0.5	**72.8**	3.9	0	180
	ESL	5	0	9.4	0.6	7.2	0.6	**70**	7.2	0	180
	NSE	0	0	5	2.5	7.5	4.2	**63.2**	16	1.6	120
High	EFL	4.2	1.1	9.7	0.55	6.1	0	**75.5**	2.2	0.55	360
	ESL	1.9	0	7.2	0.3	5.5	1.7	**79.2**	3.9	0.3	360
	NSE	0	0	1.25	0.8	1.7	2.1	**86.2**	7.1	0.8	240
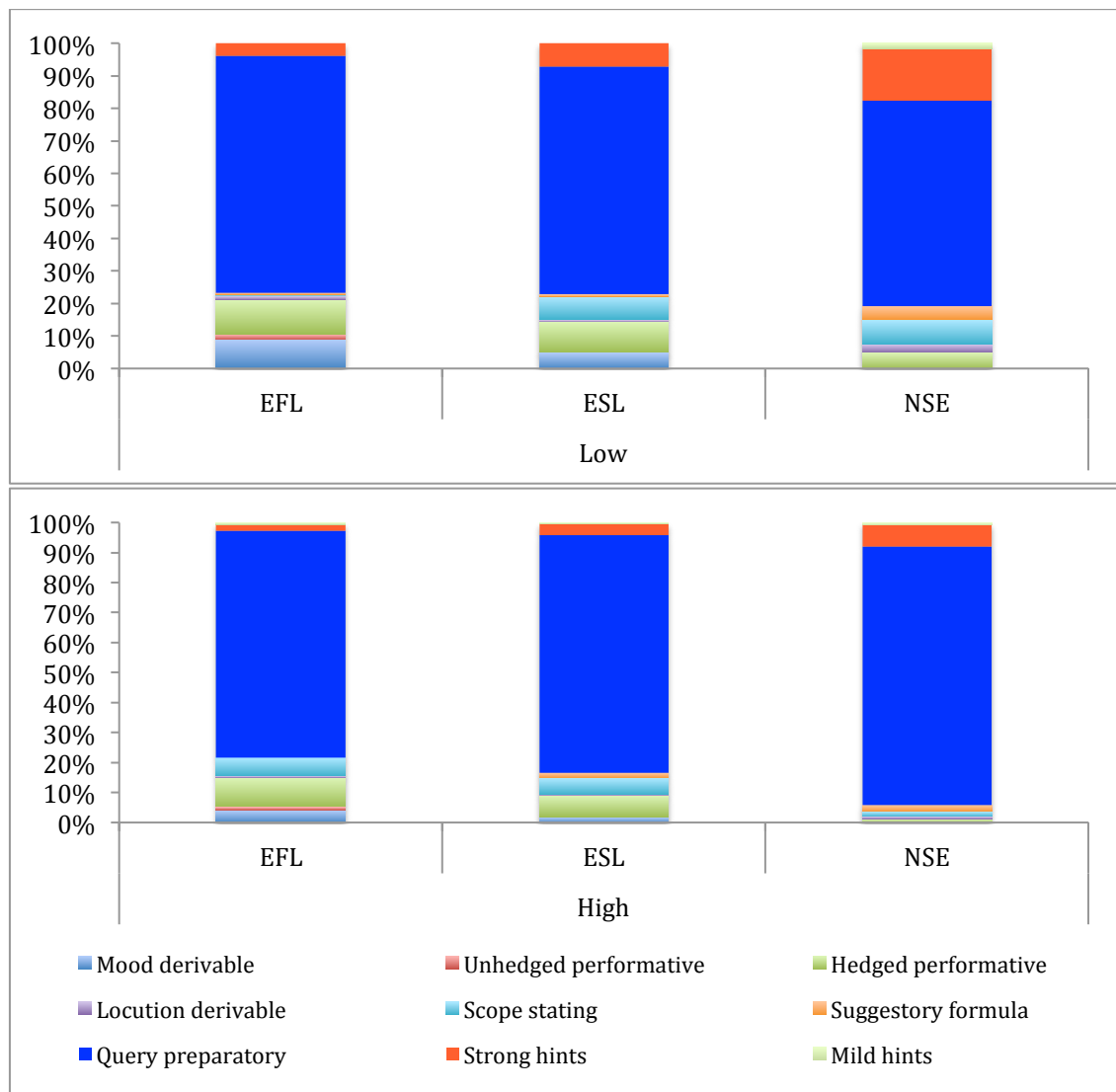
Figure 4.6. Impact of the degree of imposition on the DCT directness strategies.

The results revealed that the three groups, and especially the NSE and ESL groups, employed higher rates of more indirect strategies in high imposition contexts. Conventionally indirect request strategies represented 67.4% of the NSE participants' low-imposition requests, while 88.3% of their high imposition requests were conventionally indirect. Meanwhile, the ESL group employed conventionally indirect requests in 70.6% of their low imposition requests, compared with 80.9% of their high imposition requests. In terms of the EFL group, 73.3% of the participants' requests were conventionally indirect when the degree of imposition was low, and 75.5% when it was high. It can be therefore concluded that although the three groups employed higher rates of more indirect strategies in high imposition

contexts, this was only statistically significant for the NSE group ($p < 0.01$), and the ESL group ($p < 0.05$).

Although the EFL group did not significantly alter the level of directness between their high and low imposition requests, their requests involving *imperatives* (mood derivable) reduced by approximately half in the high imposition contexts (8.9% to 4.2%). Instead, the EFL speakers employed *scope stating*, which is the last level on the scale of direct request strategies, in the high imposition contexts (6.1% of their requests), although this was not employed significantly in the low imposition contexts (only 0.5%). Indeed, the EFL group appeared to replace the use of mood derivable strategies with scope stating strategies, but both strategies remained within the same direct request category, and hence did not affect the overall directness of their requests. In contrast, the NSE group was the most sensitive to the degree of imposition, and possessed a greater repertoire of ways to be indirect, followed by the ESL group. This suggested that the ESL group was more aware of the fact that the more imposing the requests, the more indirect requests were required, and thus the more polite and more socially accepted their requests were. Furthermore, since high imposition requests potentially involve greater threat to face, employing indirect requests allows options for those on the receiving end of such requests in high imposition contexts (see Blum-Kulka & House, 1989; P. Brown & S. Levinson, 1987; Lakoff, 1973, 1977).

Several of the DCT results presented in the above table and figure are of interest. For example, the ESL and NSE participants employed *strong and mild hints* in the low imposition contexts almost twice as often as in the high imposition contexts (ESL: 7.2%-4.2%, and NSE: 17.6%-7.9%), which was not the case with the EFL group. This appeared to indicate that hints might be inappropriate strategies to employ when writing high imposition requests. The following table and figure employ Lin's (2009) subcategories to further illuminate the DCT results for the participants' request strategies, in order to illustrate whether it is possible to observe further differences between the groups, in terms of the degree of imposition.

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Table 4.9. Impact of the degree of imposition on the DCT query preparatory.

		The Sub-strategies of Query Preparatory %							Total No.
		Can	Could	Will/Would	May	Do/Would you mind	Possibility	I was wondering	
Low	EFL	53.4	26.7	8.4	5.3	6.1	0	0	131
	ESL	24.3	48.7	8.7	1.6	13.5	1.6	1.6	126
	NSE	9.3	52.7	7	2.8	18.3	8.4	1.4	76
High	EFL	49.3	24.6	8.4	4.8	12.1	0	0.7	272
	ESL	22.2	44.5	10.5	2.4	11.6	3.2	5.6	285
	NSE	4.9	27.8	13	0	14	22.7	17.5	207
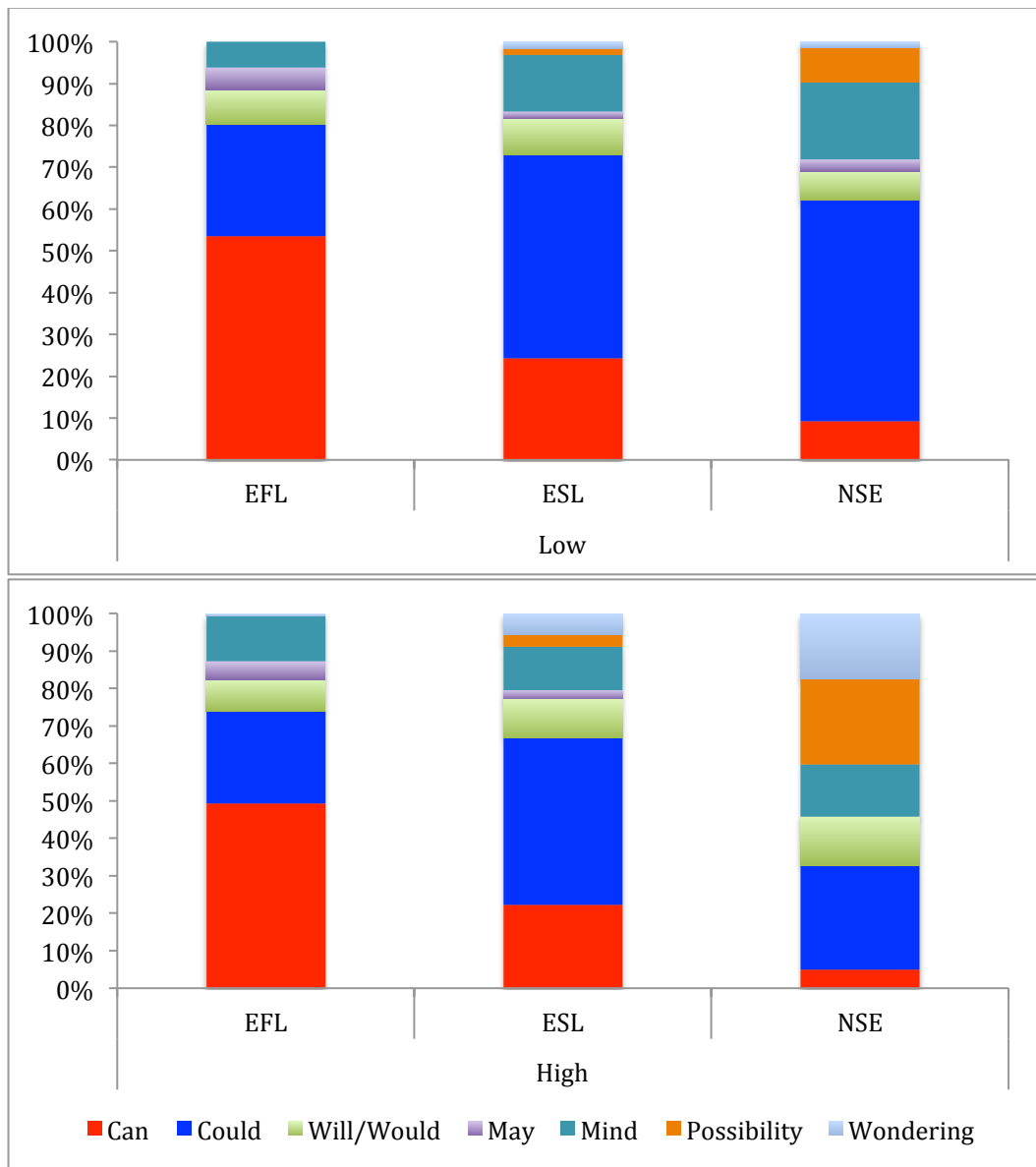
Figure 4.7 Impact of the degree of imposition on the DCT query preparatory.

The influence of the degree of imposition on the DCT results was also apparent in the groups' choice of query preparatory, specifically in terms of the NSE group, who employed a wider range of options in the high imposition contexts as well as more casual options compared to the low imposition contexts, as shown in Figure 4.7. For example, *can/could* was employed in 62% of the NSE's query preparatory strategies in their low imposition requests, while it was employed in only 32.7% of their high imposition requests, while other options were used far more frequently. In addition, the NSE group relied more on casual options for their query preparatory in high imposition requests, since *possibility* and *wondering* represented 40.2% of their query preparatory responses in this context, compared with just 9.8% in their low imposition requests. Again, the non-native groups shifted between the two contexts in the DCT query preparatory, but less so than the native group, although the ESL group employed a wider range of options in both imposition contexts, compared with the EFL group.

The remainder of this subsection compares the above DCT findings regarding the impact of the degree of imposition with those of the RPT, which are presented in the following table and figure.

Table 4.10. Impact of the degree of imposition on the RPT directness strategies.

		LEVEL OF DIRECTNESS %									Total
		Mood derivable	Unhedged performative	Hedged performative	Locution derivable	Scope stating	Suggestory formula	Query preparatory	Strong hints	Mild hints	No.
Low	EFL	10	3.3	6.7	0	0	0	80	0	0	60
	ESL	5	0	11.7	0	3.3	0	78.3	0	1.6	60
	NSE	0	0	5	5	5	5	77.5	2.5	0	40
High	EFL	0	2.5	10	0.8	14	0.8	70	0	1.8	120
	ESL	0	0	5.8	0.8	11.3	1.7	75.8	2.8	1.7	120
	NSE	0	0	2.5	2.5	3.75	5	81.25	5	0	80
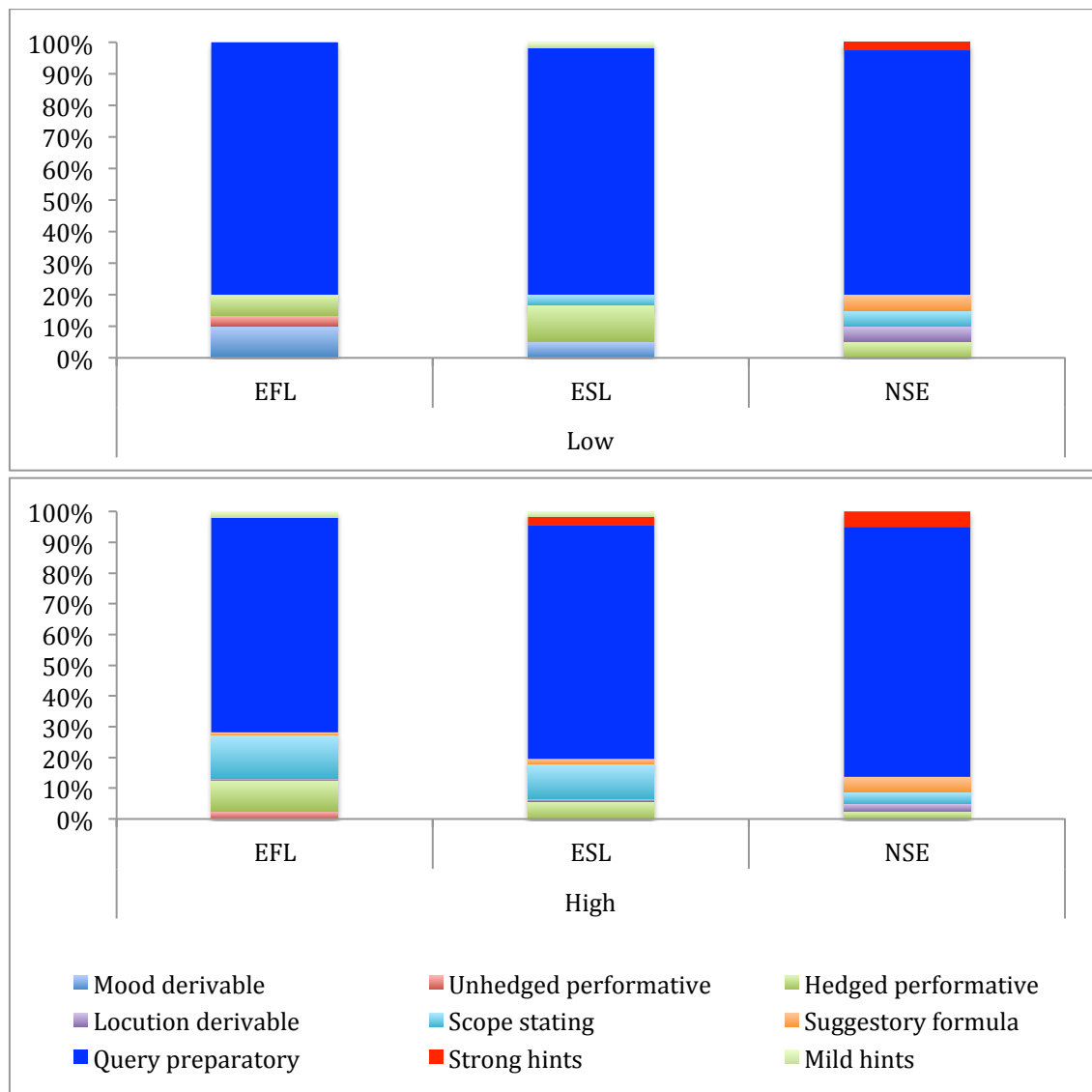
Figure 4.8. Impact of the degree of imposition on the RPT directness strategies.

All of the RPT groups tended to be less direct in their high imposition requests, but there was no statistically significant difference between the two contexts of low and high imposition requests, for all of the groups ($p > 0.05$). This represented a major difference between the DCT and the RPT results, regarding the use of request strategies, and may be due to the fact that there were fewer role-play scenarios and participants than there were examples and participants in the DCT. Nevertheless, several of the RPT results should be highlighted; for instance, the groups employed fewer direct options within the direct category when making high imposition requests. As illustrated in Table 4.10, for example, 10% of the low-imposition requests of the EFL participants were *mood derivable*, compared with 8.9% in the

DCT results, and none of their high-imposition requests were *mood derivable*, compared with 4.2% in the DCT results. Similarly, *scope stating*, which is the last level on the scale of directness categories, was not employed at all as a strategy by the EFL participants in the low contexts, yet it represented 14% of their direct strategies in the high imposition contexts. Hence, the EFL participants tended to employ fewer direct strategies in the RPT, and these were primarily within the same first directness category. Similarly, the ESL participants also exhibited a considerable gap between their low and high imposition requests.

Another interesting difference between the DCT and the RPT results was that all of the RPT groups rarely employed non-conventional requests (hints) in the low imposition contexts, but employed them more often in the high imposition contexts. The RPT results in this regard demonstrated that *hints* in spoken requests were a strategy employed in the high imposition contexts, unlike the DCT requests in similar contexts. Hence, these RPT results illustrated that all three participating groups changed their choice to a certain extent in the context of the high-imposition requests, in order to be less direct, and although these changes were not statistically significant (there was a statistically significant difference in the DCT results for the same situation). Similarly to the DCT requests, with regard to the results of the RPT sub-strategies of query preparatory presented in the table and figure below, all of the groups employed different options in their high imposition requests.

Table 4.11. Impact of the degrees of imposition on the RPT query preparatory.

		The Sub-strategies of Query Preparatory %							Total No.
		Can	Could	Will/Would	May	Do/Would you mind	Possibility	I was wondering	
Low	EFL	54.1	27.1	2.1	2.1	14.6	0	0	48
	ESL	22.7	45.4	10.6	4.2	8.5	0	8.5	47
	NSE	6.8	38.4	19.3	0	6.4	12.7	16.3	31
High	EFL	52	26	7.1	1.35	12.2	0	1.35	84
	ESL	22	43.9	11	1.1	12.1	5.5	4.4	91
	NSE	4.8	27.5	10.8	0	16.9	32.3	7.7	65
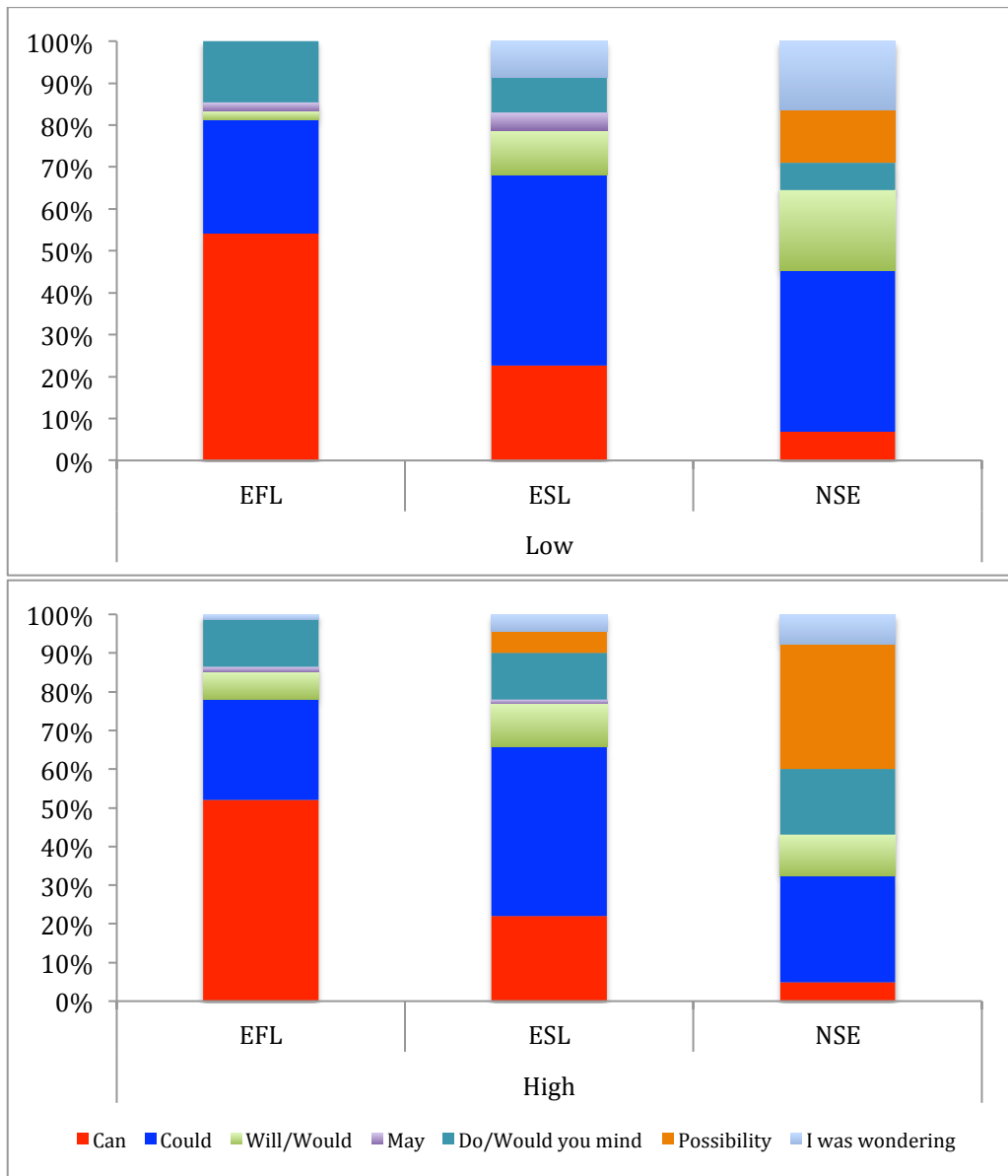
Figure 4.9. Impact of the degrees of imposition on the RPT query preparatory.

As in the DCT results, the results of the RPT revealed that the NSE participants employed a wide range of sub-strategies in the query preparatory subcategory in the high imposition contexts, compared with the low imposition contexts. In the RPT, the ESL speakers also shifted to a wider variety of modals in the high imposition contexts, compared with their EFL counterparts. Therefore, the RPT results presented the same trend as the DCT results in this regard, although no significant differences were found in the use of request strategies between the two contexts ($p > 0.05$) for all of the RPT groups.

To conclude this subsection, and to address the research question investigating the differences between the groups, in terms of the influence of the degree of imposition on the participants' request strategies, the above results for the DCT and RPT can be summarised as follows:

- Based on the data collected through the DCT and RPT, the role of the degree of imposition was evident in some groups' productions. For example, the DCT results demonstrated that the NSE and ESL groups were generally less direct when making high imposition requests, as the DCT results revealed a statistically significant difference between the two contexts (high/low) for only the ESL and NSE groups. Hence, the EFL group demonstrated far less consideration of this factor. However, the RPT results did not show any statistically significant differences between the low and high imposition contexts in all of the groups.

- In general, the NSE group tended to shift to more indirect requests, and exploited a wider range of options than the non-native groups, when making high imposition requests. The ESL group ranked second in this regard, as the statistical tests confirmed that they employed significantly fewer direct strategies with their high imposition requests, compared with the EFL group. However, it should be noted that although the ESL group employed more native-like strategies in their low and high imposition requests, these requests did not match native patterns.

4.2.3 Request strategies based on the interlocutor's status

In terms of the second sociopragmatic variable, the interlocutor's status, the extant studies discussed in the literature review chapter (2) suggested that native and non-native speakers of English tend to employ different request strategies when making requests of individuals of different social status (lower/equal/higher) in natural conversations, as well as in controlled DCT and role-play scenarios (e.g. Al-Gahtani & Roever, 2012; Blum-Kulka et

al., 1989; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; P. Brown & S. Levinson, 1987). In general, the extant studies found that requests addressed to higher status individuals are more indirect and more modified in terms of politeness than those addressed to lower and equal status individuals. Thus, this subsection interprets the overall results presented in Section 4.2.1 in the form of smaller blocks, based on the influence of the interlocutor's status, in order to seek more pragmatic differences between the groups. The following table and figure present the DCT data relating to the impact of the interlocutor's status on the participants' request strategies.

Table 4.12. Impact of the interlocutor's status on the DCT directness strategies.

		LEVEL OF DIRECTNESS %									Total
		Mood derivable	Unhedged performative	Hedged performative	Locution derivable	Scope stating	Suggestory formula	Query preparatory	Strong hints	Mild hints	No.
Lower	EFL	13.3	0.55	9.4	1.1	1.1	0.55	72.8	0.55	0.55	180
	ESL	7.2	0	9.4	0.5	6.6	1.1	72.2	2.8	0	180
	NSE	0	0	6.7	0.8	8.3	2.5	70.8	10	0.8	120
Equal	EFL	2.8	1.1	15.5	0.5	3.9	0	70	6.1	0	180
	ESL	1.1	0	9.4	0	5	1.1	73.3	10	0	180
	NSE	0	0	0.8	2.5	2.5	5.8	71.7	16.7	0	120
Higher	EFL	1.1	2.2	5	0.5	7.8	0	81.1	1.7	0.5	180
	ESL	0.5	0	5	0.5	6.7	1.7	82.8	2.2	0.5	180
	NSE	0	0	0	0.8	0	0	89.2	7.5	2.5	120
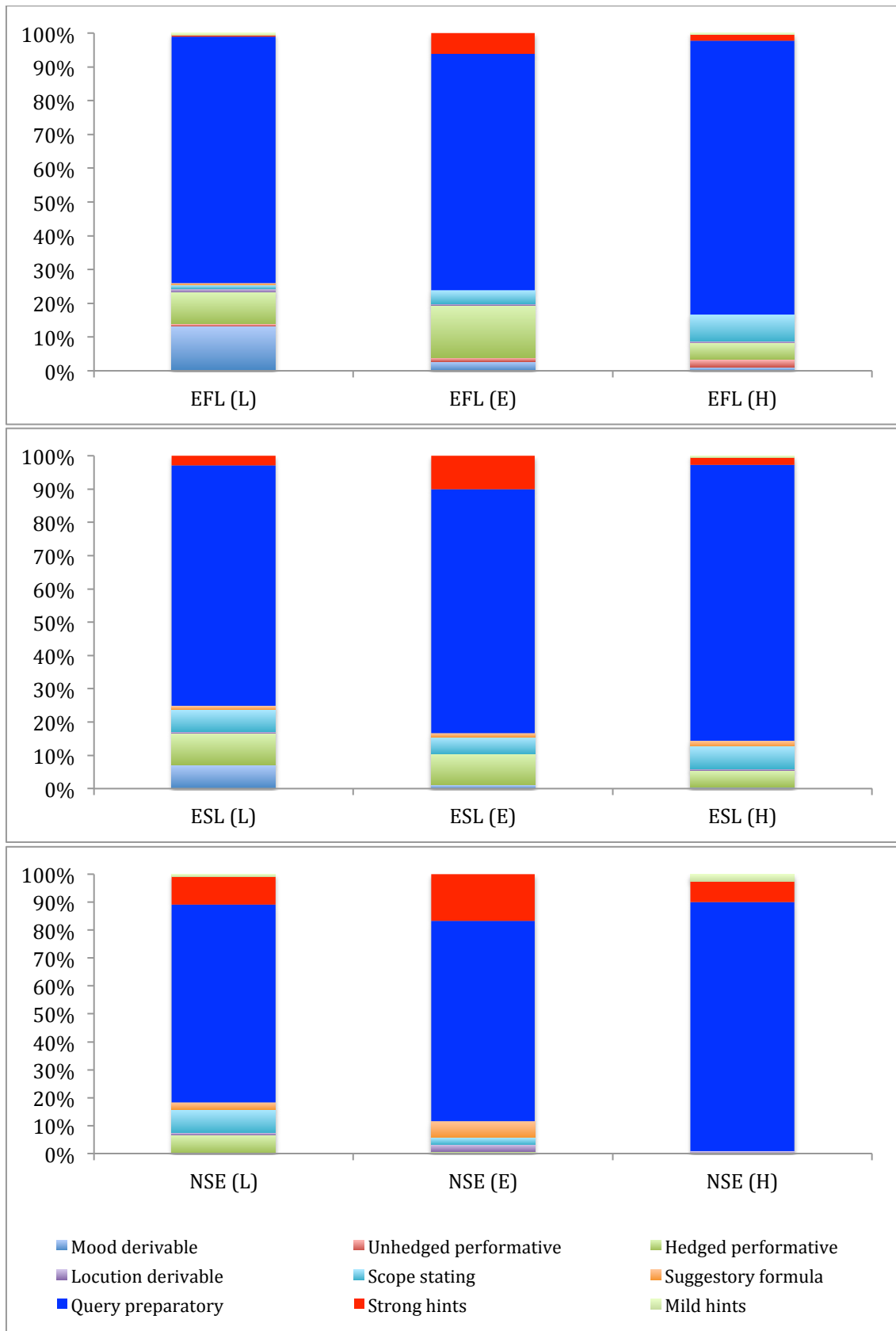
Figure 4.10. Impact of the interlocutor's status on the DCT directness strategies.

The above table and figure highlight a number of fluctuations in the results with regard the impact of the status of the interlocutors on the participants' request strategies. The NSE and ESL groups were more sensitive to this variable, and significantly reduced the number of direct requests they employed with higher status interlocutors ($p < 0.05$). For instance, the NSE group employed direct strategies in 15.8% of their requests addressed to lower status interlocutors, while 5.8% of their requests addressed to equal status interlocutors were direct requests, and only 0.8% were direct when they were addressed to higher status interlocutors. Similarly, the ESL participants employed direct strategies in 23.7% of their requests addressed to lower status interlocutors, and in 15.5% of their requests addressed to equal status interlocutors, while 12.7% of their requests addressed to higher status interlocutors were direct. However, in the EFL group, no statistically significant difference was observed in the DCT request strategies addressed to each status ($p > 0.05$). However, the EFL participants tended to reduce the number of imperatives they employed with equal and higher status individuals. For example, 13.3% of the EFL group's requests addressed to lower status interlocutors were *mood derivable*, compared with 2.8% of their requests to equal status interlocutors, and only 1.1% of their requests to higher status interlocutors. Consequently, a considerable increase was observed in the number of less direct strategies, such as *scope stating*, in the EFL group's requests addressed to equal and higher status interlocutors. This represented a sociopragmatic failure on the part of the EFL group, the participants of which were not fully aware that it is conventionally considered better to employ indirect requests with interlocutors of higher status.

It should also be noted that the DCT data demonstrated that the ESL and NSE groups employed *strong hints* with equal-status interlocutors twice as often as with lower and higher status interlocutors. This indicated that the use of hints may be acceptable when making requests of peers, but not of lower or higher status individuals, at least in written requests. The table and figure above also illustrate that *query preparatory* was one of the strategies most

affected by a change in interlocutor status. Hence, the following DCT results for the sub-strategies of query preparatory highlight the differences between the groups with regard to their directness strategies, based on the social status of the interlocutors.

Table 4.13. Impact of the interlocutor's status on the DCT query preparatory.

		The Sub-strategies of Query Preparatory %							
		Can	Could	Will/Would	May	Do/Would you mind	Possibility	I was wondering	Total No.
Lower	EFL	52.4	26.2	8.4	3.8	9.2	0	0	131
	ESL	23.6	47.2	15.4	1.5	7.7	0	4.6	130
	NSE	7.8	43.9	10.6	1.2	17.6	2.3	16.5	85
Equal	EFL	52.4	26.2	5.5	6.3	8.7	0	0.8	126
	ESL	25.2	50.5	7.6	2.3	9.1	2.3	3	132
	NSE	6.8	38.5	13.9	0	17.4	12.8	10.5	86
Higher	EFL	47.5	23.7	11	4.8	12.3	0	0.7	146
	ESL	20.1	40.3	7.4	2.7	18.7	5.4	5.4	149
	NSE	5.19	29.41	10.3	0.9	11.2	37.4	5.6	107

Figure 4.11. Impact of the interlocutor's status on the DCT query preparatory.

The DCT results for *query preparatory* revealed that all of the groups employed, to differing degrees, a wide variety of options with higher status interlocutors. The frequency of the *ability and willingness* modals decreased for all of the groups when the status of requestees increased. This was particularly clear in the results of the NSE and ESL groups, which demonstrated statistically significant differences in the decrease of *ability and willingness* options, only within these groups, when the interlocutor's status changed ($p < 0.05$). Although there was no statistically significant difference for the EFL group ($p > 0.05$) in this regard, the participants employed more casual and more complex sub-strategies of *query preparatory,* in terms of *mind, possibility*, and *wondering*, with requests addressed to higher status individuals.

As noted above, the frequency of *can/could* decreased with the increase of the requestee's social status, and this was clear in the NSE group, the participants of which did not consider the use of *can/could* as a strategy when speaking to individuals of higher status. Instead, they employed the sub-strategy of *possibility* (37.4%) over *can/could* (34.6%) in this context. Moreover, the ESL group's results showed an increase in the use of the strategies of *mind, possibility*, and *wondering* with higher status interlocutors, which suggested that this group followed the native-like pattern to a certain extent, when speaking to individuals of different statuses. Nonetheless, the differences in the DCT frequency of *query preparatory* options between the two groups (ESL and NSE) across the three social contexts were statistically insignificant ($p > 0.05$).

It is also necessary to examine the impact of the interlocutor's status (lower/equal/higher) on the direct strategies of the participants in terms of the RPT, and the following table and figure show the relevant results.

Table 4.14. Impact of the interlocutor's status on the RPT directness strategies.

		LEVEL OF DIRECTNESS %									Total No.
		Mood derivable	Unhedged performative	Hedged performative	Locution derivable	Scope stating	Suggestory formula	Query preparatory	Strong hints	Mild hints	
Lower	EFL	4.3	1.7	13.3	0	4	0	75	0	1.7	60
	ESL	5	0	13.3	0	5	1.7	75	0	0	60
	NSE	0	0	7.5	2.5	7.5	5	72.5	5	0	40
Equal	EFL	6.6	1.7	8.3	0	1.7	0	81.7	0	0	60
	ESL	0	0	10	0	3.3	1.7	80	0	5	60
	NSE	0	0	2.5	2.5	5	7.5	75	7.5	0	40
Higher	EFL	0	5	5	1.7	20	1.7	63.3	0	3.3	60
	ESL	0	0	0	1.7	16.6	0	75	6.7	0	60
	NSE	0	0	0	5	0	2.5	92.5	0	0	40
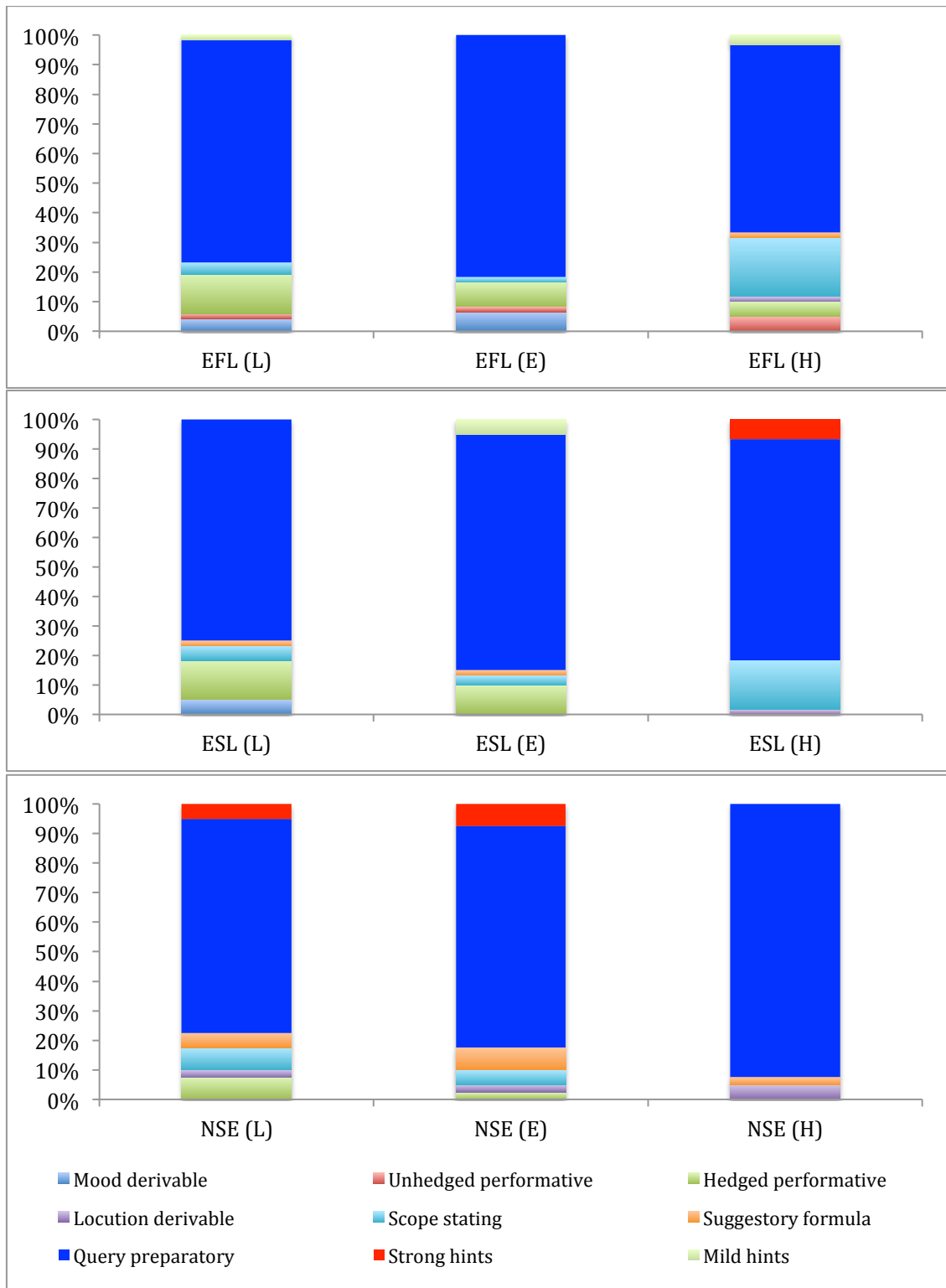
Figure 4.12. Impact of the interlocutor's status on the RPT directness strategies.

As illustrated in the table and figure above, the RPT results also revealed fluctuations in terms of the effect of the status of the interlocutors, and particularly those of equal and higher status, on the request strategies of the three participating groups. However, in

comparison to the DCT results, a slight increase was apparent in the number of indirect strategies employed by all of the RPT groups when making requests of equal and higher status interlocutors. This was clearest in the results of the NSE group, followed by those of the ESL group. However, unlike the DCT results, the Chi-square tests revealed that the shift towards less direct strategies was statistically insignificant for all of the groups ($p > 0.05$), which may be due, as already suggested, to the fact that there were fewer RPT scenarios and participants than for the DCT. In contrast, the RPT results regarding *query preparatory* demonstrated that all of the groups employed different options with each status to some degree, as illustrated in the following table and figure.

Table 4.15. Impact of the interlocutor's status on the RPT query preparatory.

		The Sub-strategies of Query Preparatory %							
		Can	Could	Will/Would	May	Do/Would you mind	Possibility	I was wondering	Total No.
Lower	EFL	50.4	25.2	4.4	2.2	17.8	0	0	45
	ESL	22.4	44.3	13.3	2.2	11.1	3.35	3.35	45
	NSE	4.65	26.35	13.8	0	27.6	17.25	10.35	29
Equal	EFL	57.1	28.6	2	0	12.2	0	0	49
	ESL	21.5	43.1	8.3	4.2	12.5	2.1	8.3	48
	NSE	7	39.7	10	0	13.3	23.35	6.65	30
Higher	EFL	47.4	32.7	10.5	5.3	10.5	0	2.6	38
	ESL	22	44.7	11.1	0	8.8	6.7	6.7	45
	NSE	4.9	27.5	16.2	0	2.7	21.6	27	37
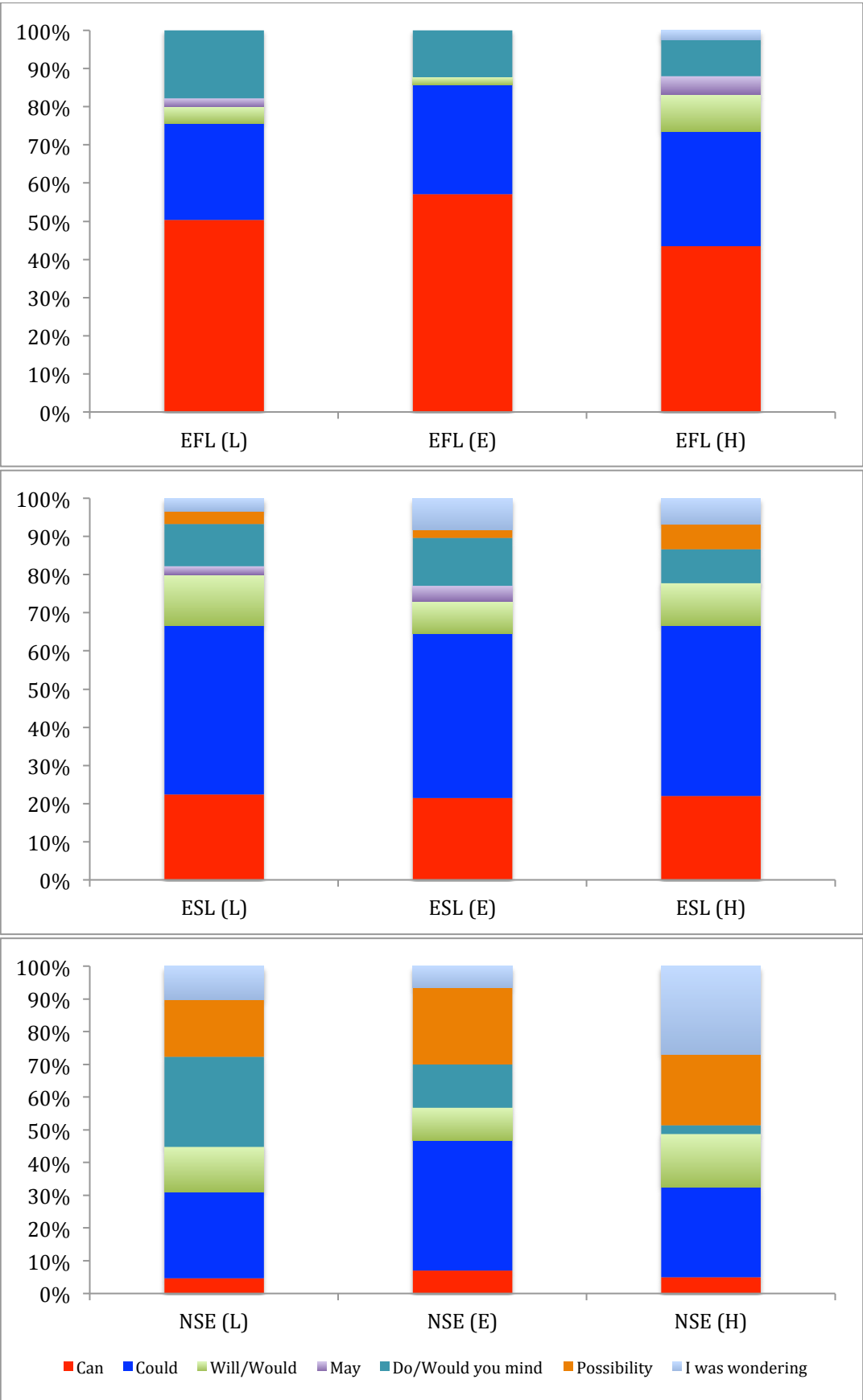
Figure 4.13. Impact of the interlocutor's status on the RPT query preparatory.

Similarly to the DCT results, all of the RPT groups tended to employ more casual and more complex sub-strategies of *query preparatory*, in terms of *mind, possibility*, and *wondering*, with the requests addressed to individuals of higher status. The ESL group, in particular, showed an increase in the use of *possibility* and *wondering* with higher status interlocutors, suggesting that their responses were the closest to native productions when addressing individuals of different statuses. In summary, the following points can be made regarding the research questions concerning the differences in the request strategies of the participants, depending on the interlocutor's status:

- The DCT and RPT data revealed that all of the groups' use of direct strategies decreased with requests to interlocutors of higher social status, especially in the NSE and ESL groups. The DCT results demonstrated that the shift towards less direct strategies was statistically significant for only the ESL and NSE groups, although the RPT results did not confirm this finding;

- With regard the sub-strategies of query preparatory, more casual strategies, in terms of *mind/possibility/wondering*, were employed by all of the groups when speaking to higher status individuals. This was particularly true of the NSE and ESL groups, as the results showed statistically significant differences, depending on the three social statuses investigated;

- When comparing the two non-native groups' results, the ESL group demonstrated a more sociopragmatic understanding of the use of requests, as they were more conscious of the role of social status when requesting, compared with the EFL group.

4.2.4 Request strategies of non-native groups based on the length of time spent learning English

Thus far, the results have presented the general pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic differences in the use of requests between the three groups involved in this study. However,

two other factors are believed to possess an impact on the pragmatic competence of non-native learners: the length of time spent learning English, and the intensity of communication with native speakers of English. This section examines the role of time spent learning English on the pragmatic competence of L2 learners. As previously noted, the present study does not examine the role of proficiency levels on pragmatic competence, as it was designed to recruit two groups of non-native participants of the same proficiency level (advanced), using IELTS or TOEFL as proficiency tests. The role of proficiency level was much discussed in the extant literature, and is not the focus of this study. However, it should be noted that I found that the non-native participants differed in terms of the length of time it took for them to attain an advanced proficiency in English. Therefore, since pragmatic competence is harder, and takes longer to acquire, than linguistic competence, as noted in the literature review, I considered the issue of the length of time spent learning English should also be examined herein.

As noted in the methodology chapter, in this study, the length of time spent learning English referred to the duration of enrolment on EFL or ESL programmes, and the participants from the non-native groups involved were categorised into two sub-groups, depending on the length of time they had spent learning English: (1) less than two years; and (2) between two and four years. The following table and figure present the DCT findings relating to the role of the length of time spent learning English on the participants' directness strategies in requests.

Table 4.16. Request directness strategies of the non-native groups in the DCT based on the length of time spent learning English.

		LEVEL OF DIRECTNESS %									Total
		Mood derivable	Unhedged performative	Hedged performative	Locution derivable	Scope stating	Suggestory formula	Query preparatory	Strong hints	Mild hints	No.
Less than 2ys	EFL	9.1	1.4	13.9	0	1.4	0	71.4	2.8	0	72
	ESL	4.4	0	8.8	0.4	7.9	1.3	72.2	4.6	0.4	261
2-4ys	EFL	4.45	1.25	9	1.15	4.9	0.55	74.95	2.75	0.8	468
	ESL	1.7	0	5.85	0.25	5.85	1.55	78.95	5.75	0	279
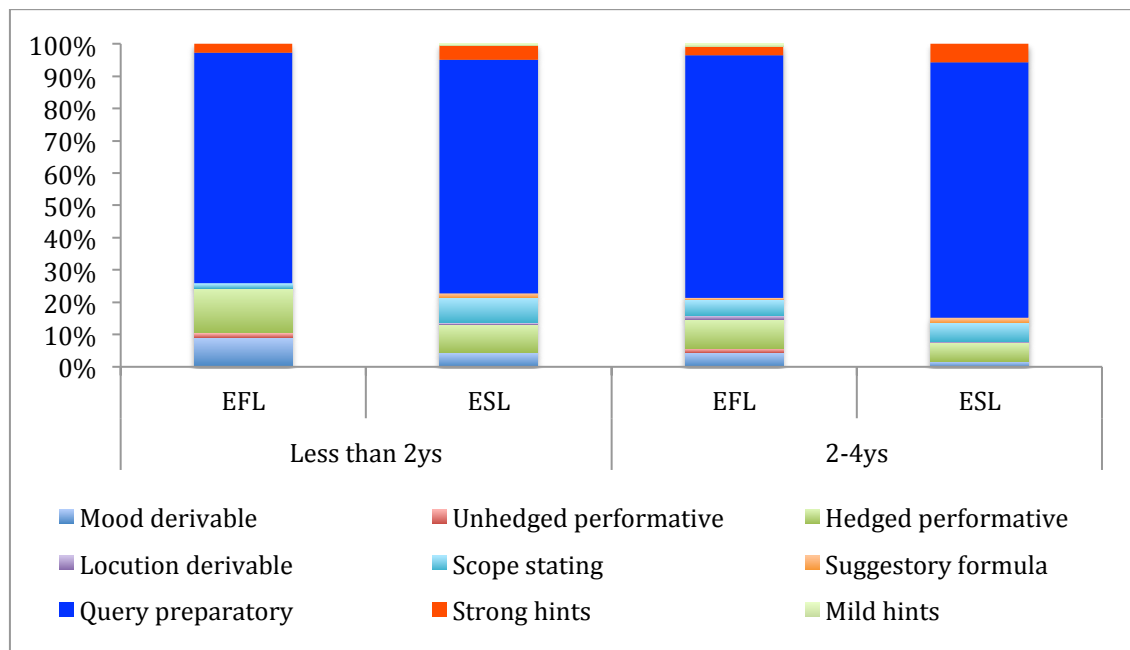
Figure 4.14. Request directness strategies of the non-native groups in the DCT, based on the length of time spent learning English.

These results demonstrated that the length of time spent learning English influenced the directness strategies of the participants to some degree. Although there were more similarities than differences between the two types of participants in each non-native group, the learners who had spent more time studying English produced more indirect requests, especially in the ESL group, and the difference between the two ESL subgroups was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). This suggested that the more ESL learned English in an English-speaking country, the more indirect their requests became, and thus the more polite and less imposing they were. However, in the EFL group, the difference was not significant ($p > 0.05$). The difference between the EFL and ESL groups, in terms of the participants who had spent a longer time learning English shifting towards less direct requests, might be due to the different learning environments, whereby English-speaking environments enhanced the communicative and pragmatic competence of the learners, as discussed in the literature review. The following DCT table and figure illustrate the results relating to the influence of the length of time spent learning English on the use of the sub-strategies of *query preparatory* by the two non-native groups.

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Table 4.17. Directness sub-strategies of the non-native groups in the DCT, based on the length of time spent learning English.

		The Sub-strategies of Query Preparatory %							
		Can	Could	Will/Would	May	Do/Would you mind	Possibility	I was wondering	Total No.
Less than 2ys	EFL	49.9	25.1	8	8	9	0	0	51
	ESL	25	50.2	12.1	2.6	6.3	1.6	2.2	189
2-4ys	EFL	46.65	23.3	13.9	4.55	10.9	0	0.6	351
	ESL	21.15	42.3	7.8	1.3	17	4.25	6.1	221
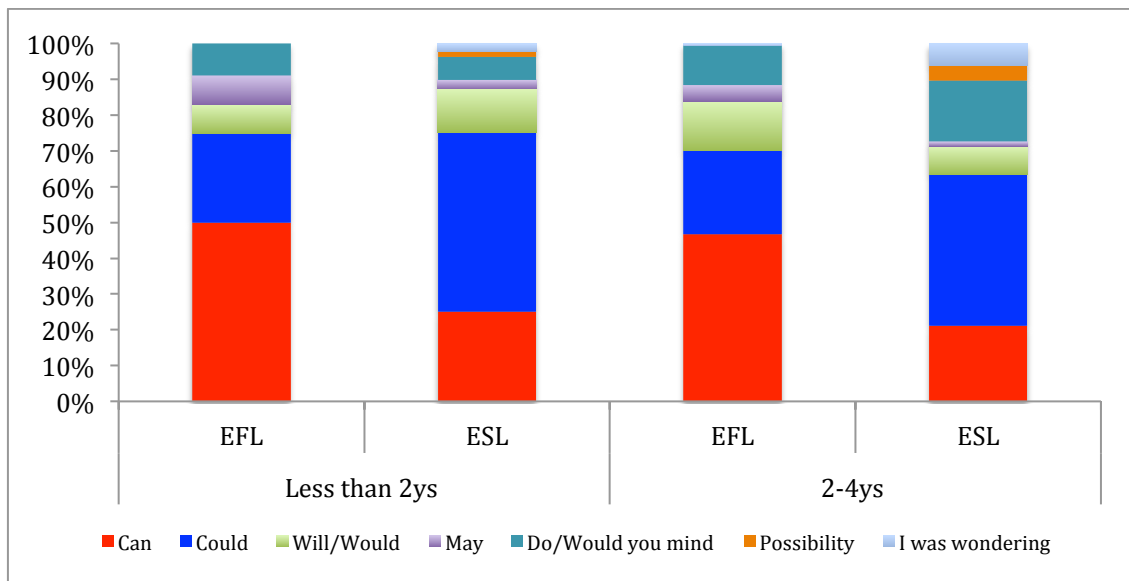
Figure 4.15. Directness sub-strategies of the non-native groups in the DCT, based on the length of time spent learning English.

With regard to the sub-strategies of *query preparatory*, the EFL and ESL subgroups who had spent longer periods of time learning English employed a wider variety of sub-strategies of *query preparatory*, and more casual examples than the other subgroups. However, the data revealed that the length of time spent learning English in EFL environments did not affect the EFL learners' *query preparatory* choices, as it did those of the ESL participants, which may be due to the above-mentioned differences between the learning contexts. To check this finding, the following table and figure present the results of the RPT for the same variable.

Table 4.18. Request directness strategies of the non-native groups in the RPT, based on the length of time spent learning English.

		LEVEL OF DIRECTNESS %									Total No.
		Mood derivable	Unhedged performative	Hedged performative	Locution derivable	Scope stating	Suggestory formula	Query preparatory	Strong hints	Mild hints	
Less than 2ys	EFL	5.5	0	8.3	0	9.3	0	76.8	0	0	36
	ESL	2.8	0	11.1	0	12.5	2.8	69.4	1.4	0	72
2-4ys	EFL	2.55	2.55	7.75	0.5	8.4	1.5	75.2	0	1.5	144
	ESL	0.7	0	4.85	0.7	5	0	83.35	2.7	2.7	108
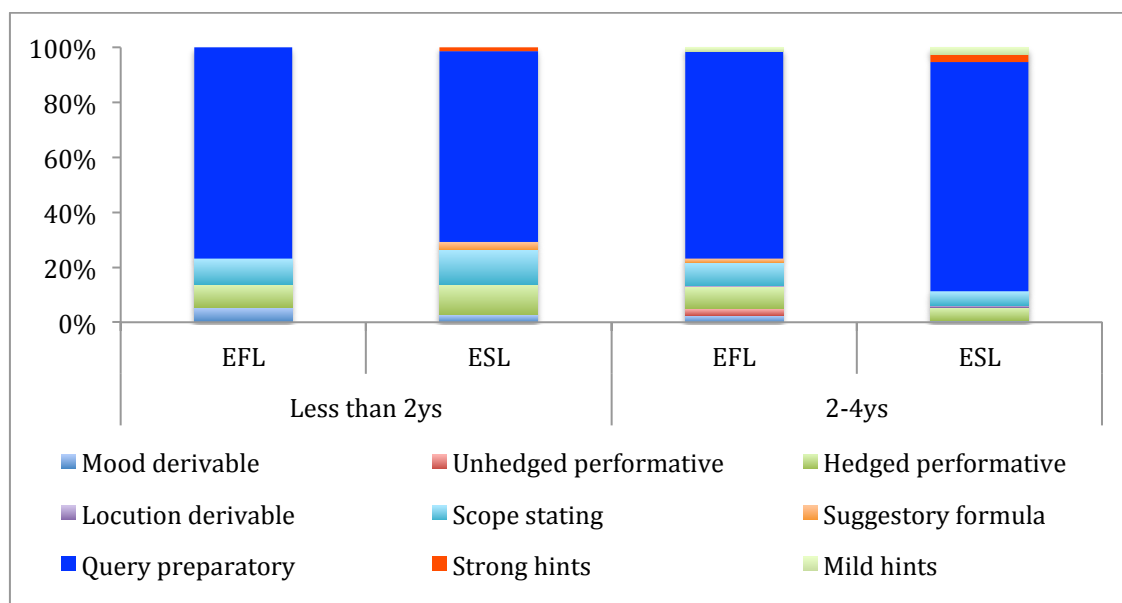
Figure 4.16. Request directness strategies of the non-native groups in the RPT, based on the length of time spent learning English.

The statistical tests of the RPT results confirmed the DCT findings that the length of time spent learning English affected the request strategies of only the ESL group, as the difference between the two ESL subgroups in the use of indirect strategies was statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). Moreover, the statistical results demonstrated that the characteristics of the ESL group's requests were less direct, and more native-like, the longer the duration of their learning. Therefore, as in the results of the DCT, those of the RPT revealed that the length of time spent learning English had less of an effect on the EFL learners who learned English at home than on those who learned it in an English-speaking context (these findings were also evaluated when examining the other aspects of requests, in terms of internal and

external modifiers). The following table and figure illustrate the sub-strategies of *query preparatory* for both non-native groups in the RPT, based on the length of time spent learning English.

Table 4.19. Directness sub-strategies of the non-native groups in the RPT, based on length of time spent learning English.

		The Sub-strategies of Query Preparatory %							Total No.
		Can	Could	Will/Would	May	Do/Would you mind	Possibility	I was wondering	
Less than 2ys	EFL	64.3	32.1	0	0	0	0	3.6	28
	ESL	21.7	43.5	16	4	8	2.4	4.4	50
2-4ys	EFL	44.6	22.3	8.4	4.15	20.5	0	0	108
	ESL	23.3	46.7	6.9	0.9	11.15	4.25	6.7	90
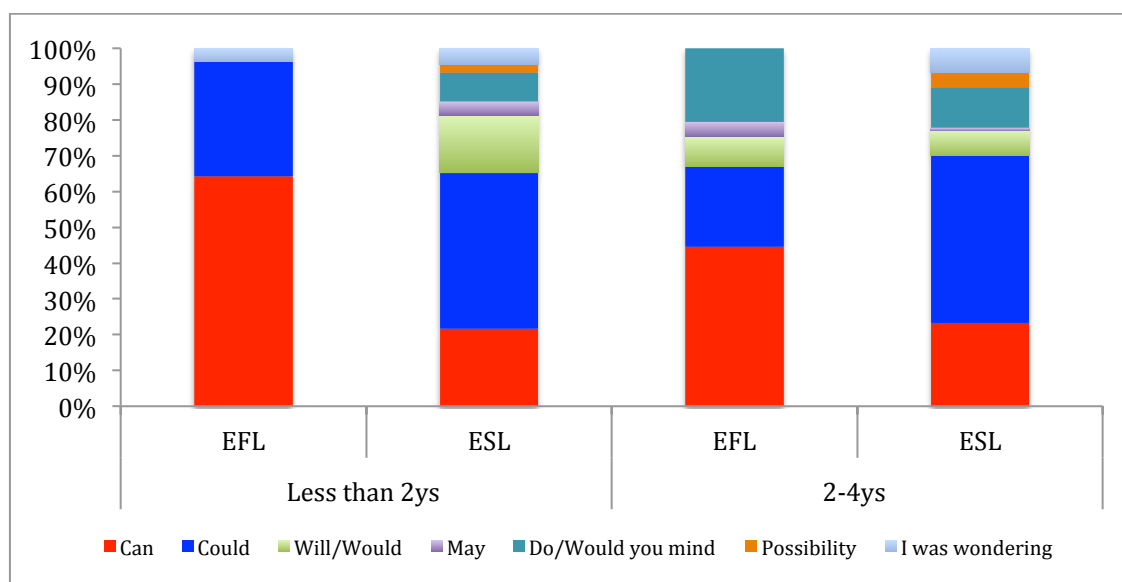
Figure 4.17. Directness sub-strategies of the non-native groups in the RPT, based on the length of time spent learning English.

With respect to the sub-strategies of *query preparatory*, the EFL subgroup whose participants had spent a longer period of time learning English employed wider sub-strategies of *query preparatory* (especially casual ones) than the other EFL subgroup. However, both ESL subgroups varied their choice of sub-strategies for *query preparatory*. Although this finding may not be generalisable, it may suggest that the ESL learning environment enabled the ESL participants to expedite their acquisition of pragmatic competence during their first

two years of learning English, compared with the EFL group. In summary, based on the above results, the following points can be made regarding the research question concerning the pragmatic differences between the two non-native groups, based on the length of time spent learning English:

- The data suggested that the ESL participants employed more indirect request strategies over time than their EFL counterparts. The request strategies employed by the ESL group tended to follow NSE forms when the duration of learning increased. However, the ESL group had not entirely achieved a native-speaker level, which may be explained either by the fact that the time they had spent in the UK was not sufficient for reaching this level, or that not all of the Saudi ESL participants had communicated intensively with native speakers. This aspect is examined further in the next subsection;

- The factor of the length of time spent learning English had less of an impact on the EFL group's options of request strategies, which may refer to the fact that other approaches must be employed, in addition to the length of time spent learning English, to enhance pragmatics, such as enhanced exposure to the L2 culture;

- In general, the results concurred with those of the previous studies, suggesting that learning in the L2 environment, together with the length of residence in the L2 environment, has a positive impact on the pragmatic awareness and the pragmatic competence of English language learners.

4.2.5 Request strategies of the ESL group, based on the intensity of communication with native speakers of English

In addition to the length of time the ESL group had spent learning English, the additional variable of the intensity of their communication with native speakers was investigated through studying ESL request strategies, since it is regarded as a factor that may

cause pragmatic differences. To the best of my knowledge, this factor has not been sufficiently examined in the extant studies, and is therefore one of the gaps in the literature that this thesis addressed. In this present study, it was challenging to determine the amount of communication the participants had engaged in with native speakers using objective criteria, and then to divide the group based on this factor. However, the ESL participants were divided into two groups, depending on the amount of time they reported that they had spent communicating with native speakers: (1) less than five hours a week; and (2) five hours a week or more. The following tables and figures present the DCT results relating to the impact on the ESL participants' directness strategies of the intensity of the communication they had with native speakers.

Table 4.20. Request directness strategies in the DCT, based on the ESL participants' intensity of communication with native speakers.

| | | LEVEL OF DIRECTNESS % | | | | | | | | | Total No. |
		Mood derivable	Unhedged performative	Hedged performative	Locution derivable	Scope stating	Suggestory formula	Query preparatory	Strong hints	Mild hints	
Less than 5 hours a week	ESL	3.4	0	9.7	0.3	7.5	0.6	75.5	2.7	0.3	297
5 hours a week & more	ESL	2.6	0	6.8	0.3	4.5	1.7	76.6	7.2	0.3	243

149
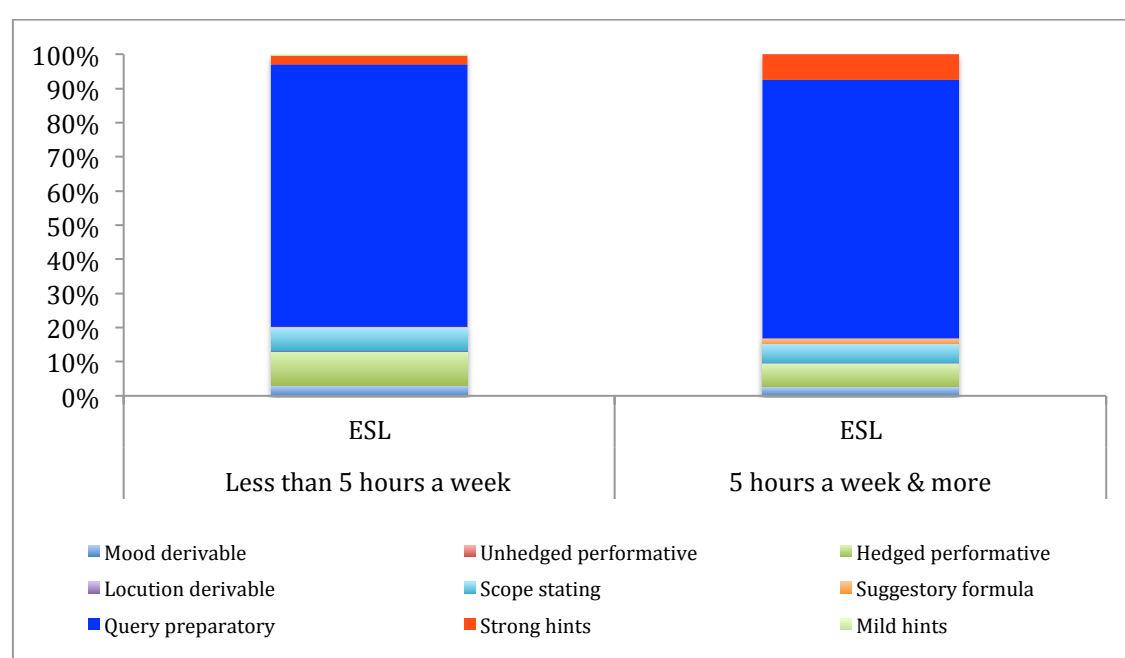
Figure 4.18. Request directness strategies in the DCT, based on the ESL participants' intensity of communication with native speakers.

Table 4.21. Directness sub-strategies of the ESL group in the DCT, based on the intensity of communication with native speakers.

| | | The Sub-strategies of Query Preparatory % | | | | | | | |
		Can	Could	Will/Would	May	Do/Would you mind	Possibility	I was wondering	Total No.
Less than 5 hours a week	ESL	25.5	51.1	7.3	2.6	9.1	0.8	3.4	224
5 hours a week & more	ESL	19.2	38.3	13.6	2.15	16.1	5.1	5.5	186
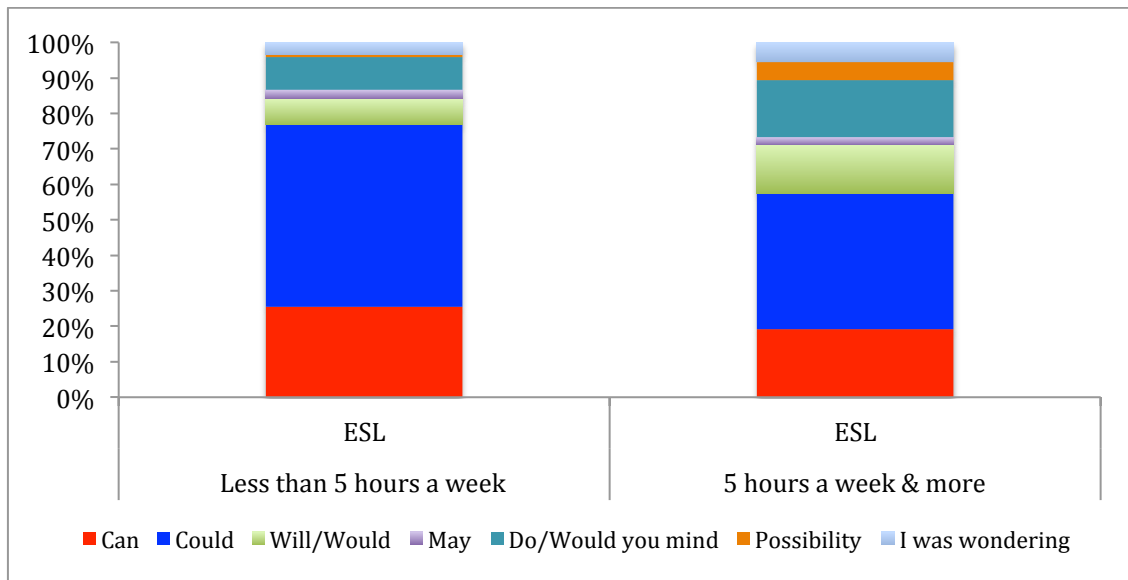
Figure 4.19. Directness sub-strategies of the ESL group in the DCT, based on the intensity of communication with native speakers.

The tables and figures above demonstrate that the variable of the intensity of communication the ESL participants had with native speakers played a role in determining their request strategies. The data revealed that the more the ESL participants had communicated with native speakers, the more indirect their requests were, with a wider variety and causal forms of sub-strategies of *query preparatory* similar to those of native speakers. In addition, a statistically significant difference between the two subgroups was observed in the use of indirect request strategies, as well as in the sub-strategies of *query preparatory* ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, the data suggested that communication with native

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speakers was an important factor in the acquisition of aspects of pragmatic competence. To confirm such finding, the following role-play tables and figures illustrate the impact of the ESL participants' intensity of communication with native speakers on their request strategies.

Table 4.22. Request directness strategies in the RPT, based on the intensity of communication of the ESL participants with native speakers.

		LEVEL OF DIRECTNESS %									Total No.
		Mood derivable	Unhedged performative	Hedged performative	Locution derivable	Scope stating	Suggestory formula	Query preparatory	Strong hints	Mild hints	
Less than 5 hours a week	ESL	2.5	0	10.4	0	9.3	0	77.8	0	0	84
5 hours a week & more	ESL	1.5	0	5.3	2	6	1.3	77	4.9	2	96
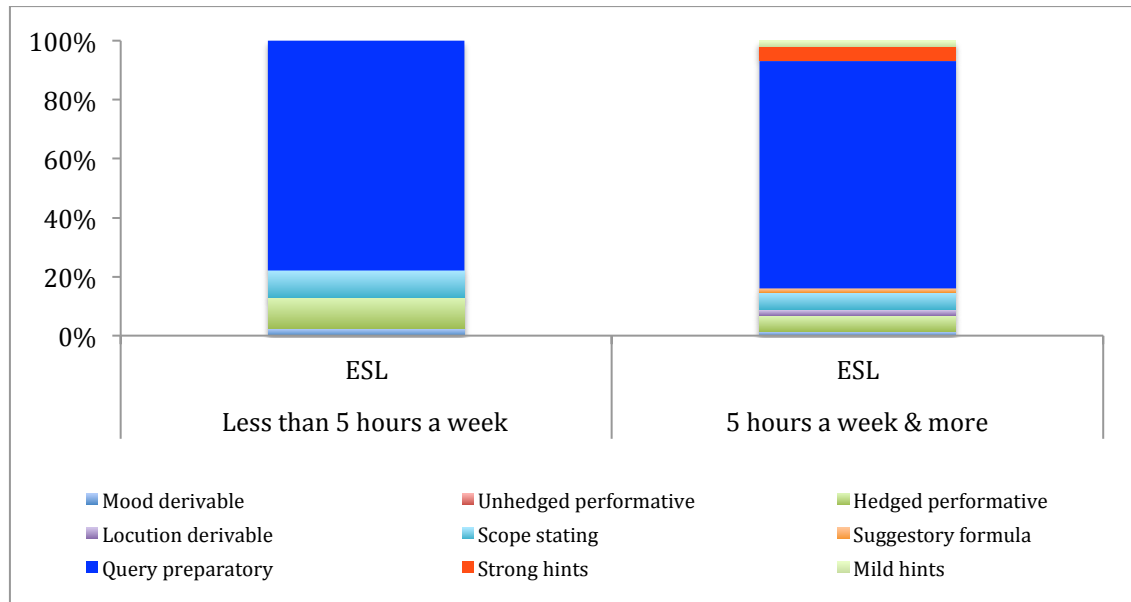
Figure 4.20. Request directness strategies in the RPT, based on the intensity of communication of the ESL speakers with native speakers.

Table 4.23. Directness sub-strategies in the RPT, based on the intensity of communication of the ESL participants with native speakers.

		The Sub-strategies of Query Preparatory %							Total No.
		Can	Could	Will/Would	May	Do/Would you mind	Possibility	I was wondering	
Less than 5 hours a week	ESL	22.7	45.4	15.7	0	11.4	1.4	3.3	65
5 hours a week & more	ESL	21.9	43.8	5.5	4.4	10	6.6	7.7	74
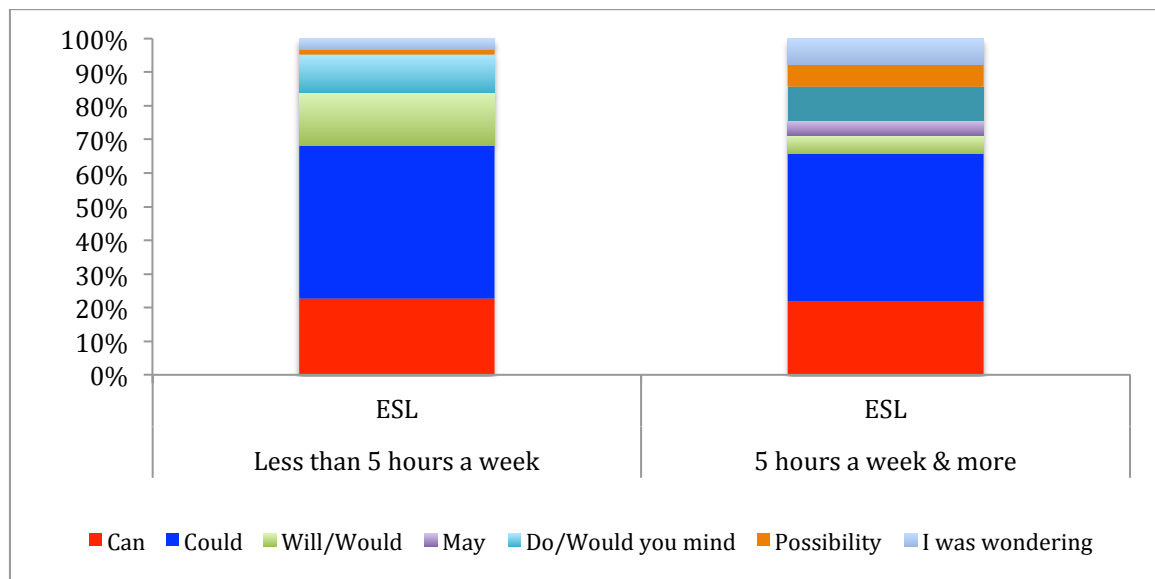
Figure 4.21. Directness sub-strategies in the RPT, based on the intensity of communication of the ESL participants with native speakers.

As illustrated above, the RPT results supported the findings of the DCT. Indeed, in concordance with the DCT results, the role-play ESL sub-groups with a higher intensity of communication with native speakers were significantly less direct, and adhered far more closely to the native speakers' patterns, as demonstrated by the frequency rates. In conclusion, the following points address the research question regarding the pragmatic differences among the ESL participants, based on the intensity of their communication with native speakers:

- The DCT and RPT data demonstrated that the ESL sub-group that had more communication with native speakers was significantly less direct, in terms of being less imposing and more polite, than the sub-group that had less communication with native speakers;

- With regard to the *query preparatory* sub-strategies, the DCT and RPT results demonstrated that the ESL participants who had communicated more with native speakers employed a greater range of *query preparatory* sub-strategies, in an approach similar to that of the NSE, than the other participants.

As demonstrated by the data analysis presented in this section, a large number of both direct and indirect request strategies were employed differently by the EFL, ESL, and NSE participants. The degrees of imposition (low/high) in the requests, and the role of the interlocutor's status (lower/equal/higher) affected the use of the groups' request strategies differently, as detailed above. Furthermore, the choices of the non-native groups were influenced by the length of time they had spent learning English, and the intensity of their communication with native speakers. These results are evaluated in conjunction with the results of internal and external modifiers presented in the following sections, and are further discussed in the final section of this chapter. The next section now concerns the analysis of request modifications.

4.3 Pragmatic Differences in the use of Internal Modifications

As already noted, in addition to the request strategies, this study found that the three groups modified their requests in terms of politeness widely, using many *internal* and *external* modifiers. For example, the participants employed *downtoners, hedges*, or *understaters* to reduce the force of a request; added further politeness markers, such as *please*, to soften requests; employed linguistic devices to obtain the interlocutors' attention; explained the significance of requests (grounders); employed pre-request utterances to prepare individuals for the requests; and promised rewards in order to achieve what was required. Hence, an examination of these modifications, and how the three groups employed them, along with request strategies, is an important aspect of this study for investigating the pragmatic differences between the groups, and to assess the extent to which the non-native participants were able to successfully replicate these elements in requests. This section (4.3) concerns the analysis of modifiers used in the same head act, which is to say *internal modifications,* whereas the *external modifiers* are discussed in the following section (4.4).

To analyse the internal modifiers employed in the collected data, the 1,920 requests were coded using the second part of Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) coding scheme, detailed in the methodology chapter. According to Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989), modifiers are divided into two main types: internal downgraders and internal upgraders. The former are employed to mitigate requests, whereas the later are used to aggravate a request context, as briefly summarised below:

Table 4.24. The internal modifiers employed in the study conducted by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989).

Internal Modifications Used in the Head Act of Request
1. Internal Downgraders **1.1 Lexical downgraders:** • **Downtoner**: e.g. could I *maybe* have…? • **Politeness marker**: e.g. ..., *please*? • **Understater**: e.g. can you speak up *a bit*, please? • **Hedge**: how about meeting at the weekend *somehow*? • **Appealer**: *we are going in the same direction, aren't we?* **1.2 Syntactic downgraders:** • **Conditional clause:** <u>if you could just</u>... • **Subjunctive:** <u>Might be better</u> if you were to leave now. • **Appreciative embedding:** <u>it would be nice</u> when… • **Tag question:** I don't suppose you could help, <u>could you</u>? • **Tense** (e.g. want/wanted/was wondering): past tense is seen as downgrading (making the request more polite) when used with present time reference to: e.g. *I wanted you to pass me...?* • **Negation**: you <u>couldn't do</u> me a favour, please?
2. Internal Upgraders • **Intensifier**: e.g. I have got such *a huge headache*, could… • **Time intensifier**: e.g. I <u>have urgent meetings at the same time</u>… • **Expletive**: e.g. I can't understand this *bloody* classification, could you... • **Exaggerated utterances**: e.g. I am really <u>desperate</u> to get this… • **Lexical uptoner**: a marked lexical choice gives negative connotations: clean up that *mess*! • **Orthographic/suprasegmented emphasis**: underlining/using exclamation marks in writing or using marked pausing, stress and intonation in speaking: Cleaning the Kitchen is your business!!!

As discussed in the following subsections, when applying this taxonomy, it was noticed that the three groups relied heavily on internal downgraders, and rarely employed internal upgraders. Within the internal downgraders, the groups also employed the politeness

marker of *please* to a great extent, and notably disregarded the other options of *understater,*
hedge, appealer, subjunctive, tag question, negation, intensifier, time intensifier, explosive,
exaggerated utterances, lexical uptoner, and *orthographic emphasis.* Additionally, it was
found that a large number of requests were conducted without the involvement of any request
modifiers, and these requests were, therefore, calculated in the results, in order to evaluate
which group employed the use of modifiers the least. Furthermore, a small number of the
participants from all of the groups employed several internal modifiers in a single request to
mitigate its effect further. Although these requests involving more than one modifier
constituted less than 3.5% of all of the participants' responses, they were highlighted
wherever relevant.

This section, and its subsections, seeks to present the results in a readable and
analysable form. It commences with a comparison of the similarities and differences between
the groups in the use of internal modifiers, and then presents the specific results, according to
the following four factors: the degree of imposition (low/high) in the requests, the role of the
interlocutor's status (lower/equal/higher), the non-native participants' length of time spent
learning English, and the intensity of communication between the ESL participants and native
speakers.

4.3.1 Overall results of the groups' internal modifications

The following table and figure present the total numbers (in percentages) of the DCT
internal modifications, distributed among the three groups. These results are then compared
with the RPT data.

Table 4.25. Overall use of internal modifications in the DCT groups.

		EFL %	ESL %	NSE %
Internal downgraders	(Please)	**51.7**	**56**	**61.8**
	(Others)	5.4	5.9	6.3
Internal upgraders		3.5	2.8	6.1
No internal modifications used		39.4	35.3	25.8
Total No. Requests Analysed		540	540	360
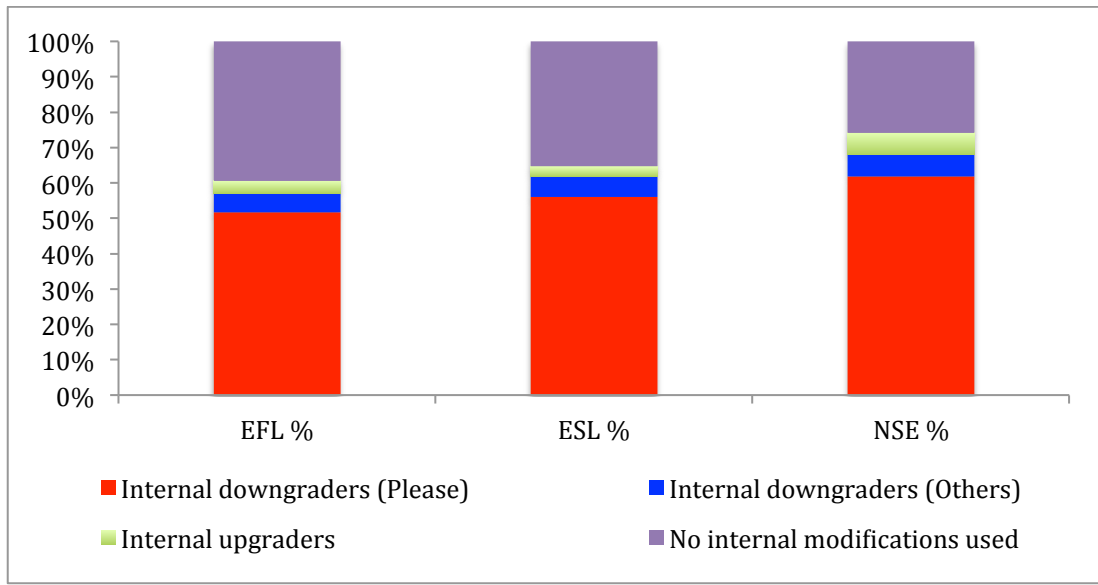
Figure 4.22. Overall use of internal modifications in the DCT groups.

As illustrated above, the three groups followed a similar trend in the use of internal modifiers. *Internal downgraders*, mainly the polite marker of *please*, were the most used in the requests (EFL: 57.1%, ESL: 61.9%, NSE: 61.8%), while *internal upgraders* were rarely employed (EFL: 3.5%, ESL: 2.8%, NSE: 6.1%), and a large number of requests were made without any modification (EFL: 39.4%, ESL: 35.3%, NSE: 25.8%). According to these results, the EFL and ESL groups succeeded in the use of basic internal modifiers in their requests, although there were differences between them and the NSE group in terms of the frequency rates for the internal modifiers. Initially, the NSE group employed significantly more internal modifiers, specifically the polite marker of *please*, than the EFL and ESL groups ($p < 0.05$), a finding that concurred with most previous studies (e.g. Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008; Hassall, 2001; Hutz, 2006; Woodfield, 2008; Woodfield & Economidou-

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Kogetsidis, 2010). According to Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory (see Section 2.7), this indicated that the NSE requests were more appropriate, softened, and socially acceptable in terms of politeness. Although the non-native learners in the present study employed a considerable number of internal modifications to soften their requests, they notably used them less compared with the native speakers. However, the ESL group demonstrated a relatively higher use of internal modifiers than the EFL group, although no statistically significant difference was found ($p > 0.05$) between the two non-native groups.

As discussed in the literature review, the non-native groups' tendency to employ fewer internal modifications can be attributed to the fact that such pragmalinguistic elements, with the exception of *please*, are less perceptible to non-native speakers, and thus harder to integrate appropriately in their requests. The use of *please* in requests, which Brown and Levinson (1987) suggested is an important means of smoothing communication, and minimising the interlocutor's discomfort, is easier to learn and to employ in requests than other politeness features, and this may explain why the non-native groups used it to a significant degree in their requests. While the relationship between the choice of request strategy, and the use of internal modifiers in the groups' requests is discussed in the final section, in which they are considered in combination, it is relevant here to note that House (1989) considered that the more indirect the request, the less likely it is to be accompanied by *please*. For example, *I wonder if it would be possible for you to...* Additionally, when requests are specifically obscured as a requestive-act to minimise imposition, *please* is not likely to be used, as it tends to form part of ritualised formulas.

In accordance with these premises, the analysis of internal modifiers focuses on two aspects: the difference in the use of the *internal downgraders*, specifically *please*, between the groups, and the absence of internal modifiers in their requests. The below table and figure compare the DCT results with the RPT results, illuminating how the three groups dealt with internal modifications when making requests in the RPT.

Table 4.26. Overall use of internal modifications in the RPT groups.

		EFL %	ESL %	NSE %
Internal downgraders	*Please*	**47.7**	**62.8**	**70.5**
	Others	5.3	6.7	7
Internal upgraders		3.9	5	4.2
No internal modifications used		43.1	25.5	18.3
Total No. Requests Analysed		180	180	120
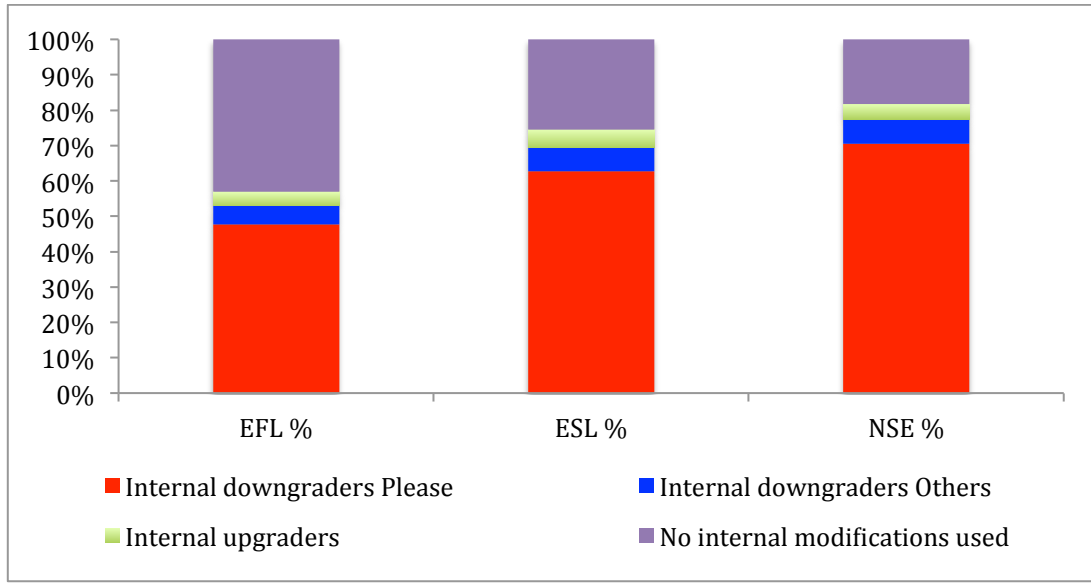
Figure 4.23. Overall use of internal modifications in the RPT groups.

The RPT results demonstrated that the use of internal modifications was found in 56.9% of the EFL requests, compared with 74.5% of the ESL requests, and 81.7% of the NSE requests. The NSE group employed more internal modifications than the ESL and EFL groups, with a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.01$). The difference between the ESL and EFL groups in the employment of internal modifications was statistically significant in the RPT ($p < 0.01$), but not in the DCT. Within the RPT internal modifications, *internal downgraders* were the most used by all of the groups, while *internal upgraders* were rarely employed. The use of *internal downgraders* in the RPT represented 53% of the EFL group's internal modifications, compared with 69.5% of the ESL group, and 77.5% of the NSE group's internal modifications, while the politeness marker *please*, in particular, was the most frequently employed by all of the groups within the *internal downgraders*, representing

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47.7% of the EFL group's internal modifiers, 62.8% of the ESL group's, and 70.5% of those of the NSE. These findings therefore suggested that the ESL group produced more native-like modifications than the EFL group, and hence, it can be claimed that the ESL group's requests were more polite than those of the EFL group. In addition, the RPT values for internal modifiers, especially *please*, were higher for all of the groups than those of the DCT, and there were statistically significant differences between the DCT and RPT groups in the amount of internal modifiers employed ($p < 0.05$). The fact that the RPT involved face-to-face interaction may be the reason why *please* was more frequently employed to soften requests, and hence to save the hearer's face.

In summary, the above DCT and RPT results demonstrated the following points with regard to the research question pertaining to the differences between the groups in their use of internal modifications in the speech act of request:

- The DCT and RPT data revealed that the NSE group employed significantly more internal modifications, especially *please*, than the non-native groups;

- The ESL group employed relatively more internal modifications, including *please*, than the EFL participants; however, the difference between the two non-native groups was statistically significant in only the RPT, and not in the DCT;

- Thus far, the results seem to suggest that the ESL group aligned more closely with the NSE group in their use of internal modifiers that smooth requests and minimise the interlocutor's discomfort.

These results concerning internal modifications require further, more detailed, investigation, and the following subsections employ the factors discussed at the beginning of this chapter to illustrate their influence on the use of internal modifications in requests, presenting the results related to the use of internal modifications, depending on the degree of imposition.

4.3.2 Internal modifications based on the degree of imposition in requests

As noted throughout this thesis, requests are face-threatening speech acts in general, and high-imposition requests are more face-threatening than low-imposition types. As detailed in Section 4.2, this study found that these two forms of request were performed differently by the participants, in terms of the request strategies employed, and they were expected to vary in terms of their modifications. This subsection focuses on the internal modifiers, and the following table and figure present the DCT results regarding the influence of the degree of imposition on the performance of internal modifiers in requests.

Table 4.27. Impact of the degree of imposition on the DCT internal modifications.

		Internal Modifications %				Total
		Internal downgraders (Please)	Internal downgraders (Others)	Internal upgraders	No modifications	No.
Low	EFL	**53**	5.8	0	41.1	180
	ESL	**45.45**	5	0.65	48.9	180
	NSE	**51.75**	5.75	1.7	40.8	120
High	EFL	**50.7**	5.4	5.2	38.6	360
	ESL	**61.1**	6.4	3.9	28.6	360
	NSE	**66.8**	6.5	8.3	18.3	240
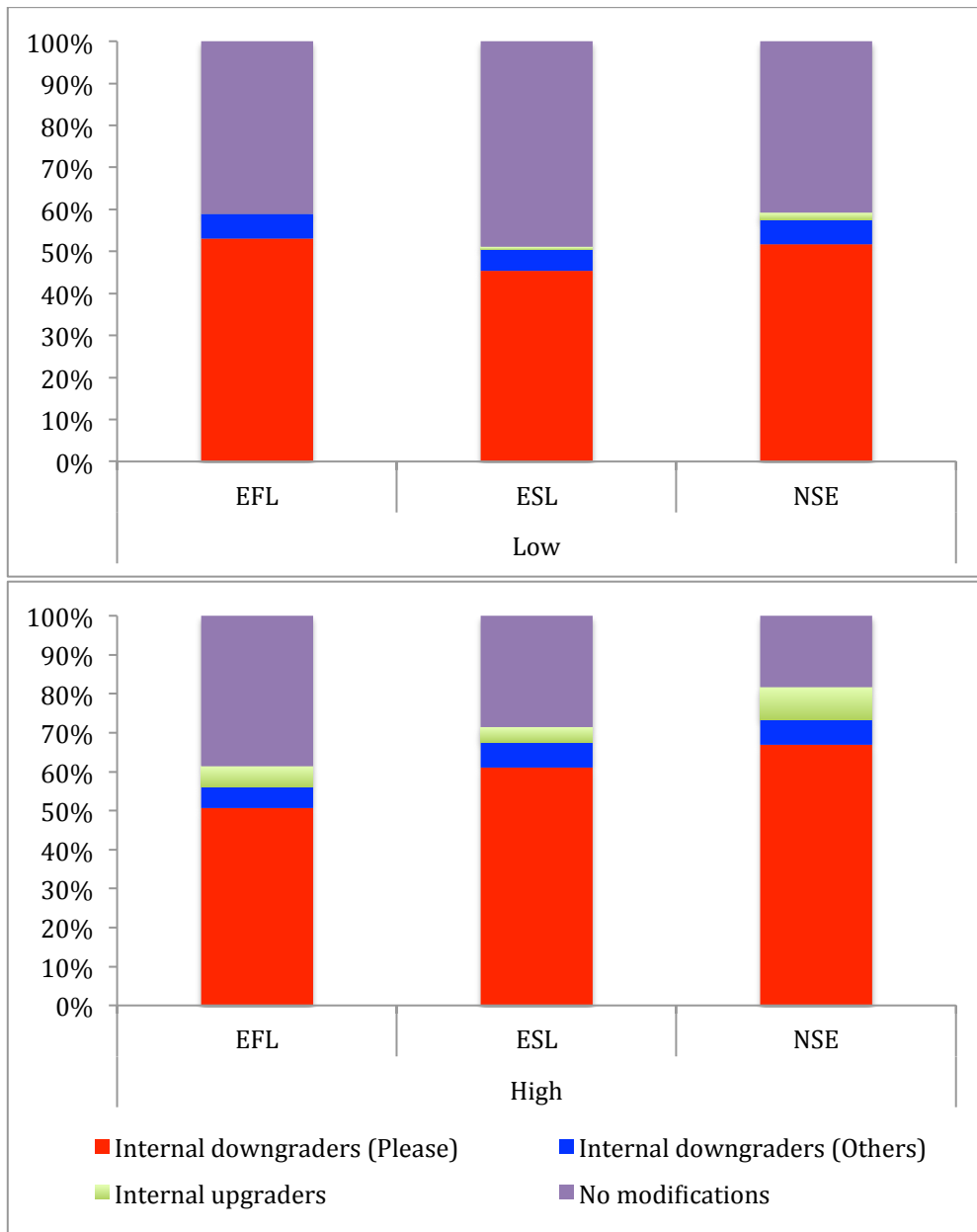
Figure 4.24. Impact of the degree of imposition on the DCT internal modifications.

As these results illustrate, all of the groups varied in their use of internal modifiers, based on the degree of imposition, and all of the participants employed more internal downgraders, especially *please*, when making high imposition requests. However, only the NSE and ESL groups showed a statistically significant shift between the two degrees of imposition ($p < 0.05$) in this regard (EFL group: $p > 0.05$). As the above frequencies demonstrate, the results suggested that the NSE requests were the most influenced by this factor, followed by the ESL requests, highlighting the difference in the pragmatic competence

between the two non-native groups. Additionally, the above results revealed that the *internal upgraders* were more associated with high-imposition requests in all of the groups, as they were rarely employed in low-imposition requests, due to the fact that *internal upgraders* are employed to intensify the context of requests, as discussed in the literature review. The following table and figure illustrate the findings of the RPT data concerning the impact of the degree of imposition (low/high) in the use of internal modifications in the requests of the three groups.

Table 4.28. Impact of the degree of imposition on the RPT internal modifications.

		Internal Modifications %				Total
		Internal downgraders (Please)	Internal downgraders (Others)	Internal upgraders	No modifications	No.
Low	EFL	**43.8**	4.9	3.3	48	60
	ESL	**48**	5.3	6.7	40	60
	NSE	**68.5**	6.5	0	25	40
High	EFL	**48.55**	5.25	4	42.2	120
	ESL	**70.3**	7.4	4	18.3	120
	NSE	**71.65**	7.1	6.25	15	80
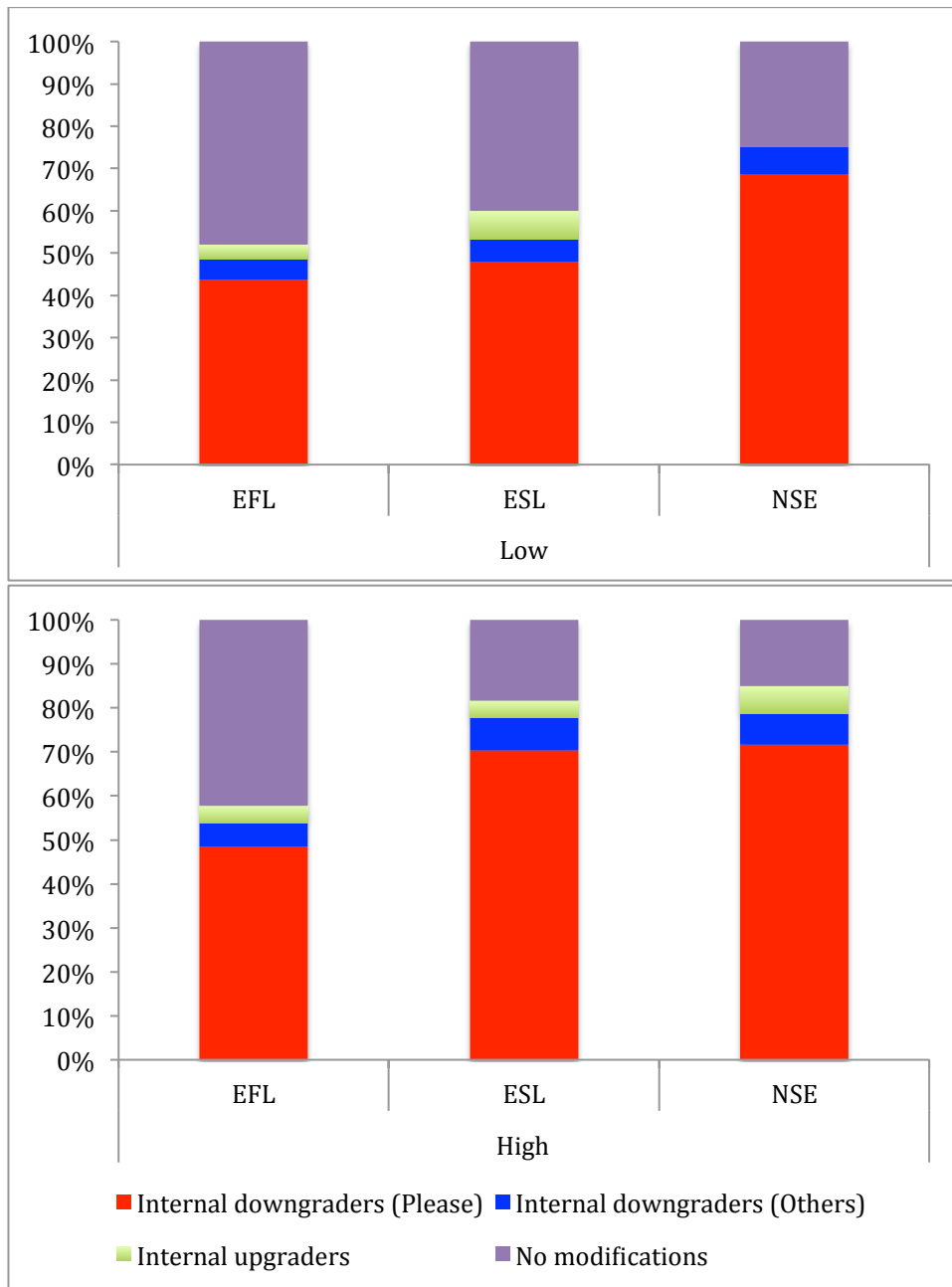
Figure 4.25. Impact of the degree of imposition on the RPT internal modifications.

As these results demonstrate, all of the RPT groups also considered the degree of imposition involved, as all of the participants employed more internal modifications, especially *please*, when making requests with a high imposition. However, as with the DCT results, there was a statistically significant difference between the two contexts only in the NSE and ESL groups' results ($p < 0.01$). In terms of the low imposition requests, for instance, those without modifications in the NSE and ESL groups' responses were more frequent than

in the high imposition requests. Therefore, the DCT and RPT results confirmed the following points:

- The EFL group was generally less sensitive to the degree of imposition when employing internal modifiers in their requests, as the Chi-square tests confirmed that there were no statistically significant differences in their DCT and RPT results, between the two degrees of imposition;

- The NSE and ESL groups employed more internal modifiers with their high imposition requests, and the differences between the two degrees of imposition in both groups were statistically significant in both the DCT and RPT results. Thus, it can be claimed that the ESL group was the closest to the native group in their use of internal modifiers in this regard.

4.3.3 Internal modifications, based on the interlocutor's status

This subsection highlights the findings relating to the role of the interlocutor's status (lower/equal/higher) in the use of internal modifications in the requests of the three participating groups. As previously, the DCT findings are presented, followed by those of the RPT.

Table 4.29. Impact of interlocutor status on the DCT internal modifications.

		Internal Modifications %				Total No.
		Internal downgraders (Please)	Internal downgraders (Others)	Internal upgraders	No modifications	
Lower	EFL	45.6	4.9	3.3	46.1	180
	ESL	49.2	5.3	2.8	42.7	180
	NSE	56.5	5.6	5.8	32	120
Equal	EFL	50.3	5.3	3.3	41.1	180
	ESL	55.3	5.8	3.3	35.5	180
	NSE	61.6	6.2	4.2	28	120
Higher	EFL	58.6	6.4	3.9	31.1	180
	ESL	63.4	6.7	2.2	27.7	180
	NSE	67.2	7	8.3	17.5	120

Internal downgraders (Please)   Internal downgraders (Others)
Internal upgraders   No modifications
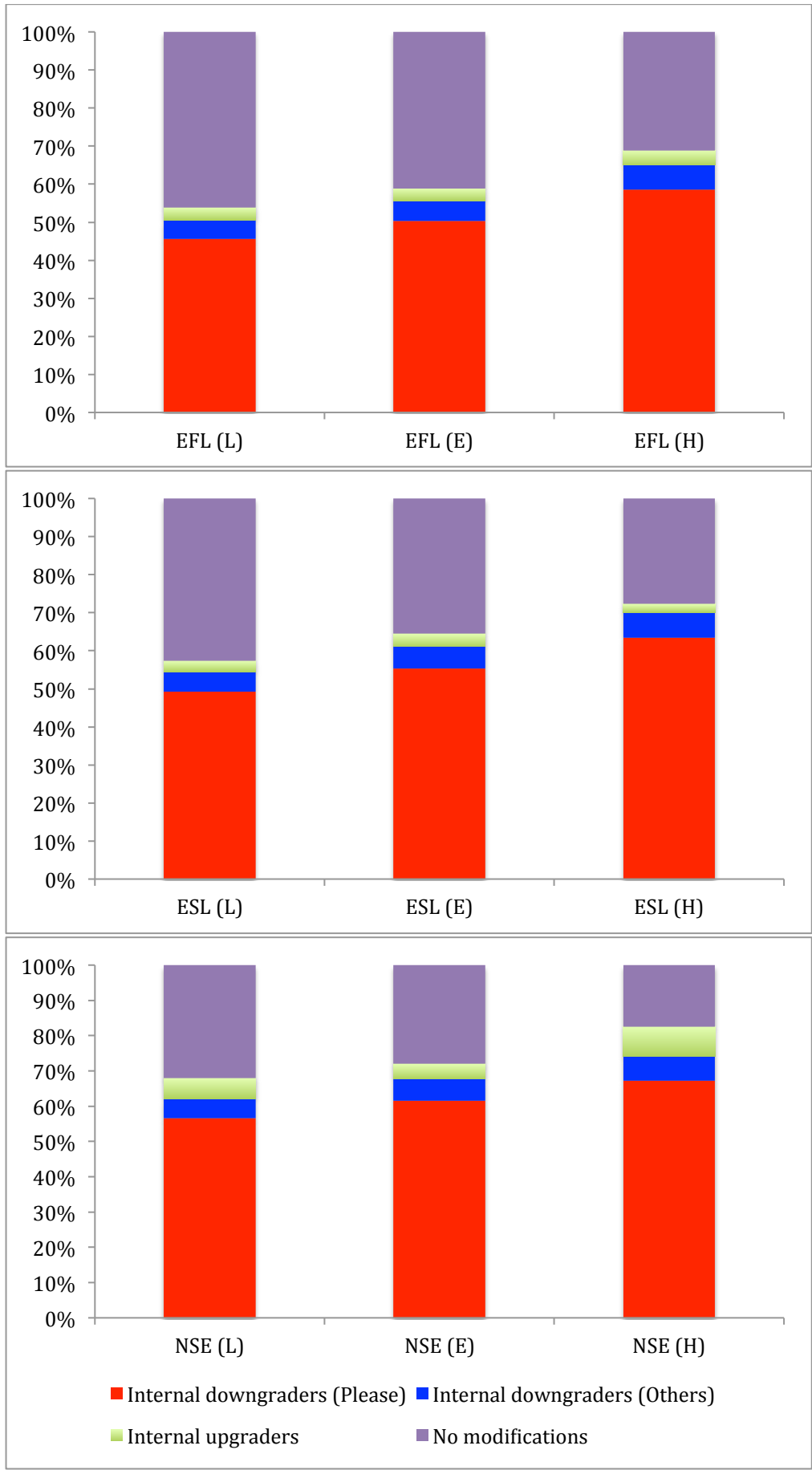
Figure 4.26. Impact of interlocutor status on the DCT internal modifications.

As the above table and figures illustrate, the groups employed internal modifiers differently in their request strategies, when speaking to individuals of different statuses. They all employed more internal modifications, especially *please*, when making requests to equal and higher status individuals, and the requests lacking modifications were more frequently employed with individuals of lower status, for all of the groups. It was also observable that all of the groups employed more internal modifications in their requests addressed to higher status interlocutors than in those addressed to equal and lower status individuals. Statistically significant differences in this regard were found among all of the groups ($p < 0.05$), suggesting that this factor had a significant impact on the use of internal modifications in all of the groups. The following table and figure present the RPT data relating to this factor of the participants' use of internal modifications in their request strategies.

Table 4.30. Impact of interlocutor status on the RPT internal modifications.

		Internal Modifications %				Total No.
		Internal downgraders (Please)	Internal downgraders (Others)	Internal upgraders	No modifications	
Lower	EFL	36	4	6.7	53.3	60
	ESL	54.2	5.8	6.7	33.3	60
	NSE	61.4	6.1	7.5	25	40
Equal	EFL	41.2	4.6	4.2	50	60
	ESL	55.9	5.8	8.3	30	60
	NSE	73	7	0	20	40
Higher	EFL	57.2	6.1	1.7	35	60
	ESL	78.2	8.4	0	13.3	60
	NSE	77.2	7.8	5	10	40
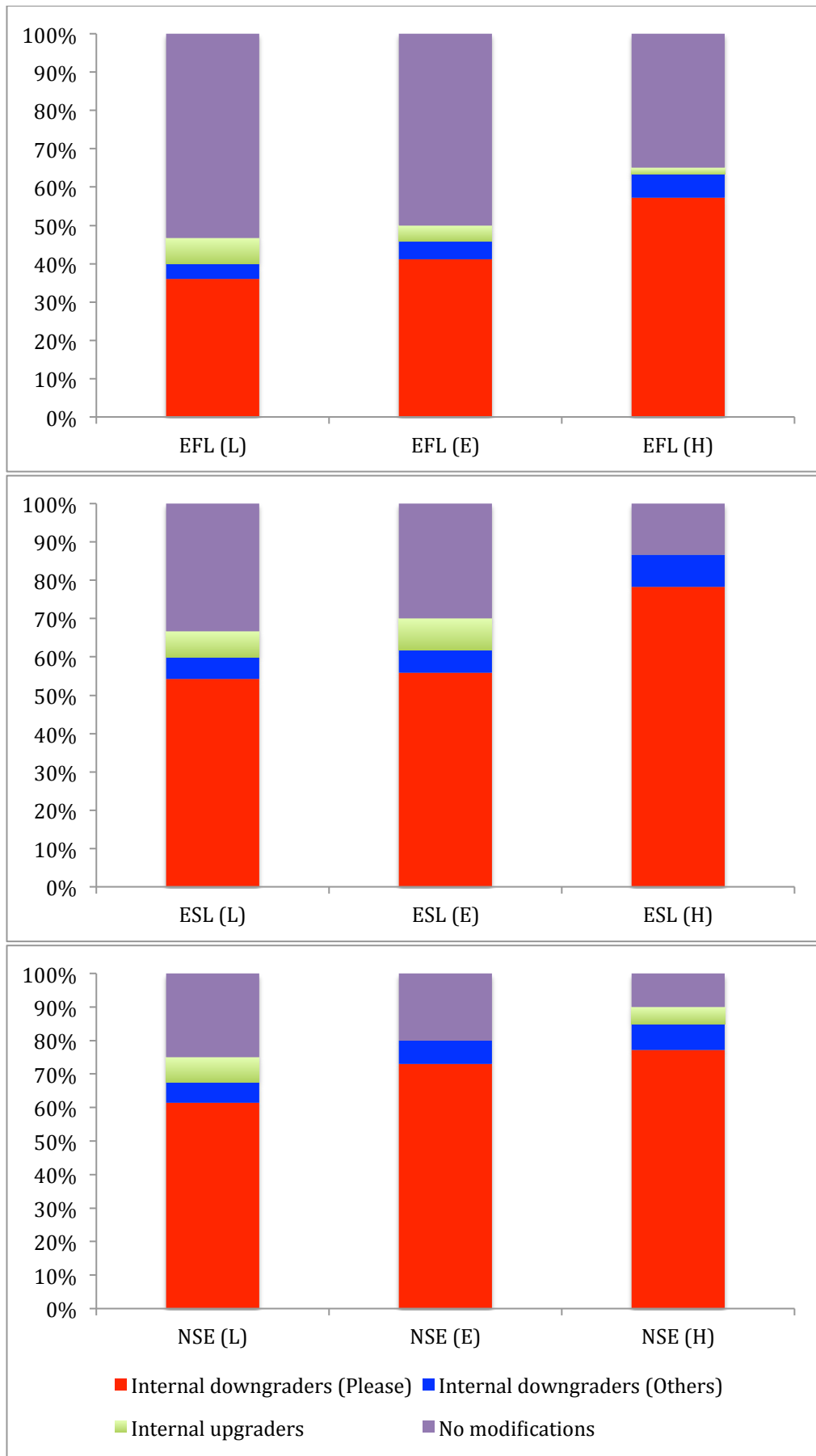
Figure 4.27. Impact of interlocutor status on the RPT internal modifications.

The RPT results also revealed that all of the groups employed more internal modifications when making requests of equal and higher status individuals, while for all of the groups, the number of requests lacking modifications was higher in the requests addressed to individuals of lower status. However, no statistically significant differences were found among the three groups ($p > 0.05$), and only the DCT data analysis showed statistical differences between the groups, with regard to their use of internal modifications, based on the social status of the interlocutors. Thus, it was possible to confirm the following point:

- All three groups were conscious of the role of social status in the use of internal modifiers, since they all increased their use of internal modifiers, specifically *please*, when the social status of the hearer increased. The DCT results significantly confirmed this increase, and this is discussed further in the final section of this chapter.

4.3.4 Internal modifications, based on length of time spent learning English

As demonstrated by the results in the previous section, the length of time spent learning English can affect the way in which non-native speakers perform speech acts. The following table and figure present the DCT results concerning the impact on internal modifications of the length of time the participants had spent learning English. As previously, the non-native speakers were divided into two groups, based on duration of learning.

Table 4.31. Internal modifications of the non-native groups in the DCT, based on the length of time spent learning English.

		Internal Modifications %				Total No.
		Internal downgraders (Please)	Internal downgraders (Others)	Internal upgraders	No modifications	
Less than 2ys	EFL	42.9	4.7	2.8	49.6	72
	ESL	50.5	5.3	2.3	41.9	261
2-4ys	EFL	59.6	6.3	4.1	30	468
	ESL	59.8	6.4	4.45	29.35	279
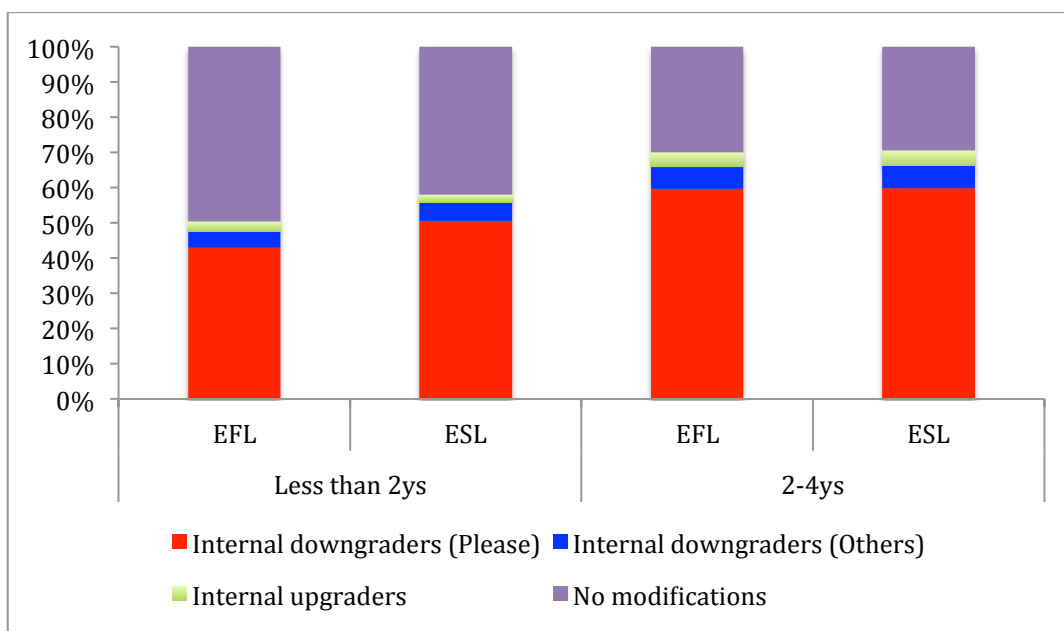
Figure 4.28. Internal modifications of the non-native groups in the DCT, based on the length of time spent learning English.

The DCT results confirmed that the length of time spent learning English influenced the EFL and ESL participants' options, as there were significant increases in the rate of internal modifications, especially *please*, among both the EFL and ESL participants who had spent a longer duration learning English ($p < 0.05$). The following table and figure present the RPT data in respect of this sub-category.

Table 4.32. Internal modifications of the non-native groups in the RPT, based on the length of time spent learning English.

		Internal Modifications %				Total No.
		Internal downgraders (Please)	Internal downgraders (Others)	Internal upgraders	No modifications	
Less than 2ys	EFL	42.6	4.6	2.8	50	36
	ESL	57.3	6	8.3	28.3	72
2-4ys	EFL	50.1	5.4	7.7	36.8	144
	ESL	74.6	8	4.2	13.2	108
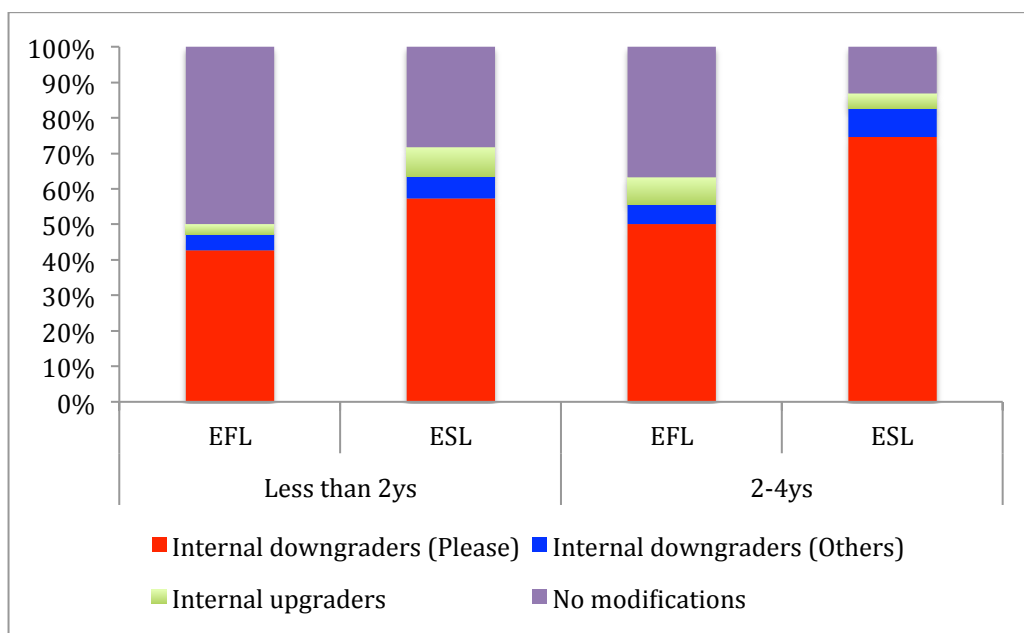
Figure 4.29. Internal modifications of the non-native groups in the RPT, based on the length of time spent learning English.

The RPT results demonstrated that the participants who had been learning English for a longer duration showed a greater use of internal modifications in their requests. However, the Chi-square tests for the RPT data differed from that of the DCT results, as the results between the two EFL subgroups were not different to a statistically significant degree. Thus, it is possible to claim that both the DCT and RPT data revealed that the ESL group demonstrated a far higher use of internal modifications ($p < 0.05$). However, with regard to the EFL participants, only the DCT results indicated that the learners who had been learning English for a longer duration demonstrated a significantly greater use of internal modifications ($p < 0.05$).

4.3.5 Internal modifications, based on the ESL group's intensity of communication with native speakers of English

As demonstrated previously, the intensity of communication with native speakers can affect the acquisition of pragmatic competence. The following table and figure illustrate the DCT results with respect to the impact of the ESL participants' intensity of communication with native speakers on their use of internal modifiers.

Table 4.33. Internal modifications in the DCT, based on the ESL group's intensity of communication with native speakers.

		Internal Modifications %				Total No.
		Internal downgraders (Please)	Internal downgraders (Others)	Internal upgraders	No modifications	
Less than 5 hours a week	ESL	55	5.7	3.8	35.5	297
5 hours a week & more	ESL	55.8	5	2.3	36.9	243
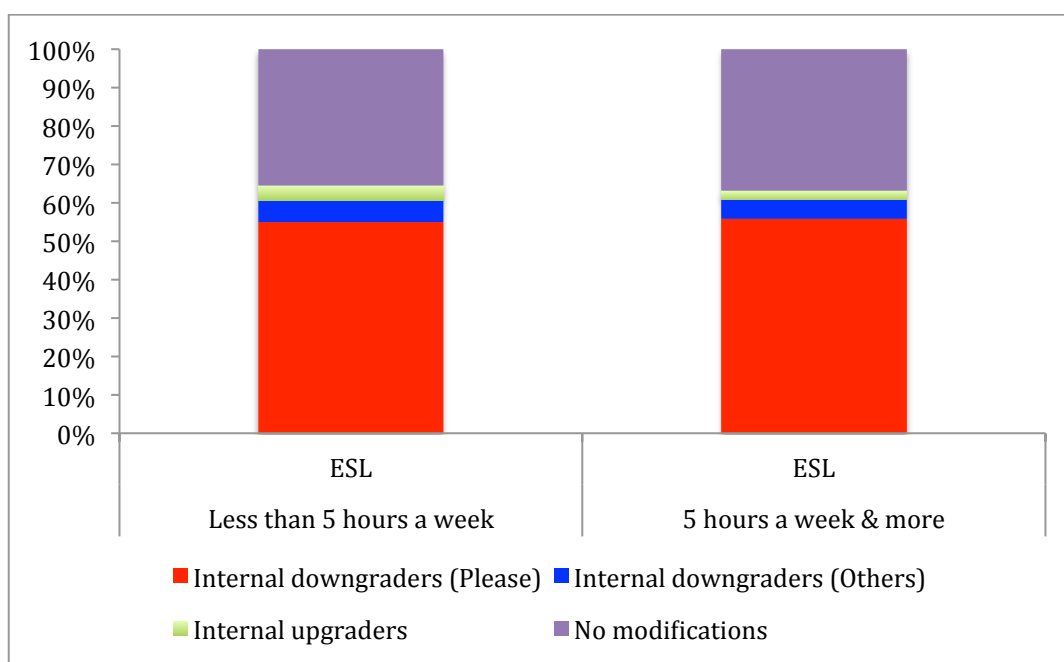
Figure 4.30. Internal modifications in the DCT, based on the ESL group's intensity of communication with native speakers.

No differences between the two ESL subgroups were found in the DCT results, which may suggest that the use of internal modifications as a pragmatic strategy was barely affected by the amount of communication the participants had with native speakers. In turn, this may mean that the acquisition and use of internal modifiers do not require a significant degree of communication with native speakers, in contrast with request strategies, for example. This was confirmed by the RPT results, as illustrated below.

Table 4.34. Internal modifications in the RPT, based on the ESL group's intensity of communication with native speakers.

		Internal Modifications %				Total No.
		Internal downgraders (Please)	Internal downgraders (Others)	Internal upgraders	No modifications	
Less than 5 hours a week	ESL	64.4	6.9	4.8	23.9	84
5 hours a week & more	ESL	59.75	6.4	6.35	27.5	96
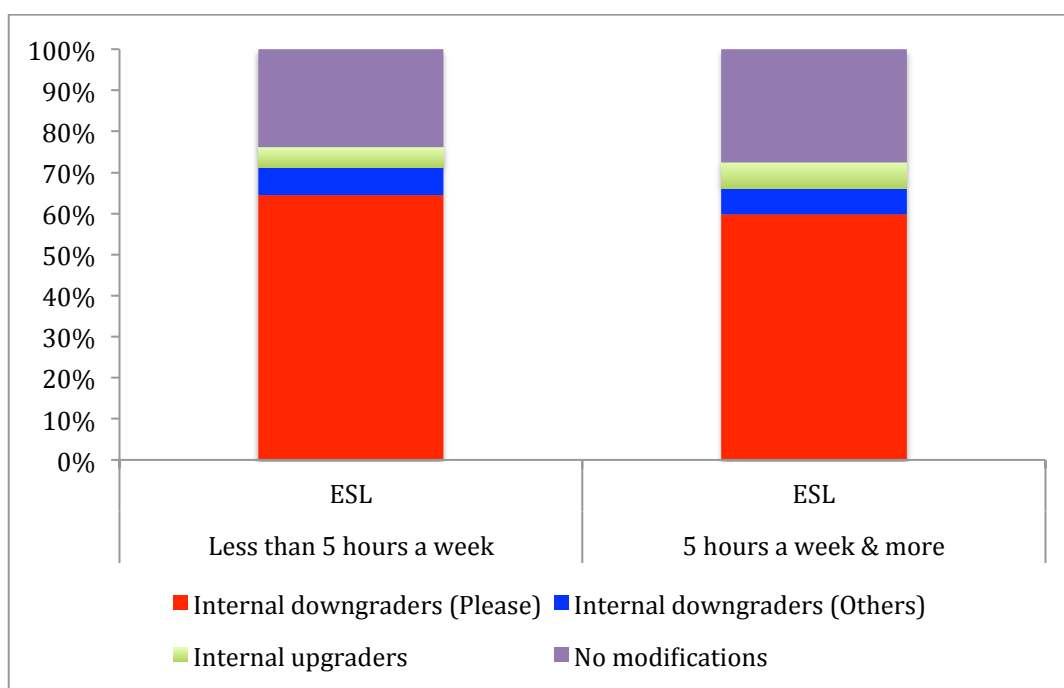
Figure 4.31. Internal modifications in the RPT, based on the ESL group's intensity of communication with native speakers.

It should be noted that although the factor of the intensity of communication with native speakers influenced the request strategies of the ESL group, the data suggested that this factor had no impact on their use of internal modifications. Both of the ESL subgroups demonstrated a similar use of internal modifications, regardless of the amount of communication they'd had with native speakers, and this may suggest that the intensity of communication with native speakers has a lesser role to play in the development of internal modifications among ESL learners.

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This section presented the results of the use of internal modifiers in all of the groups' requests. However, as noted previously, request modifiers are constituted of two types: (1) internal items in the head act of requests; and (2) external supportive words or sentences, that is, adjuncts to the head act of request. Thus, the following section examines the external modifications, and how the three groups employed them in their requests.

4.4 Pragmatic Differences in the use of External Modifications

External modifications are supportive sentences that are employed before or after the head act of requests to further mitigate the impact of the requests, and to affect the politeness of the requests, as detailed in Sections 2.8 and 2.9. In some cases, external modifications are employed both before and after the head act. For example, <u>Hi Ali, can I ask you something?</u> Could you please lend me your book for two hours? <u>I lost mine and I want to finish my assignment now!</u> For ease of reference, the below is a brief reprise of the external modifiers coding scheme of Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), which was employed to code the external modifications in the present study.

Table 4.35. The external modifiers employed in the study conducted by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989).

External Modifications in Supportive Words/Sentences
• **Linguistic devices (alerter):** e.g. Excuse me, er, Hello, Ali.
• **Pre-request (preparatory):** e.g. May I ask you something?
• **Head (getting a pre-commitment):** e.g. can you do me a favour?
• **Grounder:** providing reasons, explanations or justifications for the request.
• **Disarmer:** e.g. I know how busy you are but…
• **Imposition minimiser:** e.g. Would you give me a lift, but only if you are going my way.
• **Sweeteners:** e.g. You are the right person to help with…
• **Promise of reward:** e.g. I'll help you if you ever need me.

In the coding stage of the present study, as with the internal modifiers, it was observed that several requests were made without the involvement of any external request modifiers, and these were, therefore, presented in a separate column in the results tables. Furthermore, it was noted that a number of the participants from all of the groups combined the external

modifiers in single requests, primarily in terms of *linguistic devices* with *grounders*, and this was also calculated for each group. The following subsection presents the results regarding how the three groups externally modified their request strategies.

4.4.1 Overall results of the groups' external modifications

The following table and figure present the DCT data relating to the total number (in percentages) of external modifications employed by the three participating groups.

Table 4.36. Overall usage of external modifications for each group in the DCT.

	EFL %	ESL %	NSE %
No external modifications	30.4	16.3	18
Linguistic devices	**39.3**	**52.4**	**57.2**
Pre-request utterances	0.9	4.8	3.6
Head	0.2	0.2	0
Grounder	8	8.1	7.2
Disarmer	0	0.5	0
Imposition minimiser	1.3	1.1	2.8
Sweeteners	1.1	1.6	0.3
Promise of reward	0.9	0.3	0
More than one modification	17.9	14.7	10.9
Total No. of Requests Analysed	540	540	360
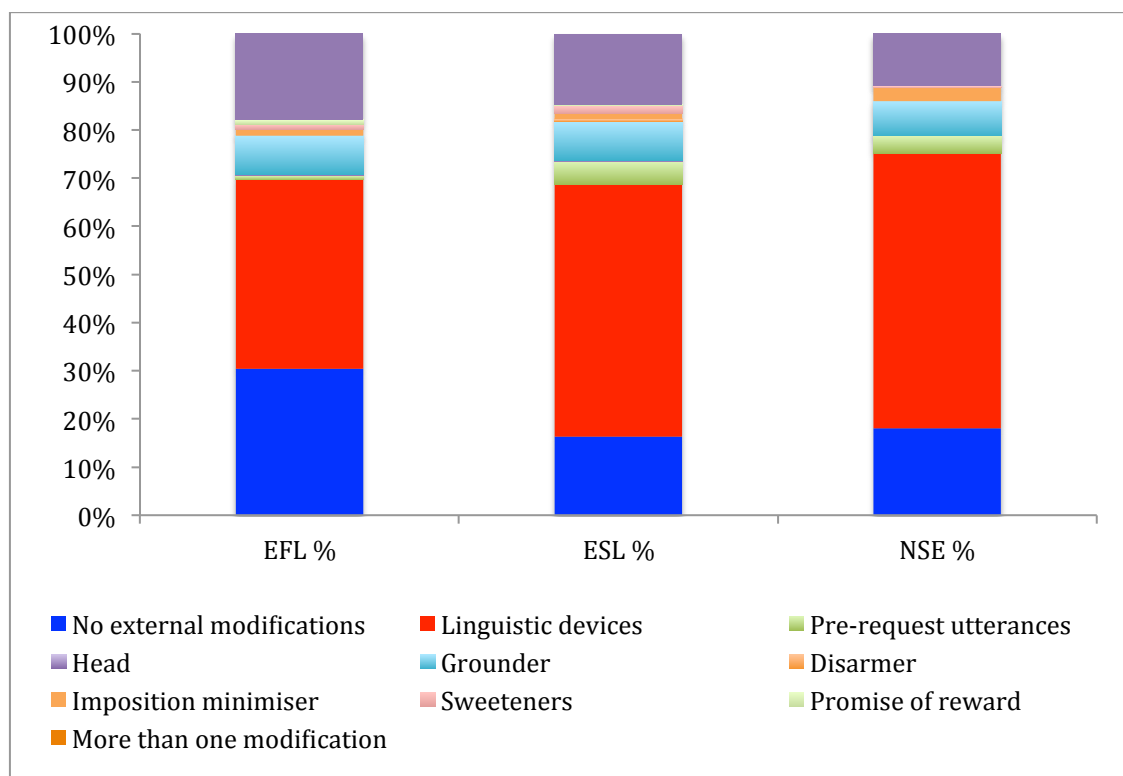
Figure 4.32. Overall usage of external modifications for each group in the DCT.

As these results demonstrate, the EFL group employed external modifications in 69.6% of their requests, which was the lowest percentage among the three groups, compared with 83.7% for the ESL group, and 82% for the NSE group. Significant differences in this regard were found between the EFL and NSE groups, as well as between the EFL and ESL groups ($p < 0.01$). The results also demonstrated that the patterns of use of external modifications between the ESL and NSE groups were similar to a certain extent (see Figure 4.32), as no statistically significant difference was found between these two groups ($p > 0.05$). In other words, the ESL group employed almost as many external modifications as the native group, whereas the EFL group did not. This constituted the first difference in the use of external modifiers between the ESL and EFL groups.

When examining how the groups employed external modifiers, *linguistic devices*, such as *Excuse me; Hi, how is it going with you?;* and *Hello/Good morning, Ali*, were found to be the modifiers most used by all of the groups, with differences in the frequency rates, as shown above. *Linguistic devices* in requests refer to the greetings and acknowledgements employed

to open a conversation with respect and consideration before making a request, and are considered to be an important external modifier. These linguistic devices, among the other external modifiers, were significantly more frequent in the NSE and ESL groups' responses than in those of the EFL group, as illustrated above. In contrast, the other external modifiers, in terms of *grounders, head, disarmer, imposition minimiser, sweeteners* and *promise of reward*, were scarcely employed by any of the groups. However, several participants from all of the groups combined more than one external modifier in one request, primarily in terms of *linguistic devices* with *grounders*, and this result was slightly higher for the non-native groups, as found in most previous studies (see Section 2.7.2.1), which generally made the non-native requests lengthier than the native requests. This was higher for the EFL group than the ESL group.

The below table and figure present the RPT results regarding how the participants employed external modifications in their requests.

Table 4.37. Overall use of external modifications for each RPT group.

	EFL %	ESL %	NSE %
No external modifications	7.6	4	2.2
Linguistic devices	**46.4**	**44.2**	**54**
Pre-request utterances	5.3	8.8	7.5
Head	0	0.55	0
Grounder	7.8	12.8	11.6
Disarmer	0	0.55	0
Imposition minimiser	1.1	2.8	4.2
Sweeteners	0	1.9	0
Promise of reward	5.1	2.2	0
More than one modification	26.7	22.2	20.5
Total No.	180	180	120
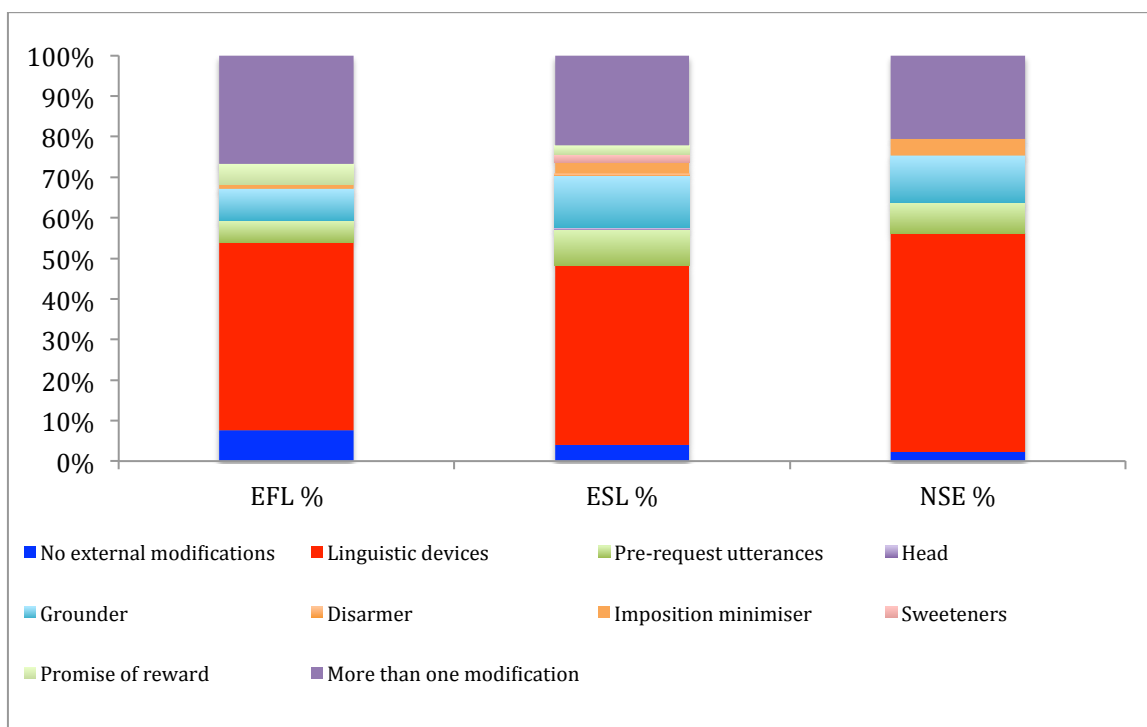
Figure 4.33. Overall use of external modifications for each RPT group.

As the above illustrate, although the RPT participants followed a similar pattern to the DCT participants in their use of external modifiers, more external modifiers were found in the RPT results of each group, compared with the DCT results. Furthermore, statistically significant differences were found between the results of the two data collection methods for all of the groups ($p < 0.05$). This finding may be due to the nature of the RPT that generally required conversation openers (external utterances) before making speech acts. As with the DCT results, the RPT data revealed that the NSE group employed external modifications more than the other two groups, and that the ESL group employed external modifications slightly more than the EFL group. However, no significant differences were found between the groups ($p > 0.05$).

In terms of the overall external modifications employed by the participants, the results obtained from the RPT and DCT data analysis can be summarised as follows:

- The DCT and RPT results revealed that the NSE and ESL groups employed significantly more external modifiers than the EFL group. The Chi-square tests also

revealed that there were no statistically significant differences between the NSE and ESL groups in their use of external modifiers ($p < 0.05$);

- The non-native groups, especially the EFL group, tended to combine more than one external modifier in a single request, primarily *linguistic devices* with *grounders*, compared with the native group.

Based on the above DCT and RPT results, the analysis of external modifiers, and the differences between the groups in the following subsections focus on three aspects: the absence of external modifiers in requests, the use of linguistic devices, and the combination of more than one modifier in one request.

4.4.2 External modifications, based on degree of imposition in requests

The impact of the degree of imposition on external modifications requires further examination. For the sake of clarity, as illustrated in the following tables and figures, in terms of the external modifications, the categories with the lowest frequencies, namely *head, disarmer, imposition minimiser, sweeteners,* and *promise of reward*, are combined and presented in one column under the label 'Others'. As previously, the DCT results are presented first, followed by those of the RPT.

Table 4.38. Impact of the degree of imposition on the external modifications in the DCT.

		EXTERNAL MODIFICATIONS %						Total No.
		No modifications	Linguistic devices	Pre-request	Grounder	Others	More than one modification	
Low	EFL	33.3	40	0	4.9	5.5	16.3	180
	ESL	20.5	54.2	1.5	3.3	9.4	14.1	180
	NSE	24.2	56.3	2.5	5	5.1	6.9	120
High	EFL	28	38.5	1.7	11.1	1.4	19.3	360
	ESL	12.2	50.9	7	12.2	0.3	17.4	360
	NSE	12.5	59.2	5	9.3	0	14	240
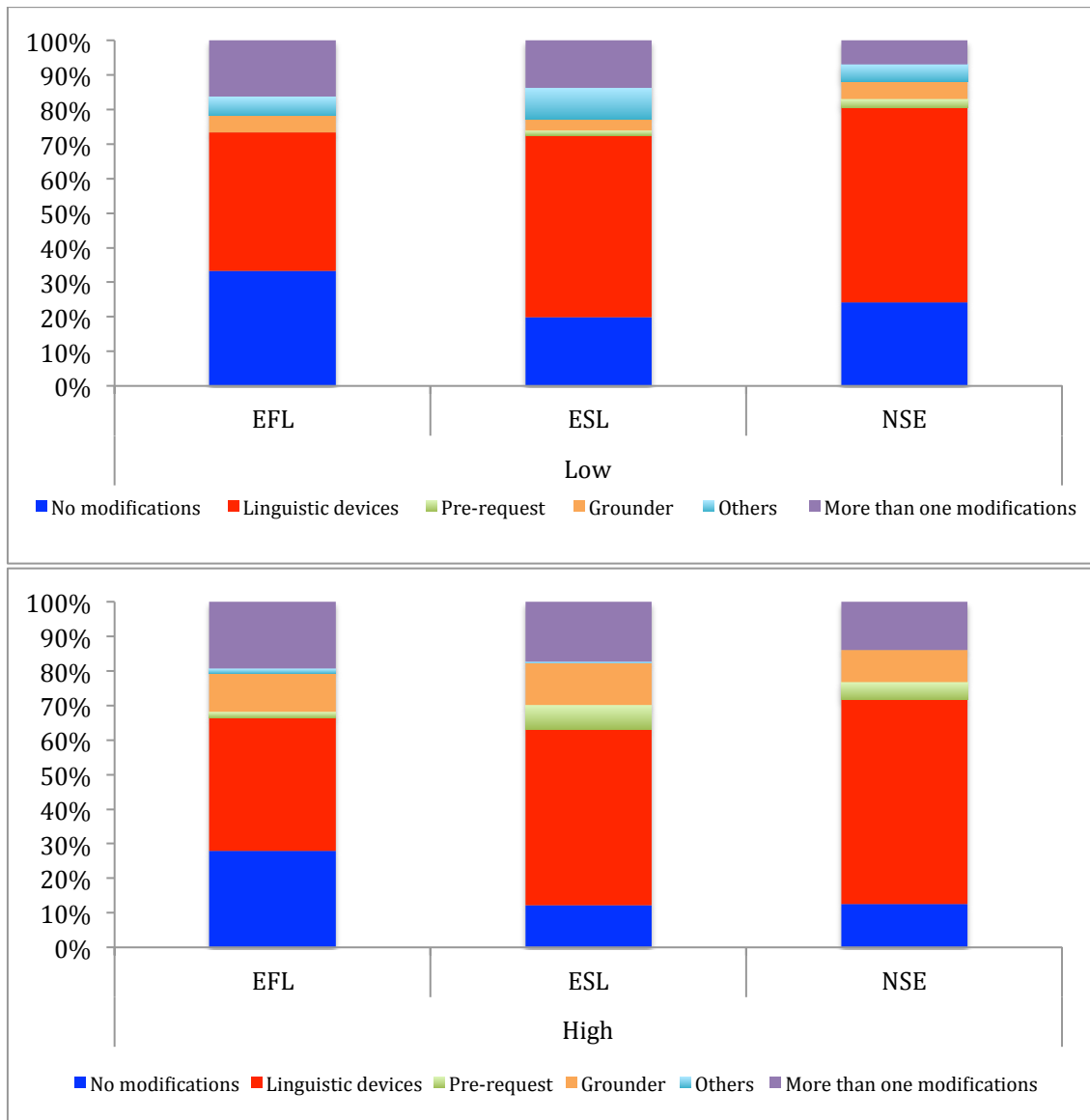
Figure 4.34. Impact of the degree of imposition on the external modifications in the DCT.

The results relating to the use of external modifications revealed that all of the groups were sensitive to the degree of imposition when making high imposition requests. For instance, all of the groups employed a greater number of diverse external modifications, and largely employed more than one external modification within their requests, compared to their low impositions requests. Requests that did not involve external modifications were also relatively more frequent in the low imposition requests of all of the groups. However, statistically significant differences between the two degrees of imposition were found only in the ESL and NSE groups ($p < 0.05$), which meant that the EFL group were the less

considerate, since they did not significantly employ more external modifiers when the degree of imposition increased. The following table and figure present the RPT data regarding the impact of the degree of imposition on the participants' use of external modifications.

Table 4.39. Impact of the degree of imposition on the external modifications in the RPT.

		EXTERNAL MODIFICATIONS %						Total No.
		No modifications	Linguistic devices	Pre-request	Grounder	Others	More than one modification	
Low	EFL	9.8	47.1	1.9	4.9	12.7	23.6	60
	ESL	8.3	42.7	8	6.4	12.7	21.9	60
	NSE	4.5	53	4.5	10	8	20	40
High	EFL	5.7	46.7	8.3	9.2	1.4	28.7	120
	ESL	0	46.3	9.85	16.85	2.5	26.3	120
	NSE	0	55	9.8	12.5	0	22.7	80

180
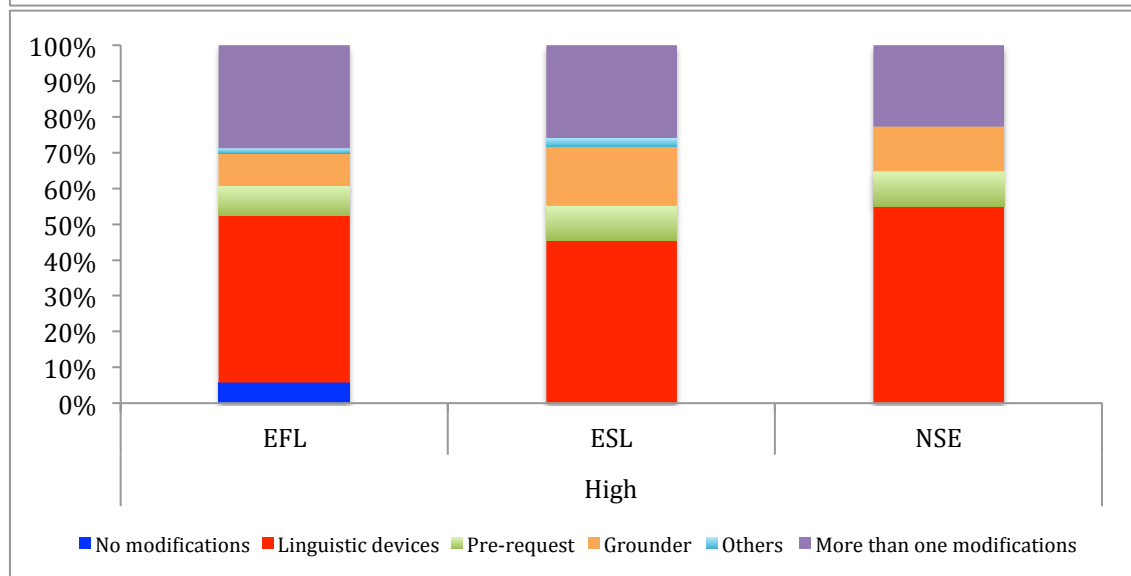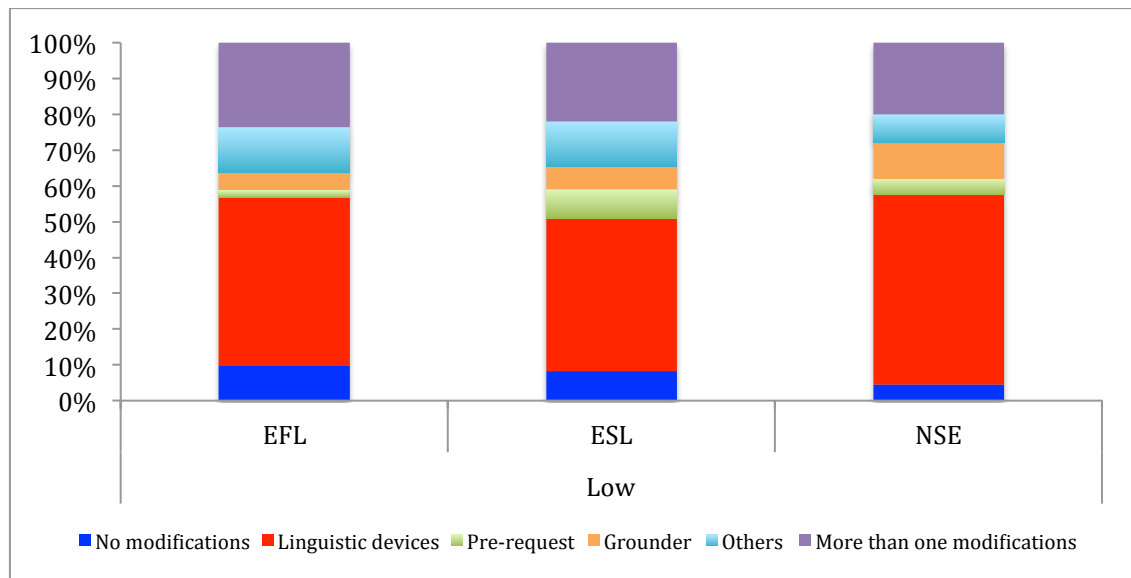
Figure 4.35. Impact of the degree of imposition on the external modifications in the RPT.

The RPT results suggested that all of the groups were relatively sensitive to the degree of imposition when making high imposition requests. Indeed, requests that did not involve external modifications were relatively more frequent in the low imposition requests than in the high imposition requests. However, as with the DCT results, statistically significant differences were only found in the RPT data between the two degrees of imposition for the ESL and NSE groups ($p < 0.05$). Thus, the results of this subsection suggested that the ESL and NSE groups employed significantly more external modifiers in their high imposition requests.

4.4.3 External modifications, based on interlocutor status

Since the role of interlocutor status (lower/equal/higher) on the participants' external modifications requires further investigation, this subsection presents the DCT data in relation to this variable, providing the results of the data analysis in the following table and figure.

Table 4.40. Impact of interlocutor status on the external modifications in the DCT.

		EXTERNAL MODIFICATIONS %						Total No.
		No modifications	Linguistic devices	Pre-request	Grounder	Others	More than one modification	
Lower	EFL	34.4	34.4	1.1	3.8	12.4	13.9	180
	ESL	26.7	51.1	5	0	10	7.2	180
	NSE	35	45	2.5	7.2	4.2	6.1	120
Equal	EFL	31.6	41.1	0.5	7.8	0	19	180
	ESL	11.7	61.7	4.4	12.2	0	10	180
	NSE	12.5	70	0	0	7.8	9.7	120
Higher	EFL	22.2	40.3	1.1	12.4	0	24	180
	ESL	10	43.3	5	12.2	3.8	25.7	180
	NSE	5.5	56.7	7.5	14.4	0	15.9	120
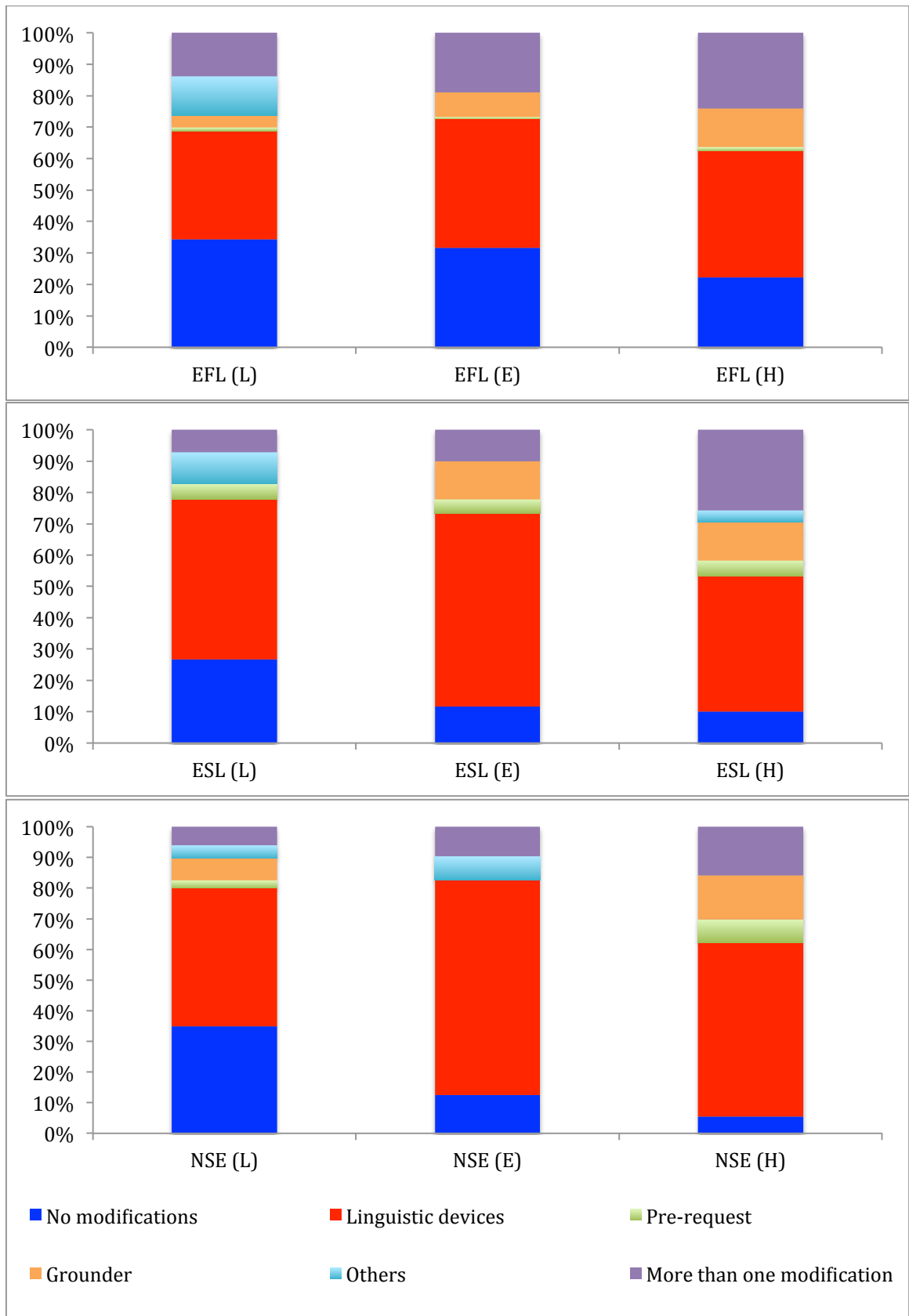
Figure 4.36. Impact of interlocutor status on the external modifications in the DCT.

The results demonstrated that the groups employed external modifiers differently in their request strategies when speaking to individuals of different statuses. They all employed relatively more external modifications when making requests of equal and higher status individuals, as requests that did not involve modifications were more frequent for all of the groups in their requests addressed to individuals of lower status. Furthermore, all of the groups employed more external modifications in their requests addressed to higher status interlocutors than in their requests made of equal and lower status interlocutors. In this regard, statistically significant differences were found for all of the groups ($p < 0.05$), suggesting that this factor had a significant impact on the participants' use of external modifications. The following table and figure present the findings of the RPT data relating to the participants' use of external modifications, depending on interlocutor status.

Table 4.41. Impact of interlocutor status on the external modifications in the RPT.

		EXTERNAL MODIFICATIONS %						Total No.
		No modifications	Linguistic devices	Pre-request	Grounder	Others	More than one modification	
Lower	EFL	7.9	40.5	1.8	1.8	23	25	60
	ESL	13.5	35	5	13	15.5	18	60
	NSE	7	45	14.4	12	11.6	10	40
Equal	EFL	7.9	46.1	1.8	12.5	11.7	20	60
	ESL	0	51.3	5	13	14.1	16.6	60
	NSE	0	57	7	12	5	19	40
Higher	EFL	6.9	50.6	13	9.5	0	20	60
	ESL	0	51.3	7.9	13	0	27.8	60
	NSE	0	61	0	12	0	27	40
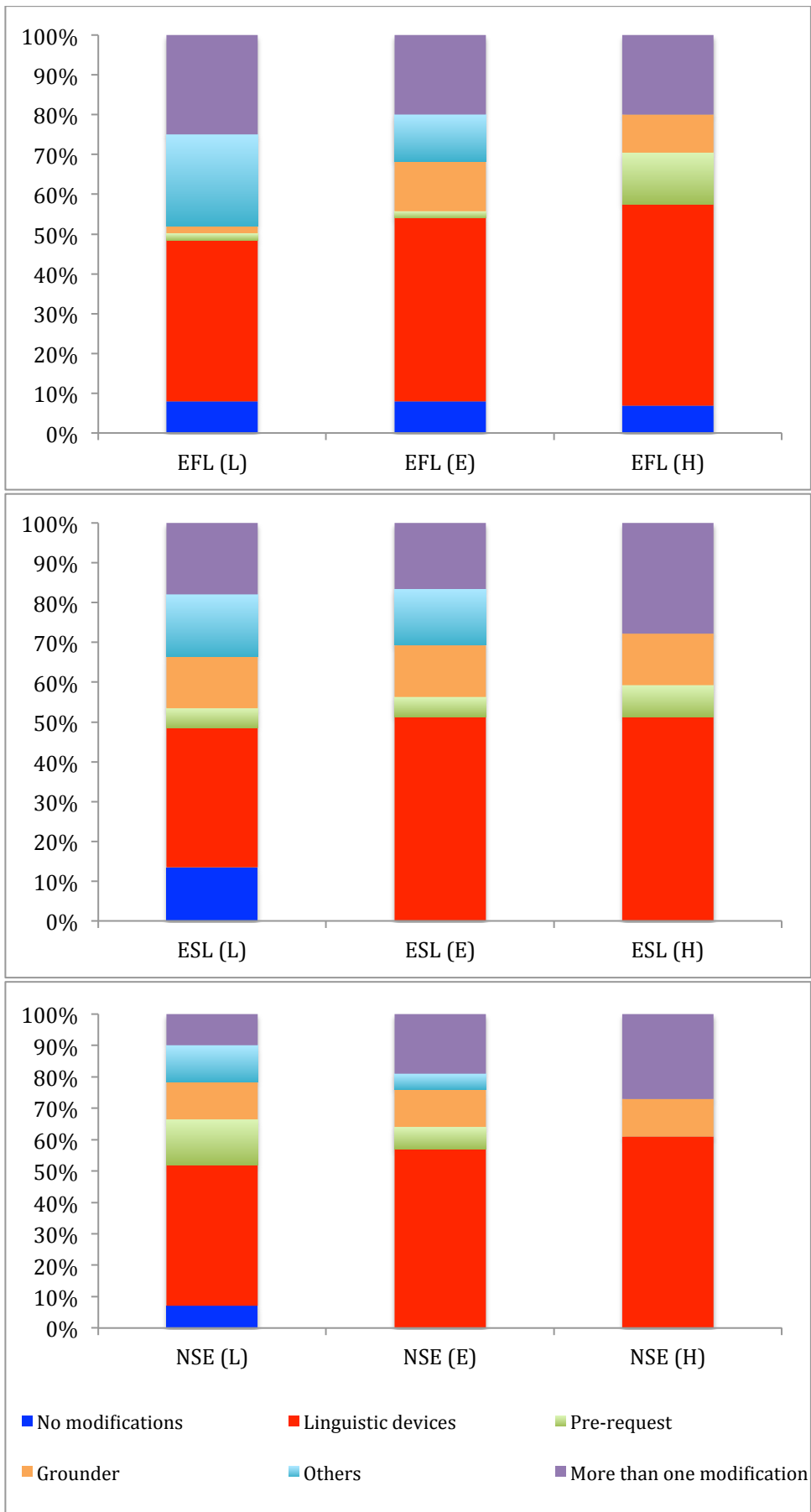
Figure 4.37. Impact of interlocutor status on the external modifications in the RPT.

The RPT results also revealed that all of the groups employed more external modifications when making requests of equal and higher status individuals. Likewise, the number of requests that did not involve modifications was higher in all of the groups in requests addressed to individuals of lower status. However, statistically significant differences were observed only between the ESL and NSE groups ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, the results of the DCT and RPT can be summarised as follows:

- The data strongly suggested that all of the groups tended to employ more external modifiers with individuals of a higher social status. This was statistically significant in the DCT and RPT results for the ESL and NSE groups, but only for the DCT results in the EFL group.

4.4.4 External modifications, based on length of time spent learning English

The following table and figure illustrate the results of the DCT data analysis with respect to the role played by the length of time the participants had spent learning English on their use of external modifications.

Table 4.42. External modifications of the non-native groups in the DCT, based on the length of time spent learning English.

		EXTERNAL MODIFICATIONS %						Total No.
		No modifications	Linguistic devices	Pre-request	Grounder	Others	More than one modification	
Less than 2ys	EFL	26	46.2	0	0	7.3	20.5	72
	ESL	17.7	55.6	3.4	0.4	7.3	15.6	261
2-4ys	EFL	32	34.7	1.9	16.2	0	15.2	468
	ESL	14.6	50	5.9	16	0.5	13	279
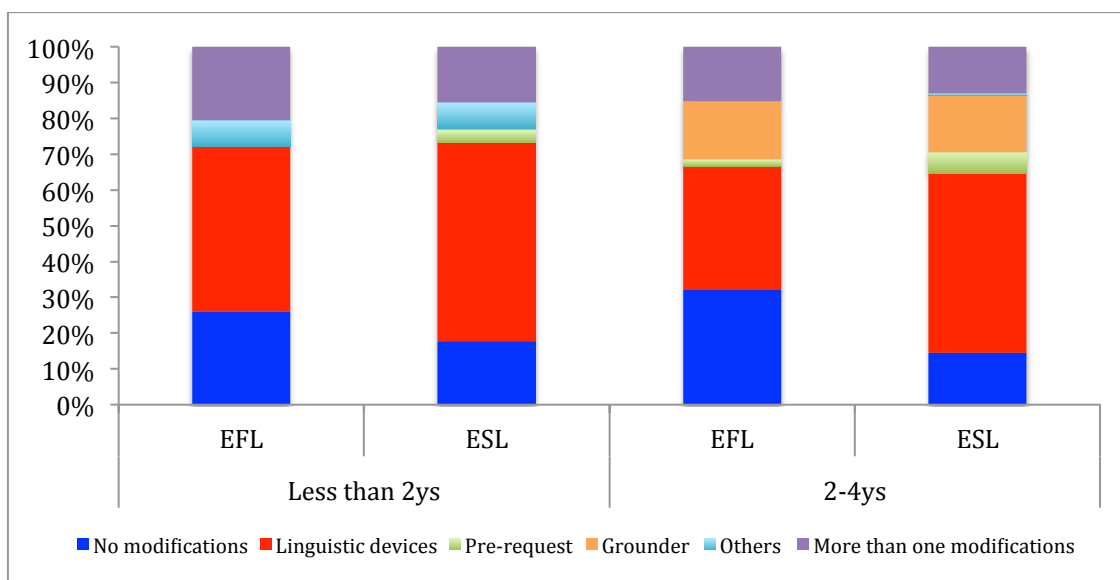
Figure 4.38. External modifications of the non-native groups in the DCT, based on the length of time spent learning English.

As illustrated above, the EFL results regarding external modifiers differed from those of the ESL group, since, in contrast with the ESL group, the EFL subgroup, who had spent a longer period of time studying English, employed slightly fewer external modifiers. Hence, the length of time spent learning English had not enhanced their use of external modifiers. Nonetheless, the data suggested that this factor slightly influenced the ESL group's pragmatic competence in using external modifiers. However, no significant increase was observed in the ESL participants' use of internal modifications, among those who had spent a longer period of time learning English ($p > 0.05$). The following table and figure present the RPT data regarding the impact of the length of time spent learning English on the non-native participants' use of external modifications.

Table 4.43. External modifications of the non-native groups in the RPT, based on the length of time spent learning English.

| | | EXTERNAL MODIFICATIONS % | | | | | | Total No. |
		No modifications	Linguistic devices	Pre-request	Grounder	Others	More than one modification	
Less than 2ys	EFL	8.8	51	2.5	2.5	11	24.2	36
	ESL	8.4	36	1.5	17.7	18.4	18	72
2-4ys	EFL	7	43.7	7.5	13	0	28.8	144
	ESL	0	51.3	14.5	7.9	0	26.3	108

186
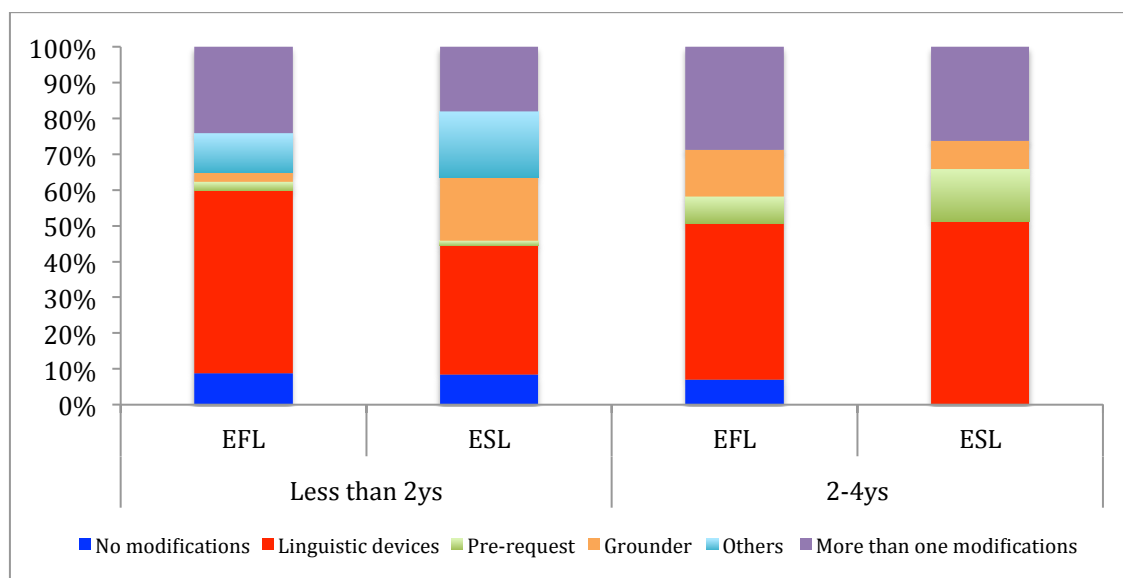
Figure 4.39. External modifications of the non-native groups in the RPT, based on the length of time spent learning English.

The RPT results relating to external modifiers revealed that the EFL participants who had studied English for a longer period of time employed almost the same number of external modifiers as those who had been learning English for a shorter period of time. This finding confirmed that the length of time spent learning English had no influence on the EFL group's external modifiers. However, a significant increase was noted in the rate of external modifications employed by the ESL participants who had spent a longer period of time learning English ($p < 0.05$).

4.4.5 External modifications based on ESL group's intensity of communication with native speakers of English

The following table and diagram display the DCT data analysis results to illustrate the ESL participants' intensity of communication with native speakers, and their effect on the acquisition of external modifications.

Table 4.44. External modifications of the ESL groups in the DCT, based on intensity of communication with native speakers.

		EXTERNAL MODIFICATIONS %						Total No.
		No modifications	Linguistic devices	Pre-request	Grounder	Others	More than one modification	
Less than 5 hours a week	ESL	20.3	46.6	4.9	8	12.2	8	297
5 hours a week or more	ESL	12.5	56.8	4.5	8.5	0	17.7	243
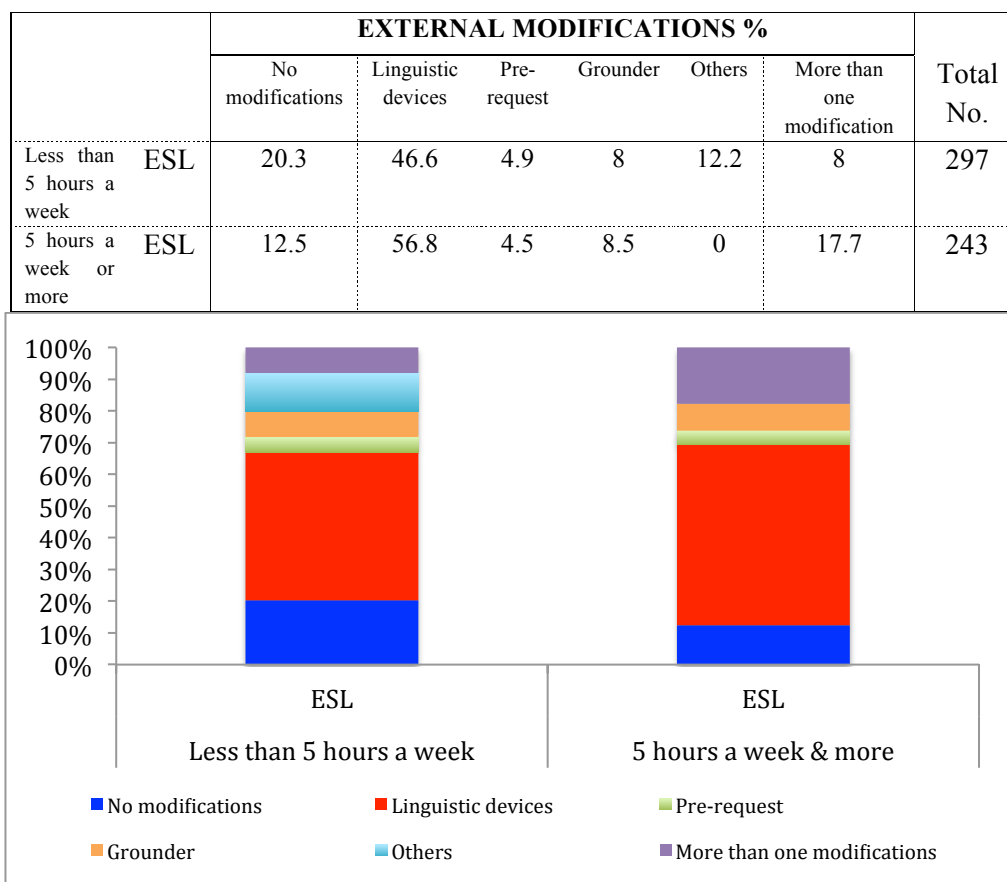
Figure 4.40. External modifications of the ESL groups in the DCT, based on intensity of communication with native speakers.

Furthermore, statistically significant differences were identified between the two subgroups in terms of the DCT results; specifically, the ESL group increased their use of external modifiers over time ($p < 0.05$). In addition, the RPT results below reveal a not statistically significant increase in ESL participants' use of external modifications ($p > 0.05$).

Table 4.45. External modifications of the non-native groups in the RPT, based on intensity of communication.

		EXTERNAL MODIFICATIONS %						Total No.
		No modifications	Linguistic devices	Pre-request	Grounder	Others	More than one modification	
Less than 5 hours a week	ESL	5.1	41.9	9.25	9.25	15.5	19	84
5 hours a week or more	ESL	2.7	46.5	8.2	16.6	0	26	96
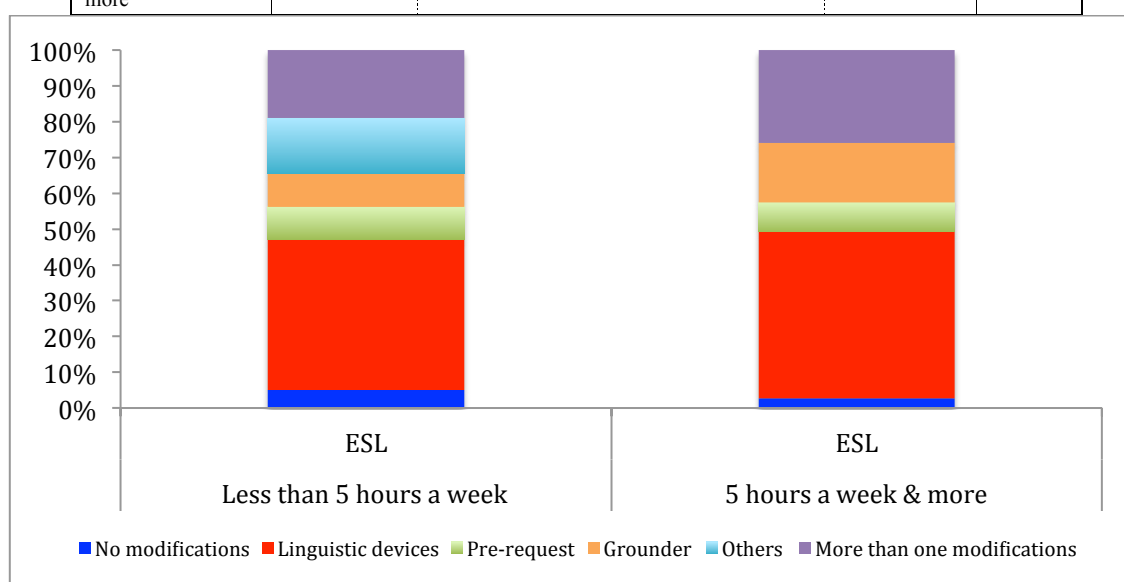
Figure 4.41. External modifications of the non-native groups in the RPT, based on intensity of communication.

Based on the results obtained from the data analysis highlighted in this section, we can confirm that although the intensity of communication does not impact on ESL participants' use of internal modifications (discussed in the previous section 4.2), it does influence their use of external modifications. The ESL group that communicated more frequently with native speakers reported an increase in the frequency of use of external modifications (although this increase was statistically significant in the DCT results only).

4.5   Summarising and Concluding Remarks

The DCT and RPT results clarify that the NSE group used direct strategies only in 7.5%-10.8% of their requests, with the majority of their requests 80.2%-85% using conventionally indirect strategies, and 4.2%-12.3% non-conventionally indirect ones (i.e.

hints). As detailed earlier, this confirms that conventionally indirect strategies (especially query preparation strategies) are judged the most appropriate request strategies by participants from the NSE speech community, a finding that correlates with the majority of previous studies (e.g. Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Cenoz & Valencia, 1996; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008; Faerch & Kasper, 1989; Hassall, 2001; House, 1989; House & Kasper, 1981; Hutz, 2006; Tanaka, 1988; Yu, 1999). Additionally, 93%-100% of NSE's direct requests included internal modifiers, 84%-92.8% of conventionally indirect strategies did so also, and only 47%-50% of non-conventionally indirect ones did. With regard to external modifications, 94.9%-100% of NSE directs requests included external modifiers, 83.3%-98.3% of conventionally indirect strategies did, whereas just 67.4%-94.7% of non-conventionally indirect ones did so. Therefore, the NSE group preferred to include external modifications (specifically linguistic devices and grounders) more often with direct requests, to mitigate the impact of direct requests on hearers.

With regard to the non-native participants' requests, although the ESL group used indirect strategies for around 80% of their DCT and RPT requests, extensively modifying their strategies, they were significantly more direct than the native group, as detailed in the previous sections. However, the ESL group's results did not diverge considerably from the NSE group's results; although the rates of modification were lower the patterns were similar. The RPT results also revealed that ESL speakers preferred internal and external modifications with direct requests rather than DCT results, thereby imitating native speaker patterns. Generally speaking, the ESL results have shown more similarities than differences with the NSE results. However, from the EFL results, it is apparent that these learners were notably more direct, also using remarkably fewer internal and external modifications with their direct requests relative to the other two groups. Therefore, it can be generalised that the EFL group is less competent than the ESL group at performing requests in English, since the former group used more direct requests carrying a greater threat to the face of hearers, impeding their

desire to be free from imposition. The EFL group also used fewer internal and external modifiers to soften their requests. However, it is noteworthy that the EFL group shares some similarities with both the other two groups (ESL and NSE groups); the rates are significantly lower but the patterns are similar in several situations, as detailed in the previous subsections. Hence, we can conclude that the ESL participants' requests were more similar to those of NSE (the control group) in terms of directness strategies, politeness strategies and adjuncts to requests than those of the EFL group (see Chapter Six for more discussion of these results).

5 Chapter Five: Analysis of Refusals

Following a similar format to chapter Four, which analysed the speech act of requests, this chapter will examine and compare how the three groups performed the speech act of refusal. In order to facilitate this, a total of 2,160 refusals were collected from the three groups using (1) DCTs, which yielded 1440 refusals, and (2) RPTs, generating 720 refusals. The collected data was then categorised, as illustrated in Chapter Three, using Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz's (1990, pp. 72-73) taxonomy. In their classification, refusals are divided into two main categories: (1) a head act of refusal; and (2) adjuncts to refusals, as shown in the two examples below:

- *Hey, this sounds really interesting and I would really like to come, **but I can't**.*

- *Thanks so much for your invitation, but **I have other plans that day.***

The underlined and bolded parts of the two utterances indicate the head act, which is the actual refusal and is necessary in formulating the speech act of refusal. The head act can be realised through various structures (called *refusal strategies*), as was discussed in more detail in section 3.5, and will be briefly mentioned in the following section. On the other hand, the adjunct to the head act (the first part of the above examples) is a sentence (or more) used before or after the head act in order to mitigate, modify, soften, or justify the refusal. Accordingly, the analysis in this chapter will focus on these two elements in detail, in separate sections: participants' refusal strategies are discussed in section 5.1, and the adjuncts to refusals in section 5.2. Finally, the chapter will end (section 5.3) with a summary of both elements, further discussion, and brief concluding remarks.

5.1 Pragmatic differences in the use of refusal strategies

Refusals have been called a "major cross-cultural sticking point for many non-native speakers" (Beebe et al., 1990, p. 56), where pragmatic failures in refusals are very likely to

lead to unintended offence or breakdowns in communication due to their face-threatening nature. People from different cultures usually perform refusals using different, specific refusal strategies accompanied by culture-oriented types of hesitation, apology, repair, and accounts in order to mitigate the impact of refusals (Pomerantz, 1984). As already noted, refusal strategies are at the core of the speech act of refusal, thus this section will examine how they are used in the collected data. It will start by briefly recapping how the refusal strategies were categorised in this study, which employs the Beebe *et al.* (1990) taxonomy of refusal strategies, as follows:

Table 5.1 The refusal strategies and examples.

REFUSAL STRATEGIES	EXAMPLES
1. Performative	• *I refuse to give you my book – I decline your request*
2. Non-performative	• *No – I can't go – I don't want to drink*
3. Regret	• *I'm really sorry that I won't be able to... I'm afraid I'm not – I regret to…*
4. Wish	• *I wish I could help – I wish to do so but mmmmm*
5. Excuse/Reason/Explanation	• *I have to visit my father – My car is broken*
6. Alternatives	• *I can send my driver to pick up your children… I could do it another time.*
7. Principle/Philosophy	• *I never drink right after dinner – One can't be too careful!*
8. Dissuading	• *It's an unwise thing to do – I never expected this from you*
9. Avoidance	• (*Topic switch, joke, postponement, or hedge*)

This taxonomy classifies the head act into nine strategies: the first two strategies are *direct*, whereas the remaining strategies are *indirect*. According to Beebe *et al.* (1990), these refusal strategies are what people of different cultures and languages commonly use to refuse, with different frequencies and preferences of use expected within cultures. Unlike the request strategies presented in the previous chapter, the refusal strategies above are not ordered based on a scale of directness; rather, they represent the different ways in which speakers refuse directly or indirectly. Thus, this section and its subsections will focus on the differences in the

three groups' choices of refusal strategies, as well as a comparison of the rates of direct and indirect refusals.

In order to present the refusal strategy results according to the research questions posed, the current section will be divided into five subsections. First, the following subsection (4.1.1) will present the overall results for the three groups' refusal strategies, which will then be investigated in more detail in subsection 4.1.2, based on the types of eliciting speech acts (i.e. requests, invitations, and offers), as refusals were differently formulated, in terms of directness and politeness. As with the results for requests presented in the previous chapter, the overall results for refusals will follow in subsection 4.1.3, with an investigation of how the interlocutor's status (lower/equal/higher), constrained by the given refusal scenarios, affects the groups' formulation of refusals, in order to identify how aware the non-native groups are of the role of this sociopragmatic factor. The results for the non-native groups will then be re-examined in subsection 4.1.4 based on the length of time spent learning English, in order to determine how the duration of English learning affects their acquisition of pragmatic competence in formulating refusals. Finally, the results related to the ESL group's intensity of communication with NSE and its influence on their responses will be discussed in the final subsection (4.1.5).

5.1.1 Overall results for groups' refusal strategies

Table 5.2 below shows the overall results of the DCT data analysis, in percentages, for the three groups' refusal strategies, while Figure 5.1 presents these in a more visual form.

Table 5.2: Overall frequency (in percentages) for the three groups' use of DCT refusal strategies.

REFUSAL STRATEGIES	EFL %	ESL %	NSE %
Performative	0	0	0
Non-performative	**50.7**	**39.3**	**40.8**
Regret	10.5	9.9	11.2
Wish	2.2	4.8	3.6
Excuse/Explanation	**27**	**34.3**	**36.9**
Alternatives	6	8.6	4.7
Principle/Philosophy	1.8	0.8	0.6
Dissuading	0.7	1.3	1.4
Avoidance	1.1	1	0.8
Total No.	540	540	360
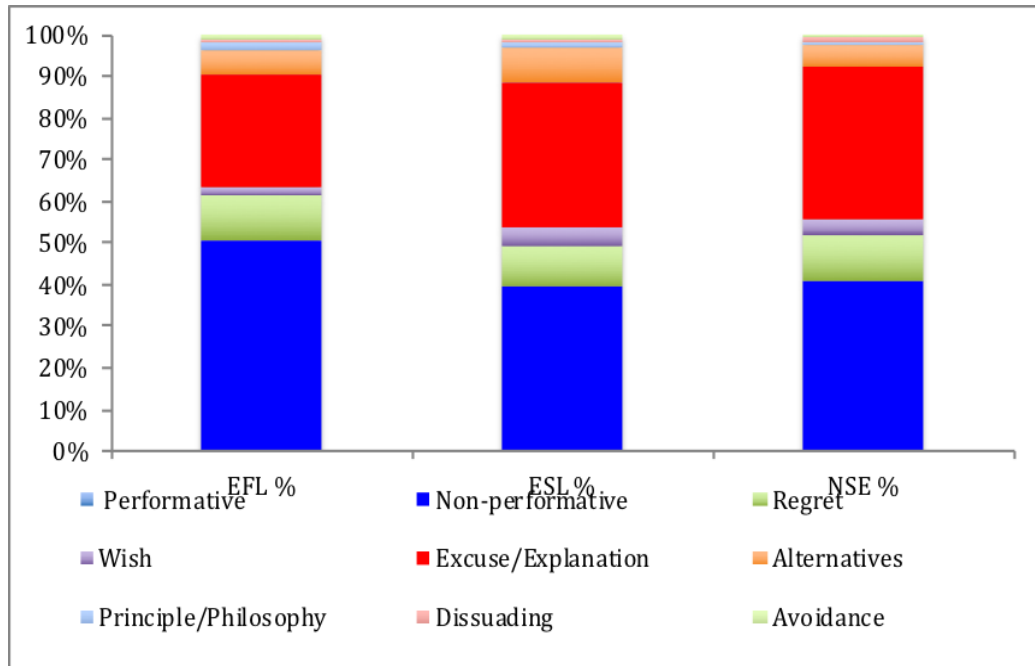
Figure 5.1. Refusal strategies - the DCT results.

The results above illustrate the refusal strategies used by each group, and also reveal similarities and differences between the groups in this regard. First, it is worth noting that not a single participant in this study used a *performative* strategy, such as "*I refuse to help*". This

may suggest that the *performative* refusal strategy in Beebe *et al.*'s (1990) model may need to be reviewed, since it does not appear in this large data set. It could be that the DCTs/RPTs did not allow participants to use that option, and they might use it in natural speech. Nevertheless, in addition to the absence of the *performative* category in the collected data, it is clear from the above results that all groups relied heavily on two main forms of refusal strategy: (1) *non-performative* (direct refusals), and (2) *excuses/explanations* (indirect refusals). As the results above show, refusing *directly* using non-performative strategies, and *indirectly* using excuses or explanations as refusals, accounted for approximately three quarters of the three groups' refusal strategies (this will be explained in more detail shortly). Regarding the other refusal strategies used, *regrets* and *alternatives* (indirect refusal strategies) were, respectively, the third and fourth most used options by all groups, while the remaining four refusal strategies (i.e. wish, principle/philosophy, dissuading, and avoidance) were rarely used. These findings suggest common patterns in the use of refusal strategies among the groups; the following table (5.3) shows, in descending order, the frequencies of the DCT refusal strategies used across the groups.

Table 5.3. The ordering of refusal strategies across the groups.

EFL	ESL	NSE
Non-performative	Non-performative	Non-performative
Excuse/Explanation	Excuse/Explanation	Excuse/Explanation
Regret	Regret	Regret
Alternatives	Alternatives	Alternatives
Wish	Wish	Wish
Principle/Philosophy	Dissuading	Dissuading
Avoidance	Avoidance	Avoidance
Dissuading	Principle/Philosophy	Principle/Philosophy

Based on the above, it can be clearly concluded that the order of use of refusal strategies was similar for all groups in regard to most preferred main forms. The main

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interpretation here is, as mentioned above, that the three groups mostly exhibited the same general pattern, whereby the *non-performative* strategy was the most used form, the *excuse/explanation* the second most used, *regret* the third, and *alternative* the fourth. In general, the results above demonstrate more pragmalinguistic similarities than differences between groups in terms of their use of the main forms of refusal strategy; thus, the analysis of refusal strategies must focus on differences between groups in terms of the level of directness in using the speech act of refusal to further investigate this issue.

As illustrated in Table 5.2, the data demonstrates that the EFL group made heavy use of *non-performative* strategies (e.g. *No, I can't,* or *I'm not able*) in just over half of their refusals (50.7%), which is significantly higher than those in the ESL (39.3%) and NSE (40.8%) groups. Using chi-square testing, a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.01$) was found between the EFL group and the NSE group, and also between the EFL group and the ESL group, in terms of their use of the direct strategy (i.e. *non-performative*) in comparison to all of the indirect strategies combined. This implies that the EFL group in the present study could not replicate certain patterns in refusals compared to the ESL group. With regard to the level of directness in refusals, interlanguage research on refusals, as noted in Chapter Two (section 2.9), tends to suggest that refusing someone directly without mitigating the effect of the refusal is considered inappropriate (especially refusing requests) in many cultures, including English- and Arabic-speaking cultures. In some cases, such as refusing offers or invitations, the use of direct refusal strategies is reported to be more common and tolerated, which may explain why it is still the more frequently used strategy, even for the NSE group (this will be discussed in the coming subsection).

On the other hand, the data suggests that the ESL group exhibited important differences from the EFL group in terms of directness, as they not only used *direct refusal* strategies significantly less than the EFL participants, they were also very close to the NSE group in this regard. Using chi-square testing, no statistically significant difference between

the ESL and the NSE groups was found ($p > 0.05$) in regard to the overall use of the main strategies. This generally suggests that the ESL participants closely replicated native patterns of refusals and demonstrated a more pragmatic understanding of refusal strategies than the EFL group. The pragmatic differences between the EFL and ESL groups in terms of the directness of refusals could be attributed to several factors, such as differences in learning environments, differences in the schoolbooks used in Saudi Arabia and the UK, or in the exposure to authentic language input. With regard to learning environment, previous studies have found that the refusal strategies used by learners studying in an L1 context become more native-like over time than those of learners in L2 environments (see Bella, 2011; Sasaki & Beamer, 2002), which the DCT results presented thus far appear to support.

In regard to the RPT results, the table and graph below illustrate the refusal strategies of the three groups:

Table 5.4: Overall frequency (in percentages) of the three groups' use of RPT refusal strategies.

REFUSAL STRATEGIES	EFL %	ESL %	NSE %
Performative	0	0	0
Non-performative	48.3	36.7	37.5
Regret	9.4	9.4	10
Wish	4.5	6.1	5
Excuse/Explanation	29.4	33.9	35.7
Alternatives	3.9	8.9	8.3
Principle/Philosophy	1.1	1.1	0.8
Dissuading	0.5	1.7	1.1
Avoidance	2.8	2.2	1.6
Total No.	270	270	180
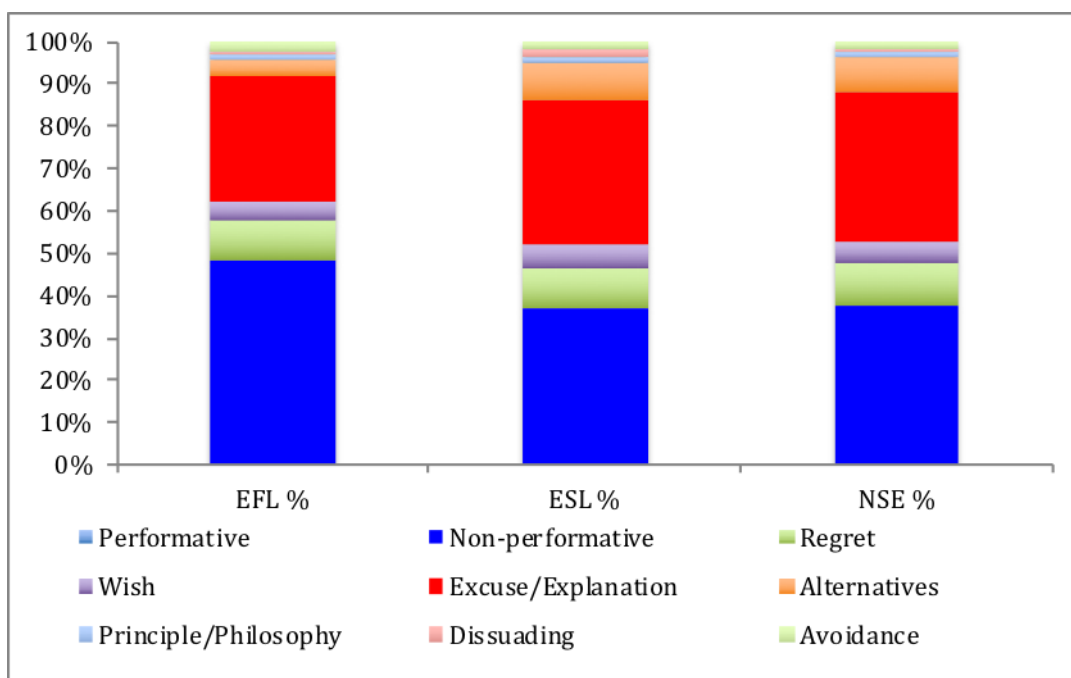
Figure 5.2 Refusal strategies for role-play results.

The RPT results are broadly similar to those for the DCT refusals, as participants demonstrated similar trends, patterns, and orders of use. The EFL group, again, was the most direct, since they used the direct *non-performative* strategy in approximately half of their refusals, compared to 36.7% of the ESL responses, and 37.5% of the NSE responses. Using chi-square testing, a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.01$) was found between the EFL group and the NSE group, as well as between the EFL group and the ESL group (the use of the *non-performative* direct strategy was tested against all the indirect strategies combined). On the other hand, no statistically significant difference was found between the ESL and the NSE groups ($p > 0.05$) in regard to the overall use of the main strategies in RPTs, which is in line with the results for the DCTs.

When comparing the RPT and the DCT data, it can be seen that participants were slightly less direct in RPTs than in DCTs (see the use of the *non-performative* strategy between Tables 5.2 and 5.4). However, no statistically significant differences were found between the DCT and the RPT results in terms of the use of direct and indirect refusals in the three groups ($p > 0.05$). In any case, this slight decrease in the use of direct refusals, as shown

in the RPT results, may be due to the nature of the RPTs used in this study, which involved face-to-face interaction and may have led participants to be less direct than in other DCT situations.

Nevertheless, it can be concluded that the above results contribute to answering the main research questions of this study: 'How do Saudi ESL and EFL learners and British NSE produce speech acts of refusal? And, to what extent does each non-native group produce refusals similar to those of NSE (the control group) in terms of directness strategies?' With regard to the refusal strategies in the head act, all groups relied heavily upon *non-performative* (direct strategy) and *excuses/explanations* (indirect strategy) as the main forms of refusals. *Regrets* and *alternatives* (indirect refusal strategy) were, respectively, the third and fourth most frequently used options by the participants, while all groups rarely used the remaining four refusal strategies. Although the EFL group shares similar main patterns with the other two groups (with direct refusal being the most frequent), they were significantly more direct than the other groups. This seems to suggest that the ESL group was better able to replicate native-like refusal strategies than the EFL group.

As mentioned in the literature review, although the speech act of refusal has been the subject of increased interest in pragmatic and sociolinguistic research in a wide range of languages and cultures (e.g. Abdul Sattar et al., 2010; Al-Eryani, 2007; Al-Issa, 2003; Al-Kahtani, 2005; Aliakbari & Changizi, 2012; Allami & Naeimi, 2011; Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1991; Beebe et al., 1990; Chang, 2009; Chen, 2006; Felix-Brasdefer, 2004; Gass & Houck, 1999; Henstock, 2003; Ikoma & Shimura, 1994; Li, 2007; Liao & Bresnahan, 1996; Nelson et al., 2002; Ramos, 1991; Sadeghi & Savojbolaghchilar, 2011; Stevens, 1993), most studies have examined the cross-cultural use of refusal strategies, and how *pragmatic transfer* from L1 affects the production of refusal strategies in L2. Few studies on refusals have explicitly investigated and compared the pragmatic competence of L2 learners in using L1 refusals. The main contribution of the current study is in studying the use of refusal strategies

across different groups of English language learners, and identifying the apparent lack of effect L1 has on the results.

Following the above broad findings regarding use of refusal strategies across the groups, the following subsections will deepen the analysis of the data in relation to the specific factors mentioned earlier. In the following subsection, the results will be re-examined based on the types of eliciting speech act (i.e. requests, invitations, and offers).

5.1.2 Refusal strategies based on types of eliciting speech act

Given their face-threatening nature, refusals often involve a long-negotiated sequence, and their form and content will vary depending on the eliciting speech act. In response to requests, invitations, or offers, refusals are usually *dispreferred*, and typically involve a certain degree of indirectness, vagueness, and adjunctive sentences (Levinson, 1983). In this regard, it is also expected that refusals would be expressed differently based on the type of initiating speech act (Beebe *et al.*, 1990). For example, refusing invitations and offers is generally considered to be less face-threatening than refusing requests (Beebe *et al.*, 1990) and, therefore, participants in this study were expected treat them differently.

As already mentioned, when coding the refusals based on the type of the eliciting speech act, those that were responses to *invitations* or *offers* were combined in one set, as they were produced almost identically by all groups with no statistically significant differences in terms of refusal strategies and adjuncts to refusals. However, refusals in response to *requests* were presented in another row, as they were significantly different from the first set. Therefore, it is important here to compare the pragmatic differences in the three groups' responses based on these two sets in order to determine whether one is more formal/direct than the other. Additionally, in order to simplify the presentation of tables, the first direct refusal strategy (i.e. *performative*) has been removed from all of the following tables, because, as shown in the previous section, it was not used at all by any of the groups. On the

other hand, the three least indirect strategies (i.e. principle/philosophy, dissuading, and avoidance) have been combined in a single column named 'Others' because they had the lowest frequency rates across all groups. The following table presents the differences in the DCT results between the groups when refusing invitations/offers and refusing requests, and the subsequent graph provides a visual representation of the results:

Table 5.5. DCT refusal strategies based on the type of initiating speech act.

		REFUSAL STRATEGIES %						Total
		Non-Performative	Regret	Wish	Excuse/Explanation	Alternatives	Others	No.
Refusing Invitations & Offers	EFL	60.5	9.35	2.4	23.9	2	1.8	300
	ESL	48.4	7.4	3.65	35.15	4.75	0.55	300
	NSE	51.25	7	2	37.5	2.25	0	200
Refusing Requests	EFL	39.7	12.3	3.5	30.3	9.2	4.9	240
	ESL	27.7	11.7	5.6	34.6	13.7	6.6	240
	NSE	28.5	14.1	3.7	36.7	10	6.9	160
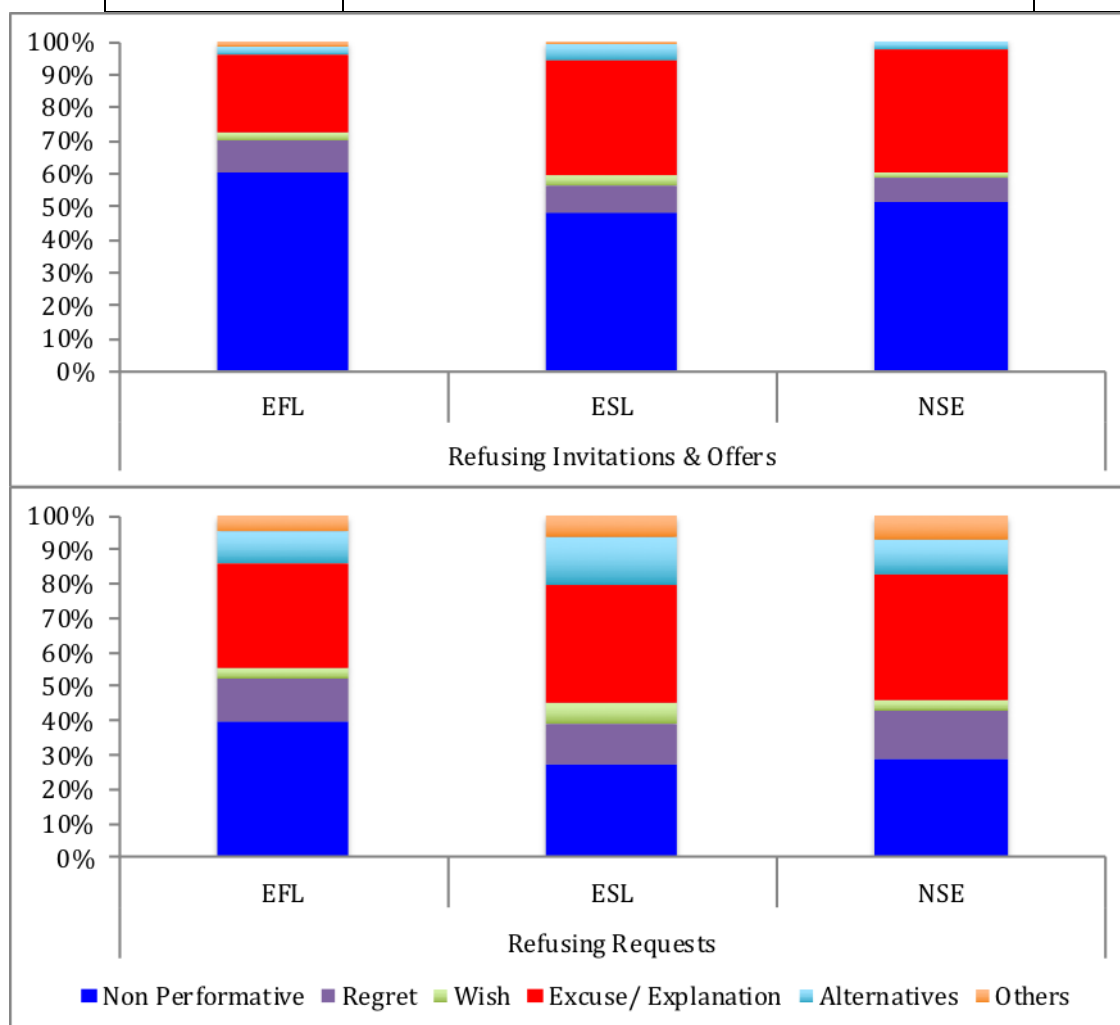
Figure 5.2. DCT refusal strategies based on the type of initiating speech act (in percentages).

It is clear from the above results that the three groups mostly exhibited the same general pattern in refusing both types of initiating speech act. Indeed, the results suggest that the *non-performative* strategy was the most used form, *excuse/explanation* the second, *regret* the third, and *alternative* the fourth. However, the results also demonstrate that each group refused *invitations* and *offers* differently from *requests,* in terms of directness. More specifically, all the groups used significantly more indirect strategies than direct ones when refusing requests than they did when refusing invitations and offers ($p <0.05$ for each group). The above results may be explained by the fact that the refusal of *requests* is generally thought to be more face-threatening than refusing *invitations* and *offers*, which also suggests that all groups were aware, to varying degrees, of the need to use different refusal strategies in response to different initiating speech acts.

When examining and comparing the directness levels in groups' refusal strategies in both contexts, it can be concluded that there is a difference between the EFL group and the other two groups. For example, the EFL group was more direct when refusing invitations and offers, as well as when refusing requests. Using a chi-square test, significant differences between the EFL group and the other two groups were found in regard to participants' refusals of invitations and offers ($p < 0.05$), as well as in their refusals of requests ($p < 0.05$). This is not altogether surprising given the overall results of the EFL group, as presented in the previous section. The above results also suggest that although the EFL group generally chose to use a different strategy based on the type of initiating speech act, they were not as close to the native participants as the ESL group. The results for the ESL and NSE groups in terms of refusal strategies and directness levels showed no statistically significant differences in both sets of refusals ($p > 0.05$), which further confirms that the ESL group pragmatically succeeded in varying their refusal strategies based on the type of the initiating speech act. The table and graph below illustrate whether the RPT results are in line with the DCT results.

Table 5.6. RPT refusal strategies based on the types of initiating speech act.

		REFUSAL STRATEGIES %						Total No.
		Non-Performative	Regret	Wish	Excuse/ Explanation	Alternatives	Others	
Refusing Invitations & Offers	EFL	59.5	9.85	2.9	21.9	3	2.8	180
	ESL	46.4	7.4	4.65	35.15	5.25	1.15	180
	NSE	48.75	7.5	0.5	39.9	2.75	0.5	120
Refusing Requests	EFL	40.7	11.8	3	32.3	8.2	3.9	90
	ESL	30.6	10.8	4.7	34	13.7	6.2	90
	NSE	29	12.6	3.2	36.2	12.5	6.5	60
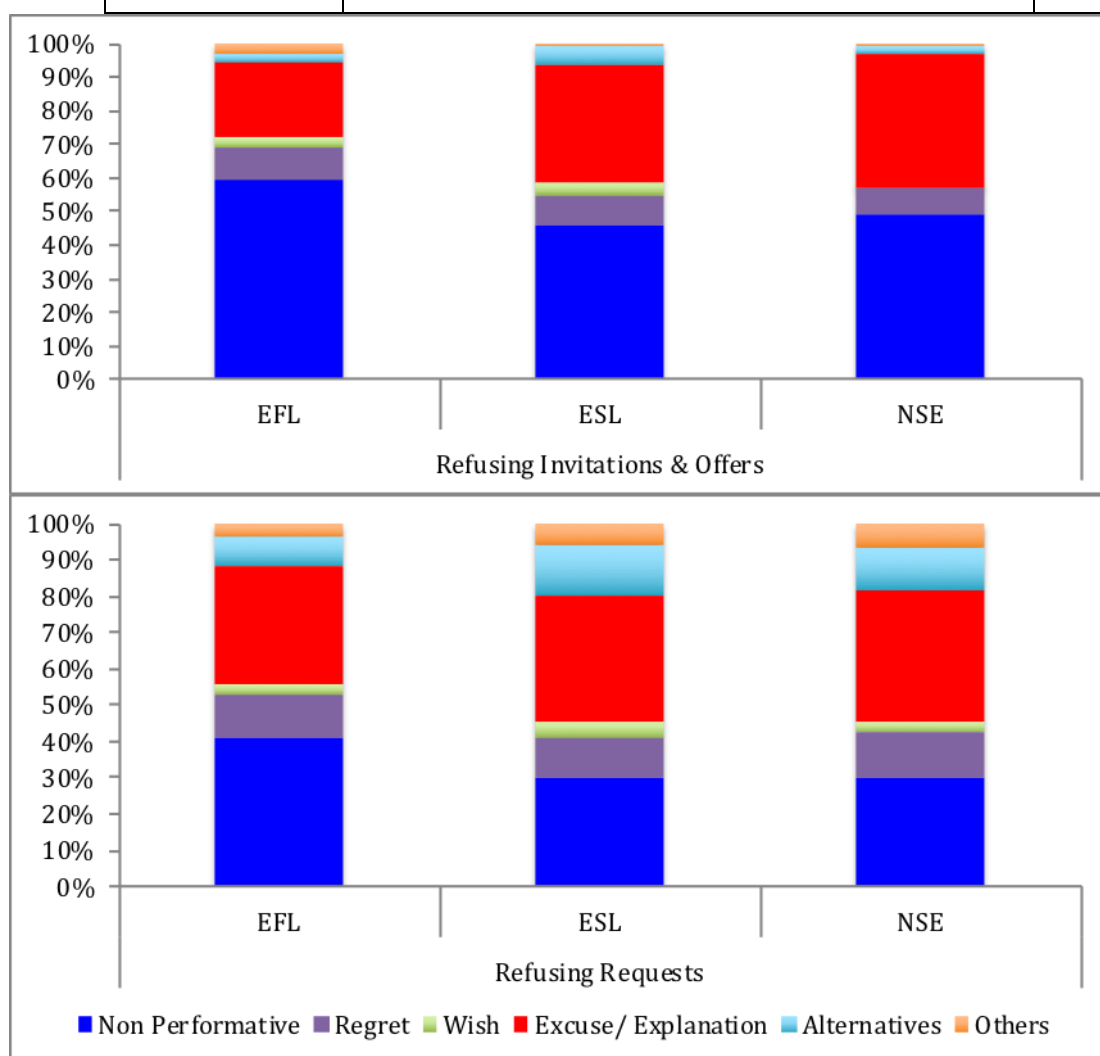
Figure 5.3. RPT refusal strategies based on the type of initiating speech act.

In line with the DCT results, the RPT data suggests that all the groups used significantly fewer direct strategies when refusing requests, and were more direct when refusing invitations and offers ($p < 0.05$ for each group). Furthermore, similar to the DCT results, some differences were found between the EFL group and the other two groups, where

the EFL group was more direct compared to the other two groups when refusing invitations and offers ($p < 0.05$). The EFL participants were also more direct than the other two groups when refusing requests ($p < 0.05$). The RPT results for the ESL and NSE groups in terms of directness norms in refusing were almost identical, and a chi-square test showed no statistically significant difference ($p > 0.05$) between the two groups. When comparing the RPT and the DCT data regarding refusal strategies, it appears that, as noted above, the findings were similar in terms of the frequency rates, and no statistically significant differences in the use of direct and indirect refusals were found between any of the groups across the two contexts ($p > 0.05$ each time).

Hence, the above DCT and RPT results help to answer the research questions: "How do Saudi ESL and EFL learners, and British NSEs produce the speech act of refusal addressed to requests, offers and invitations? Are there any differences between the three groups when making refusals addressed to requests, offers, and invitations?" Based on the above results, it can be concluded that all groups varied in their use of refusal strategies according to the type of initiating speech act, and that the differences between the two contexts for every group were statistically significant. Groups were significantly less direct when refusing requests in comparison to invitations and offers. However, the EFL group were still significantly more direct than the other two groups when refusing requests, and also when refusing invitations and offers. Finally, the results presented above show that ESL participants were better able to replicate the NSE strategies of refusing in both contexts, as there were no statistically significant differences in the use of direct and indirect refusals between the two groups in either context (p > 0.05).

5.1.3 Refusal strategies based on the interlocutor's status

The literature and the analysis presented in Chapter Four showed that the status of the interlocutor (i.e. lower, equal, or higher) can influence the formation and performance of

speech acts. Thus, the following table and graph will examine in more detail the effect of this factor on the participants' DCT refusal strategies:

Table 5.7. DCT refusal strategies based on the status of interlocutors.

		REFUSAL STRATEGIES %						Total
		Non-Performative	Regret	Wish	Excuse/ Explanation	Alternatives	Others	No.
Lower	EFL	39	10	1.7	29.3	13.9	6	180
	ESL	32.7	9.4	3.3	29.7	18.4	6.5	180
	NSE	34.2	13.3	0	33.3	12.5	6.6	120
Equal	EFL	57.2	9.4	3.9	27.2	1.1	1.1	180
	ESL	41.1	5.5	6.6	36.8	7.8	2.2	180
	NSE	42.3	5	6.7	40.5	4.5	0	120
Higher	EFL	55	11.7	1.7	26.6	1.1	3.8	180
	ESL	43.9	11.1	4.4	36.7	2.7	1.1	180
	NSE	46.5	10.2	1.7	39.1	0	2.5	120
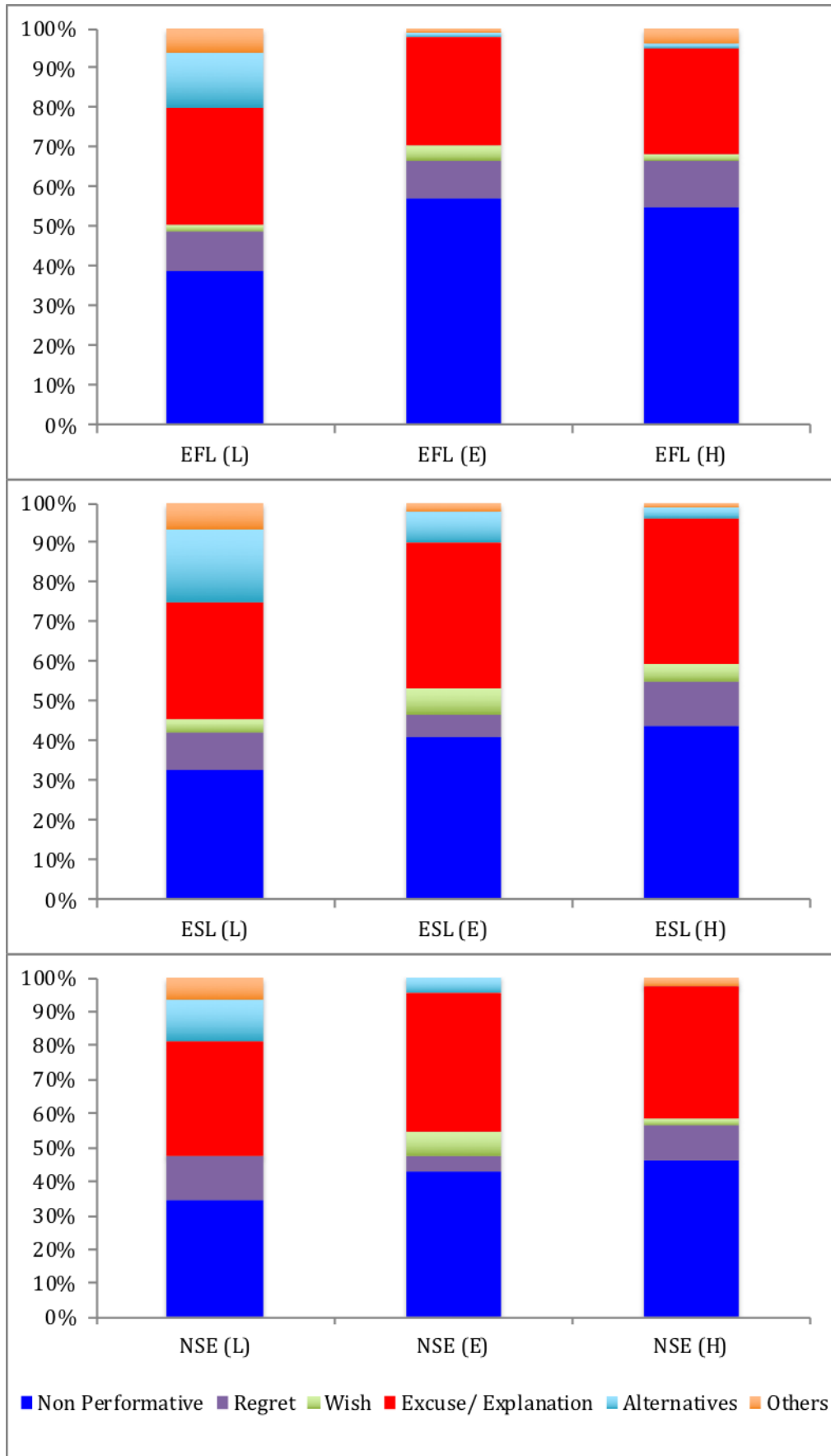
Figure 5.4. DCT refusal strategies based on the status of interlocutors.

The above DCT refusals results confirm the request strategies results, in that there is a clear effect of interlocutor's status on the performance of speech acts in all participating groups. However, surprisingly, all groups were significantly more direct when refusing equal and higher status interlocutors than lower status interlocutors ($p < 0.05$ in each case). Indirectness is associated with politeness in the speech act of refusals; for this reason, participants were expected to use more indirect refusals when addressing equal and higher status interlocutors. The data tends to suggest that all groups favoured using the *alternative* strategies (an indirect refusal strategy) with lower status interlocutors rather than a *non-performative* strategy. This is to say, although *non-performative* strategies still represented the highest proportion, *alternative* strategies were much more frequently used to address lower status participants than equal and higher status interlocutors. This further indicates that the *alternative* refusal strategy may be seen as more appropriate for use in response to people of lower status, as observed from the DCT participants' answers, a finding that should be verified by further research. In addition, the results show more significant differences between groups in refusing interlocutors of different statuses. For example, the EFL group was the most direct of all the groups when refusing from interlocutors of all statuses, as they showed significant differences in the use of direct strategies to address interlocutors of different statuses compared to the ESL and NSE groups ($p < 0.05$ in each case).

Additionally, when testing the use of *excuses and explanations* against other indirect strategies for every social status in every group, it was found that the EFL group used *excuses and explanations* significantly more when refusing individuals of lower status rather than refusing those of equal or higher status ($p < 0.05$), which was the opposite of what was found for the ESL and NSE groups. This suggests that the EFL group did not mirror the refusal strategies of the native group when the interlocutor's status increased. There were no statistically significant differences between the ESL group and the NSE group ($p > 0.05$) in this regard.

Generally speaking, the statuses of addressees significantly affected the DCT choices of all groups, as detailed above. Thus, following the DCT results, it is important to examine the data obtained from the RPTs, which is illustrated in the table and graph below:

Table 5.8. Refusal strategies for RPT results.

		REFUSAL STRATEGIES %						Total
		Non-Performative	Regret	Wish	Excuse/ Explanation	Alternatives	Others	No.
Lower	EFL	46.7	8.3	0	28.3	13.3	3.4	90
	ESL	36.7	8.3	3.3	31.7	16.7	3.2	90
	NSE	37.5	12.5	0	32.5	12.5	5	60
Equal	EFL	56.6	10	1.7	26.6	1.7	3.4	90
	ESL	40	6.7	5	38.3	8.3	1.7	90
	NSE	42.5	5	5	37.5	5	5	60
Higher	EFL	54.9	8.3	3.3	28.3	1.7	3.4	90
	ESL	43.3	6.7	6.7	38.3	3.3	1.7	90
	NSE	45	10	2.5	40	0	2.5	60
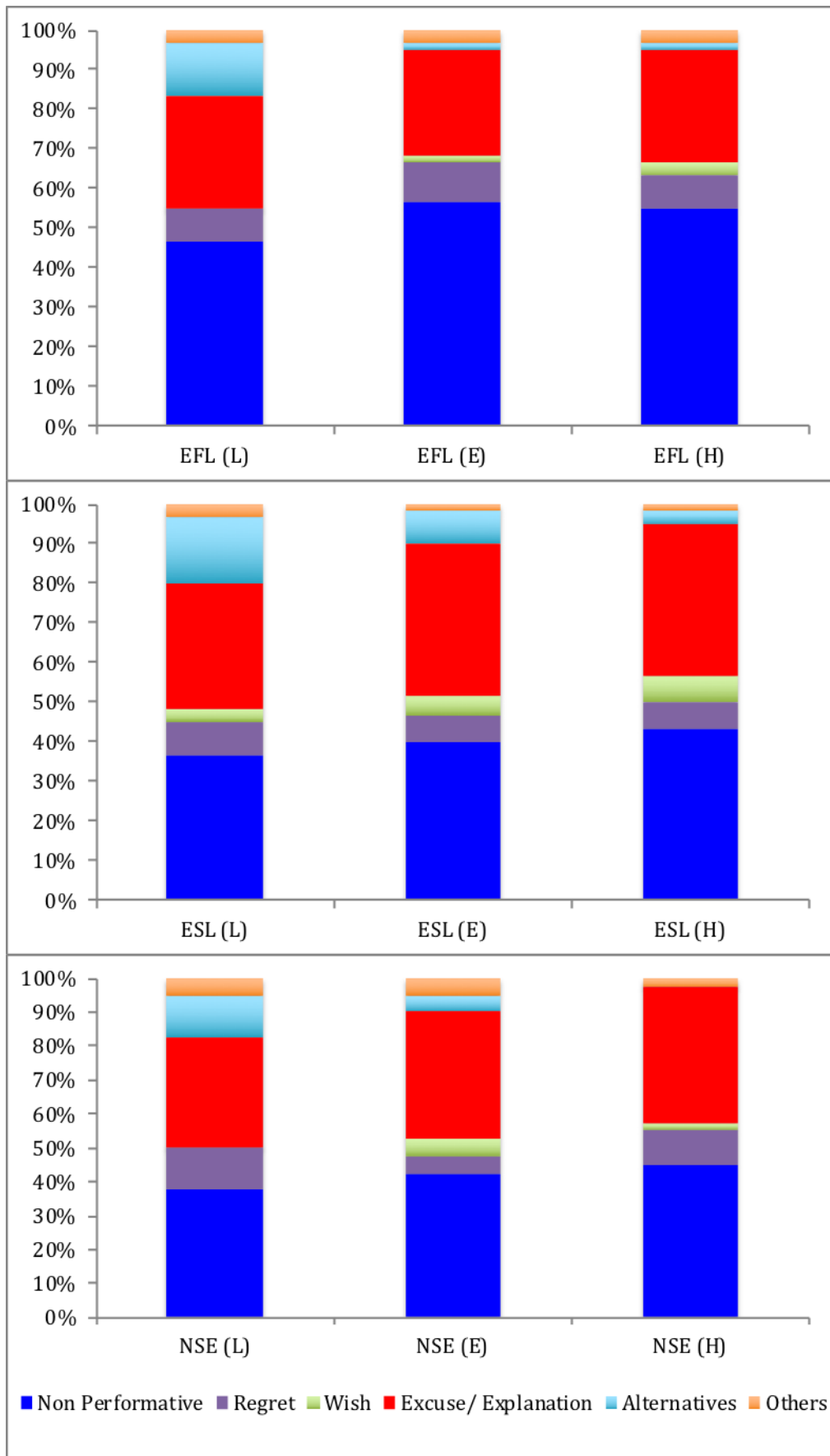
Figure 5.5. Refusal strategies in RPT scenarios.

Interlocutor status affected all participants' RPT refusal strategies. As with the DCT results, all groups used fewer direct refusals in response to individuals of lower status compared with equal and higher status participants, and the use of alternative strategies increased significantly. The EFL group was again the most direct of the groups when refusing people of all statuses. Comparing the RPT to the DCT refusal strategies, the DCT and RPT results were similar in terms of frequency rates, as there were no statistically significant differences in the use of direct and indirect refusals for any of the groups ($p > 0.05$).

Thus, the above results pertaining to the impact of addressees' status on refusal strategies provide insights relevant to the research question (see section 1.5) investigating whether there are any differences between the three groups in making refusals when interacting with interlocutors of higher, equal, and lower statuses. This factor was found to have influenced the choices of all groups, with significant differences within and between groups. Generally, all groups favoured using a *non-performative* strategy (a direct strategy) significantly more in response to equal and higher status interlocutors compared with lower status individuals, whereas the use of an *alternative* strategy was found to be significantly higher in all groups when refusing interlocutors of lower statuses compared to those of equal or higher statuses. Likewise, it can be concluded that the EFL group was the most direct when refusing individuals of all statuses, because they were the most direct overall, as highlighted in the first section of this chapter. The EFL group also used *excuses and explanations* significantly more than the two other groups when refusing lower status interlocutors, compared with equal and higher status individuals. Thus, it can be generally concluded that the EFL group is different from the other two groups in terms of adjuncts to refusals, and that the ESL group was closer to the native group in this regard, though not matching the native level in most of their responses. Finally, in terms of methodology, it can be concluded that the results regarding the impact of interlocutors' status on refusal strategies were not affected by the type of data collection methods, DCTs or RPTs.

5.1.4 Refusal strategies of non-native groups based on duration of English learning

This section details the findings for one of the variables anticipated to influence the pragmatic performance of non-native speakers of English, namely the length of time spent learning English. As explained in Chapter Four, the non-native participants were divided into two subgroups: (1) those who had spent less than two years learning English; and (2) those who had spent two to four years learning English. The DCT table below shows the impact of this factor on participants' use of refusal strategies:

Table 5.9. DCT refusal strategies based on length of time spent learning English.

		REFUSAL STRATEGIES %						Total No.
		Non-Performative	Regret	Wish	Excuse/ Explanation	Alternatives	Others	
Less than 2yrs	EFL	52.9	8.6	2.75	27	4.35	4.35	72
	ESL	43	9.7	3.8	34	5.9	3.5	261
2-4yrs	EFL	48.2	12.55	1.5	27.9	6.7	3.1	468
	ESL	35.7	9.45	5.25	34.65	11.65	3.25	279
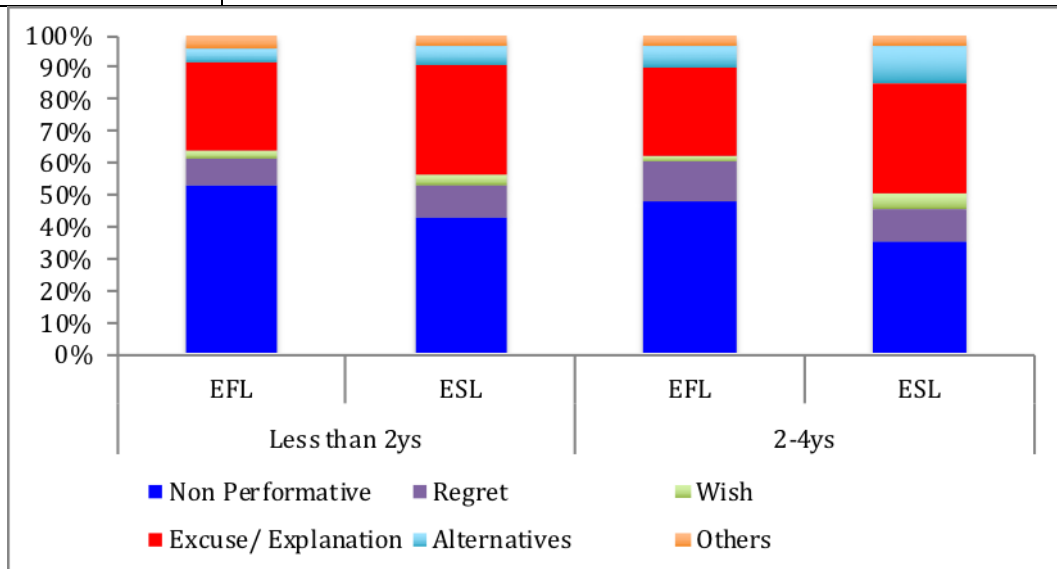
Figure 5.6. DCT refusal strategies based on length of time spent learning English.

The DCT table and graphs above show that the length of time spent learning English influenced the participants' use of refusal strategies. The EFL and ESL subgroups that had studied English for a longer time showed a higher number of indirect refusals. This was

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particularly true for the ESL participants, who demonstrated patterns closer to those of the native speakers. The difference between the two subgroups was statistically significant in the ESL group ($p < 0.05$), but not in the EFL group ($p > 0.05$). This suggests generally that the ESL participants increased their native-like use of refusal strategies over the time spent learning English more than the EFL group, in addition to the effect of other factors. The following RPT table and graph confirm the influence of the duration of English learning on the directness of the refusal strategies used by participants.

Table 5.10. RPT level of directness based on length of time spent learning English.

		REFUSAL STRATEGIES %						Total
		Non-Performative	Regret	Wish	Excuse/ Explanation	Alternatives	Others	No.
Less than 2yrs %	EFL	53.1	9.3	1.8	25.6	5.1	5.1	66
	ESL	38.5	10.5	4	29.9	11.5	5.6	102
2-4yrs %	EFL	44.55	8.65	7	34.2	2.6	3	204
	ESL	35	8.3	7.15	39	5.15	5.33	168
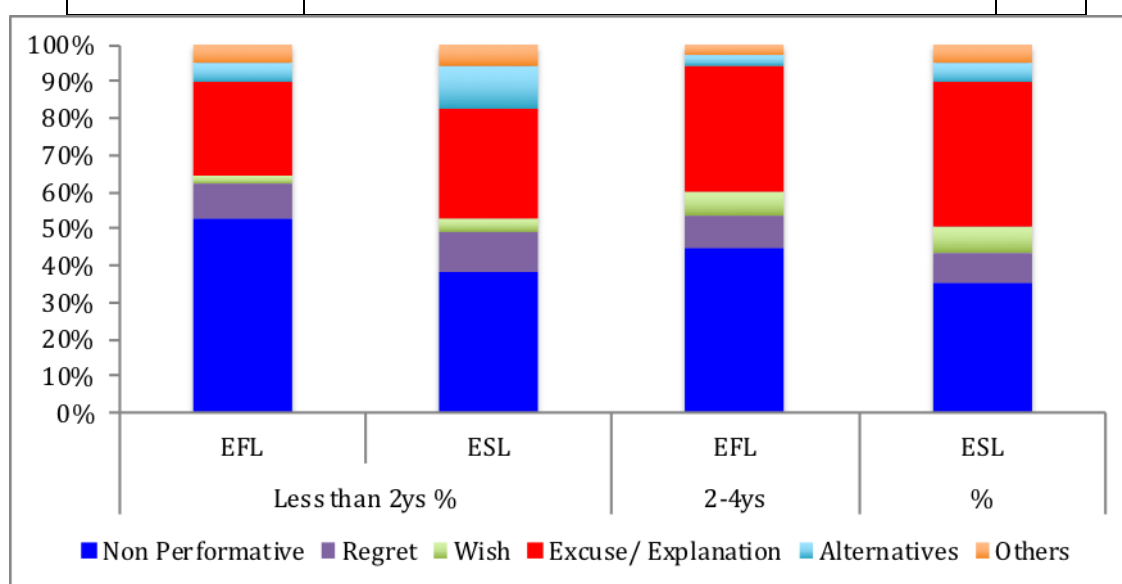
Figure 5.7. RPT refusal strategies based on length of time spent learning English.

The RPT results again mirror the DCT results and confirm that this variable affects the request strategies of all the EFL and ESL groups. Furthermore, there were significant differences in the use of direct refusal strategies between the two subgroups of both groups ($p < 0.05$). Thus, these findings contribute to answering to the research question investigating

the pragmatic differences in the use of refusal strategies between the two non-native groups based on the length of time spent learning English: it is found that EFL and ESL participants used more indirect refusal strategies over time, according to both DCT and RPT data, thereby resembling the patterns of the native group, which suggests that the length of time spent learning English plays a role in the pragmatic development of both groups in terms of performing refusals. However, the use of indirect refusal strategies was higher in the ESL group when the learning duration increased, which can be attributed to the role of learning environment.

5.1.5 ESL refusal strategies based on the intensity of communication with Native Speakers of English

This section will examine another factor predicted to influence the pragmatic performance of ESL speakers, namely, the intensity of communication with native speakers. Based on the ESL group's responses regarding how long they spend communicating with native speakers each week, participants were divided into two subgroups: (1) those who spent less than five hours a week communicating with native speakers, and (2) those who did so for five or more hours a week. The following table and graph examine the influence of ESL participants' intensity of communication with native speakers on their DCT refusal strategies.

Table 5.11. DCT refusal strategies based on intensity of communication with native speakers.

		REFUSAL STRATEGIES %						Total
		Non-Performative	Regret	Wish	Excuse/ Explanation	Alternatives	Others	No.
Less than 5 hours a week	ESL	42.1	8.6	4.75	31.4	10.35	2.8	297
5 hours a week and more	ESL	38.3	10.5	4.8	37	5.9	3.5	243
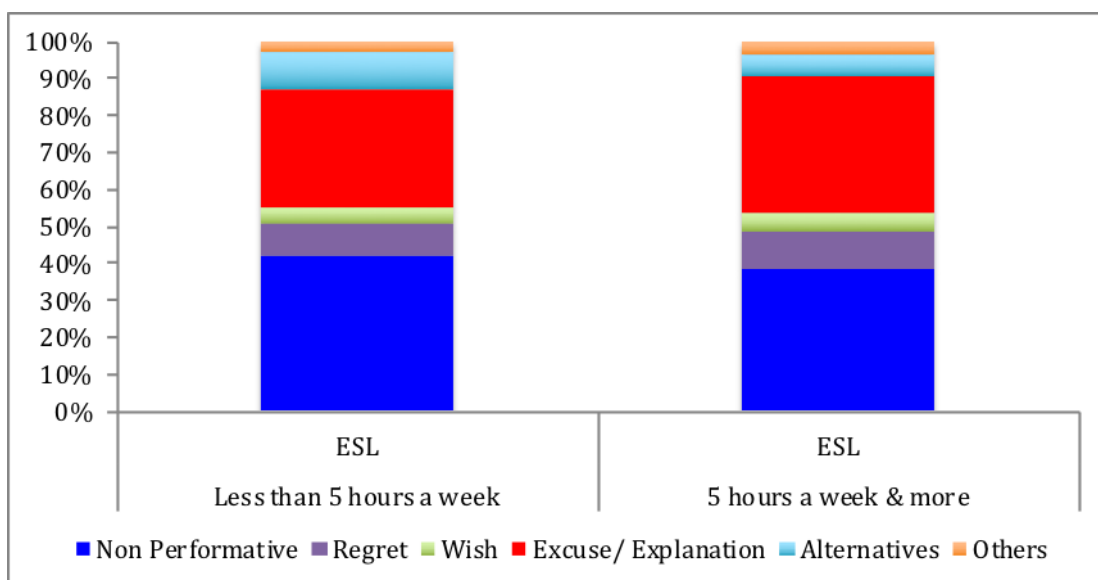
Figure 5.8. DCT refusal strategies based on intensity of communication with native speakers.

With regard to the ESL participants' intensity of communication with native speakers, the DCT tables above show that this variable plays a role when choosing refusal strategies. As the statistics show, the more that members of the ESL group communicate with native speakers, the more indirect refusal strategies they use. There is a statistically significant difference between the two subgroups in using direct and indirect refusal strategies ($p < 0.05$). This means that the communication with native speakers affected the pragmatic competence of ESL learners in using refusals. Hence, it is important to examine whether the RPT yielded similar data regarding the effect of ESL participants' intensity of communication with native speakers on their use of refusal strategies.

Table 5.12. RPT refusal strategies based on intensity of communication with native speakers.

		REFUSAL STRATEGIES %						Total
		Non-Performative	Regret	Wish	Excuse/ Explanation	Alternatives	Others	No.
Less than 5 hours a week	ESL	39.9	9.6	4.75	32.5	7.35	5.9	129
5 hours a week and more	ESL	35.3	11.7	7.8	35.3	9.9	0	141

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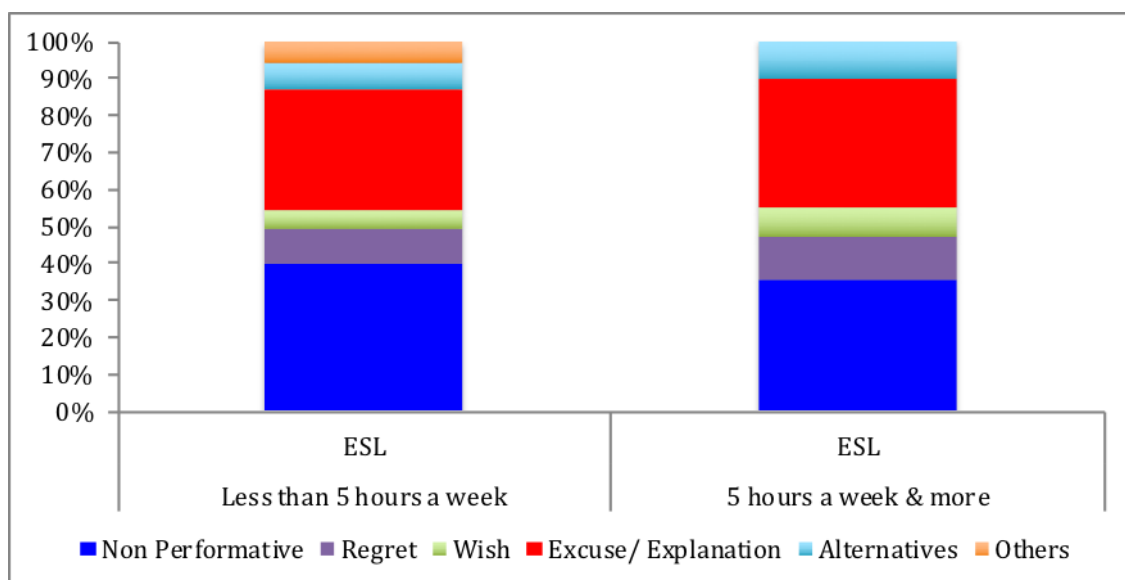
Figure 5.9. RPT refusal strategies based on intensity of communication with native speakers.

As with the DCT results, the above RPT data shows that the ESL subgroups with a higher intensity of communication with native speakers were significantly less direct and much closer to the native speakers in their use of refusal strategies. Using a chi-square test, a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$) was found between the two subgroups of ESL participants. This indicates that participants who had less intense communication with native speakers did not know which strategies were most appropriate. As a result, they appear to have tried other strategies but, with more exposure, they learn what is considered appropriate within the culture and switch to a more appropriate strategy. This finding confirms the importance of communication with native speakers in enhancing the pragmatic competence of learners, and also provides an answer to the research question investigating the potential pragmatic differences amongst the ESL participants based on the intensity of their communication with native speakers.

To summarise this section (5.1) examining the refusal strategies, a large number of differences in the use of refusal strategies were identified across the EFL, ESL, and NSE groups, and were then analysed, with the results presented and discussed above. As already mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the three groups modified their refusal strategies in terms of politeness, using different types of adjunct to the head act of refusal. These

adjuncts will be discussed in more detail in the following section (5.2). Since it was found that certain adjuncts were more associated with particular refusal strategies, the final section of this chapter (5.3) will discuss these two elements together.

5.2   Pragmatic differences in the use of adjuncts to refusals

As already mentioned, the results presented thus far have assessed the respondents' refusal strategies in terms of the head act of refusal; this section will focus on several sentences and phrases, known as *adjuncts to refusals*, used by the participants to justify the refusal or mitigate the illocutionary force. As stated earlier, these adjuncts to refusals were calculated, coded, and analysed largely based on the taxonomy of Beebe *et al.* (1990).

Table 5.13: Examples of the adjuncts to refusals.

Adjuncts to refusals	Examples
Positive Opinion	*That is a great idea, but – I'd love to come, but*
Empathy	*I know you are in a bad situation – I'm really sorry for what happened*
Pause filler	Not used in this study
Gratitude/Appreciation	*Thank you so much – I appreciate it*
External Justifications	*I will be busy with my grandmother having surgery at the same time*

All of these types of adjuncts to refusals, with the exception of *pause filler*, were found in a large number of participants' refusals. It should be noted that the last type of adjunct (*external justifications)* was added to the model for this study, as mentioned in the methodology chapter, after it was observed that a considerable number of participants (especially Saudi participants) tended to provide long statements justifying their refusal. These adjuncts were frequently found in both DCT and RPT data, as the following subsections will show.

5.2.1 Overall results for group's adjuncts to refusals

The following DCT table shows the overall frequency (in percentages) of the three groups' use of adjuncts to refusals:

Table 5.14: Overall frequency (in percentages) of the three groups' use of DCT adjuncts to refusals.

Adjuncts to refusals	EFL %	ESL %	NSE %
No adjuncts used	16.3	13.1	9.2
Positive Opinion	17.8	23.9	24.7
Empathy	14.7	15.8	19.4
Gratitude/Appreciation	24	30	32.7
External Justifications	27.2	17.1	14
Total No.	540	540	360

Table 5.14, to a certain extent, shows that the NSE group's use of adjuncts to refusals was different from the non-native group's, despite a number of similarities with their ESL counterparts, as it can be clearly seen in the graph below:
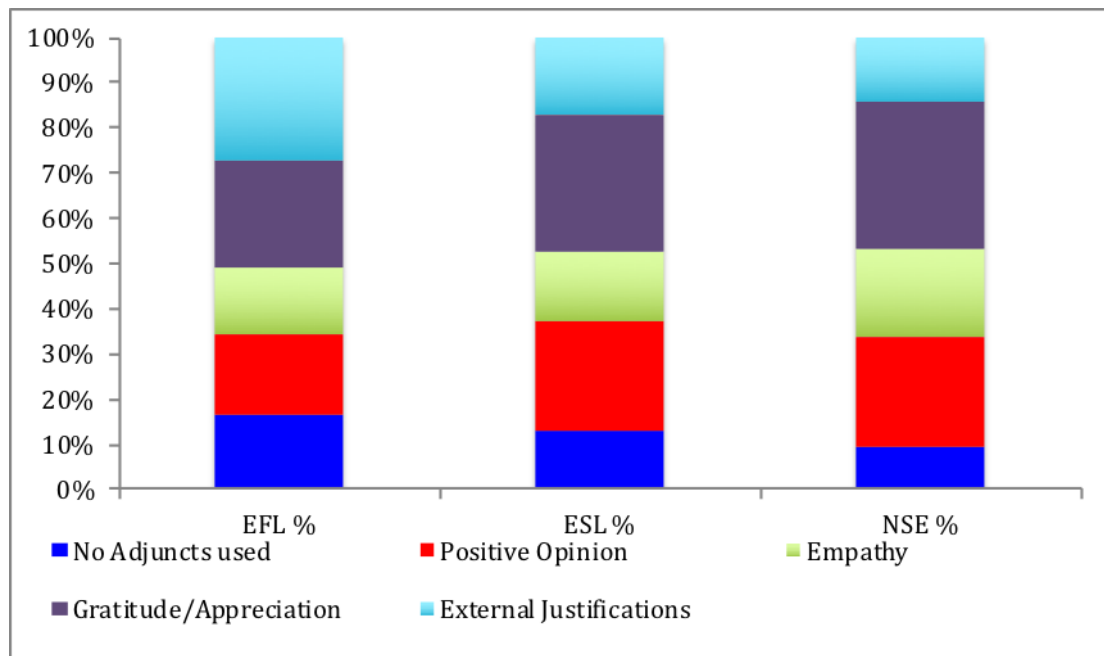
Figure 5.10. DCT adjuncts to refusals of groups.

The above results show overall similarities and differences between the groups with respect to their adjuncts to refusals. Although all three groups used adjuncts in most of their

refusals (NSE: 90.8%; ESL: 86.9%; EFL: 83.7%), the NSE group used significantly more adjuncts than the other two groups ($p < 0.05$). The ESL group was also significantly higher in their use of adjuncts compared to the EFL group ($p < 0.05$), and showed more similar frequency rates to those of native speakers in terms of adjuncts to refusals, as the data above shows. This is first difference between the groups; the analysis in the following paragraphs will focus more on the ways in which the three groups used these four types of adjuncts in their refusals.

When examining in-depth the adjuncts made by the groups, it was found that the EFL group used statements of *positive opinion* in 17.8%, *empathy* in 14.7%, and *gratitude and appreciation* in 24% of their refusals, all notably less than the values for the other two groups, as the data presented above shows. The use of these three types of adjuncts in refusals is important to soft refusing and minimises the risk of face-threatening on the part of the speakers by acknowledging his/her want (as discussed in section 2.8). It should be noted that statements of *positive opinion* and *empathy* in particular were reported to be used more when refusing requests, whereas statements of *gratitude* and *appreciation* were more frequently associated with refusing *invitations* or *offers,* as discussed in the literature review (and further examined in the coming subsection). Hence, the EFL participants using these types of adjuncts less frequently can be considered to indicate that they were less pragmatically competent in performing appropriate refusals in terms of politeness compared to the other two groups. With regard to the last type of adjuncts (i.e. *external justifications*), the EFL group overused this type compared to the other two groups, employing them in 27.2% of their responses, whereas the NSE and ESL groups used justifications notably less than the EFL group (NSE: 14%, and ESL: 17.1%). The *external justifications* in refusals explain the reason for refusing, but do not significantly affect the impact of refusals in terms of politeness, as the other three types do, which may explain why the native speakers were less dependent on their

usage in their refusals. It should also be noted that the ESL choices were much closer to those of the NSEs, as is clearly indicated in the above table and figure.

In order to verify the above DCT results, the following table and graph show the overall frequency (in percentages) of the three groups' use of adjuncts based on the RPT data.

Table 5.15. Overall frequency (in percentages) of the three groups' use of RPT adjuncts to refusal.

ADJUNCTS TO REFUSALS	EFL %	ESL %	NSE %
No adjuncts used	14.3	10	8
Positive Opinion	18.2	26.9	26.5
Empathy	17	19.6	20.5
Gratitude/Appreciation	22	25	28.8
External Justification	28.5	18.5	16.2
Total No.	270	270	180
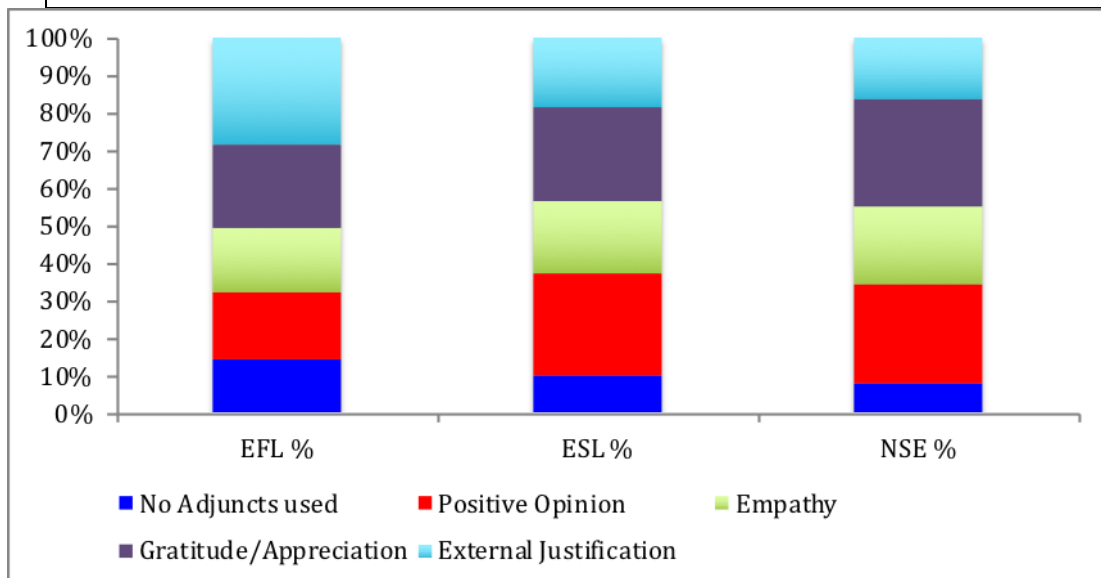
Figure 5.11. RPT adjuncts to refusals.

The RPT results are very similar to the DCT results in regard to the adjuncts to refusals; there were no statistically significant differences between the DCT and RPT results in terms of the choices and frequencies of adjuncts used by the three groups ($p > 0.05$ each time). As with the DCT results, the RPT results revealed that the ESL and NSE groups used significantly more adjuncts to their refusals in comparison to the EFL group ($p < 0.05$ each time); they employed more statements of *positive opinion, empathy*, and *gratitude/appreciation*, but less *external justifications* as adjuncts to refusals. This provides

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evidence that answers the first question addressed in this research: 'To what extent does each non-native group produce refusals similar to those of native speakers (the control group) in terms of the adjuncts to refusals?' Based on the results, it can be concluded that the ESL and NSE groups made more similar choices of adjuncts (specifically statements of *positive opinion*, *empathy,* and *gratitude/appreciation*) in the DCT and RPT tasks compared to the EFL group, who used significantly different adjuncts from the other groups. This is to say that the choices and frequency rates of adjuncts to refusals seem to be close, when comparing the ESL and NSE groups. The above discussion relates to the overall use of adjuncts by all groups. The following subsections will present and discuss the results relating to adjuncts to refusals in greater detail, based on the four factors mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, in order to establish whether these factors also influence their usage and to answer the relevant research questions. To this end, the following subsection will examine the use of adjuncts depending on the type of initiating speech act.

5.2.2 Adjuncts to refusals based on types of eliciting speech act

The table and graph below show that the adjuncts to refusals were used differently by all groups depending on the type of initiating speech act.

Table 5.16. DCT adjuncts to refusals based on the types of initiating speech act.

		ADJUNCTS TO REFUSALS %					
		No Adjuncts	Positive Opinion	Empathy	Gratitude/ Appreciation	Justification	Total No.
Refusing Invitations and Offers	EFL	13	17	8.9	38.6	22.4	300
	ESL	9.15	21.5	5.8	52.25	11.2	300
	NSE	3.5	24	6	57.75	8.65	200
Refusing Requests	EFL	20.7	20.2	22.3	4.3	32.4	240
	ESL	18	24.6	29.7	3	24.6	240
	NSE	16.2	26.8	34.4	0	22.5	160
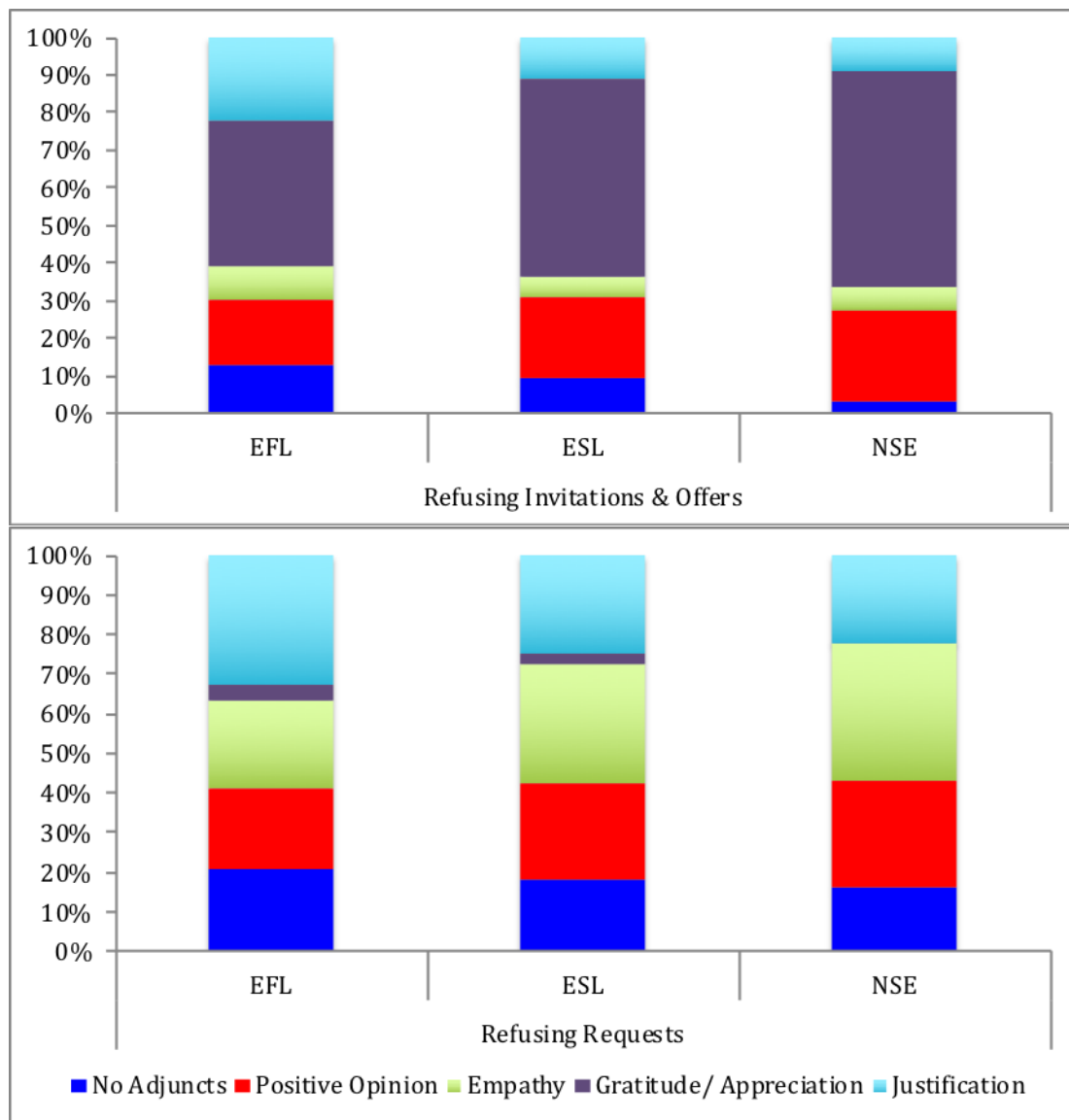
Figure 5.12. DCT adjuncts to refusals based on the types of initiating speech act.

The above table demonstrates that adjuncts to refusals were chosen differently by all groups depending on which kind of speech act they refused. All groups used significantly fewer adjuncts when refusing invitations and offers (p <0.05) than when refusing requests; this suggests that all groups tended to understand, to a greater or lesser extent, that refusing invitations and offers is less face-threatening than refusing requests, suggesting that there is a lesser need to mitigate refusals using adjuncts. Examination of the specific use of these adjuncts reveals that the groups significantly increased their use of adjuncts of *positive opinion, empathy,* and *justification* when refusing requests (p <0.05), with differences in

frequencies between groups, and overused *gratitude/appreciation* when refusing invitations and offers. This generally supports what has been reported in many studies identified in the literature review, and also reveals that the non-native groups acquired a basic knowledge of using adjuncts to refusals.

However, certain key differences could be observed between the EFL group and the other two groups; for example, the EFL group used less *positive opinions, empathy,* and *gratitude and appreciation* compared to the other two groups, but used more *justifications* with both types of refusals than the other two groups. This means that the EFL participants varied their strategies based on the type of initiating speech act, but without following the same native-like strategies as the ESL group did. The results for the ESL group were closer in both cases to the NSE group in DCTs, and the RPT results were not significantly different from the DCT results ($p > 0.05$ with each group), as illustrated in the table and figure below.

Table 5.17. RPT adjuncts to refusals based on the type of initiating speech act.

		ADJUNCTS TO REFUSALS %					
		No Adjuncts	Positive Opinion	Empathy	Gratitude/ Appreciation	Justification	Total No.
Refusing Invitations and Offers	EFL	11.5	15	10.5	39	24	180
	ESL	6.1	25.6	8.6	45.8	13.8	180
	NSE	3	26.45	6.85	54.75	8.85	120
Refusing Requests	EFL	17	22.7	25.1	2.5	32.6	90
	ESL	14	30	33	1	22	90
	NSE	13.5	27.2	34.7	0	24.5	60
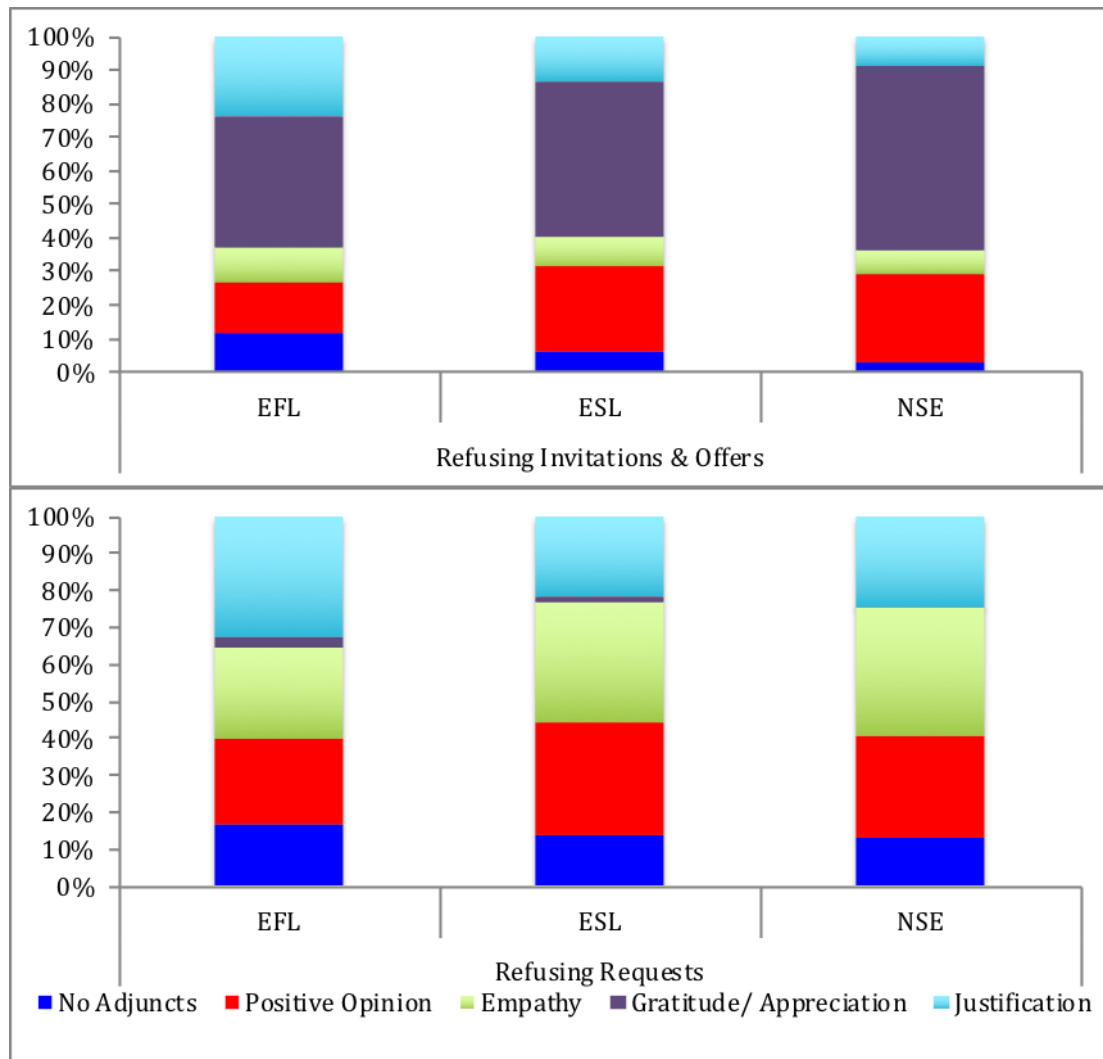
Figure 5.13. DCT adjuncts to refusals based on the types of initiating speech act.

Based on the above results, the research question investigating how Saudi ESLs, Saudi EFLs, and British NSEs use adjuncts in the speech acts of refusal addressed to requests or offers/invitations can be answered: it can be concluded that all DCT and RPT groups used fewer adjuncts when refusing invitations and offers. Specifically, they increased the adjuncts of *positive opinion,* and *empathy and justification* when refusing requests, whereas statements of *gratitude and appreciation* were more extensively used when refusing *invitations* and *offers*. However, the EFL group generally used less *gratitude and appreciation* compared to the other two groups when refusing invitations and offers, and also produced fewer instances of *positive opinions* and *empathy* compared to the other two groups when refusing requests.

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Thus, it can be concluded that the ESL group had learned many of the pragmatic patterns used by native speakers.

5.2.3 Adjuncts to Refusals Based on the Interlocutor's Status

The following table and graphs present the DCT data relating to the impact of this variable on the participants' refusal strategies:

Table 5.18. DCT adjuncts to refusals based on the status of interlocutors.

		ADJUNCTS TO REFUSALS %					
		No Adjuncts	Positive Opinion	Empathy	Gratitude/ Appreciation	Justification	Total No.
Lower Status	EFL	20.6	16.3	13.5	24	25.6	180
	ESL	20.7	16.4	14.8	29.2	18.8	180
	NSE	13.3	16.1	21.2	32.3	17	120
Equal Status	EFL	17.8	15.8	13.2	23.5	29.6	180
	ESL	12	24.9	14.3	29.5	19.3	180
	NSE	10	28.75	20.45	29.55	11.25	120
Higher Status	EFL	10.5	22.9	15.7	24.6	26.3	180
	ESL	8.9	28.45	16.75	31.25	14.55	180
	NSE	4.2	28.7	16.2	37.2	13.7	120
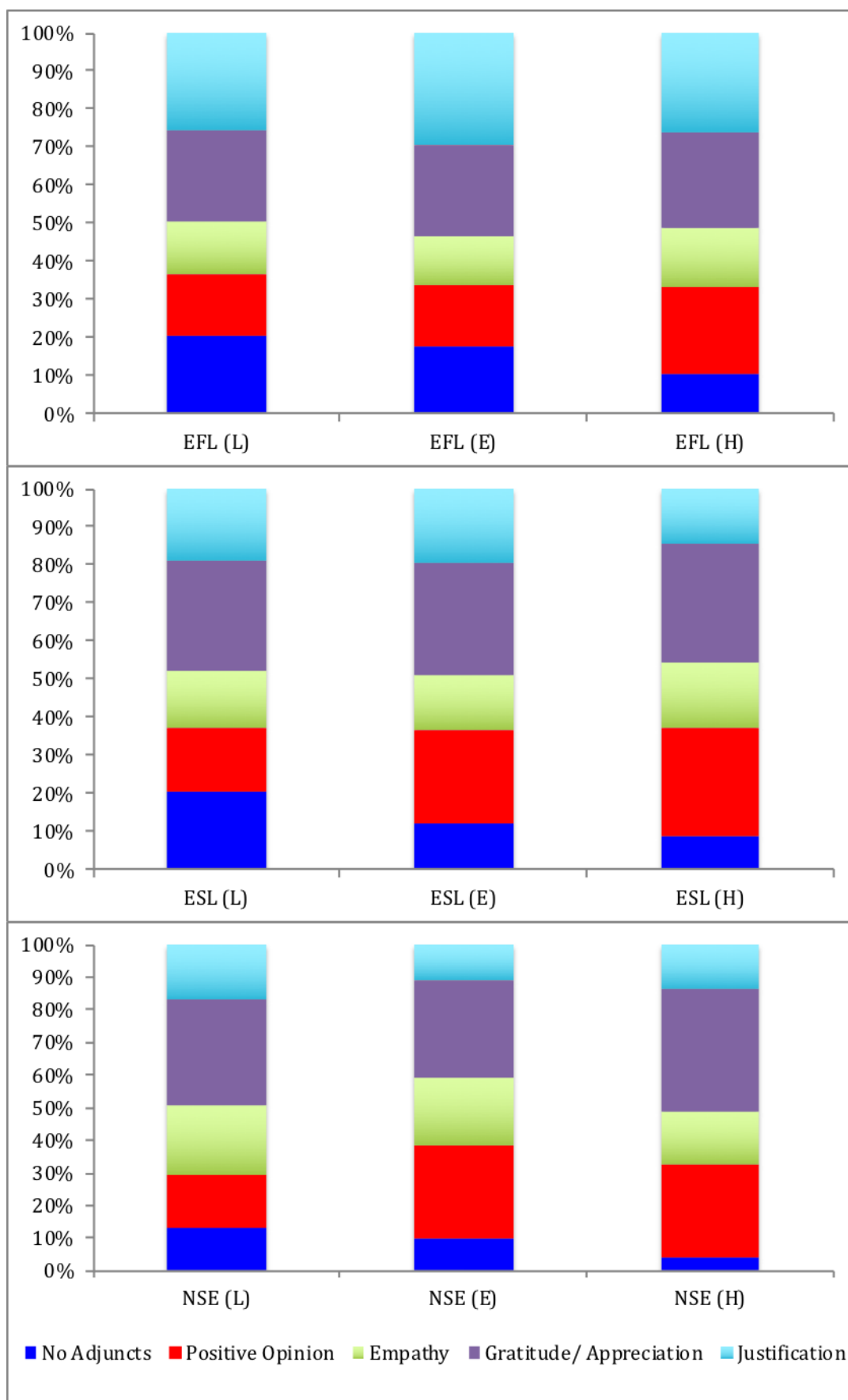
Figure 5.14. DCT adjuncts to refusals based on the status of interlocutors.

All groups used adjuncts differently in their refusals when speaking to people of different statuses. They all used relatively more adjuncts when making refusals to individuals of equal or higher status, as, for all groups, there were more refusals not involving adjuncts in refusals addressed to individuals of lower status. It can also be seen that all groups used adjuncts in refusals addressed to higher status interlocutors more than in those addressed to equal and lower status individuals. In this regard, statistically significant differences were found between all groups ($p < 0.05$), which indicates that status had a significant impact on the use of internal modifications for all groups. Significant differences were also observed between the groups with regard to the absence, or use of, adjuncts in every case ($p < 0.05$), but in particular between the NSE group and the EFL group ($p < 0.01$). This indicates that the ESL group was the closest to the native group, though with some differences. Following the DCT results presented above, it is important to also consider the impact of this factor on the RPT data, which was similar to the DCT results.

Table 5.19. Adjuncts to refusals in RPT scenarios.

		ADJUNCTS TO REFUSALS %					
		No Adjuncts	Positive Opinion	Empathy	Gratitude/ Appreciation	Justification	Total No.
Lower	EFL	18.5	17.2	12.6	23.6	28.1	90
	ESL	16.5	16.5	18.2	28.1	20.7	90
	NSE	10	17.2	23.5	31.3	18	60
Equal	EFL	14	15.8	15.2	24.5	30.5	90
	ESL	10	24.9	16.3	30.4	18.4	90
	NSE	8.5	28.75	21.45	30.5	10.8	60
Higher	EFL	9	23.2	17.9	23.6	26.3	90
	ESL	5	31.45	20.75	27.25	15.55	90
	NSE	3.5	28.7	16.2	36.2	15.4	60
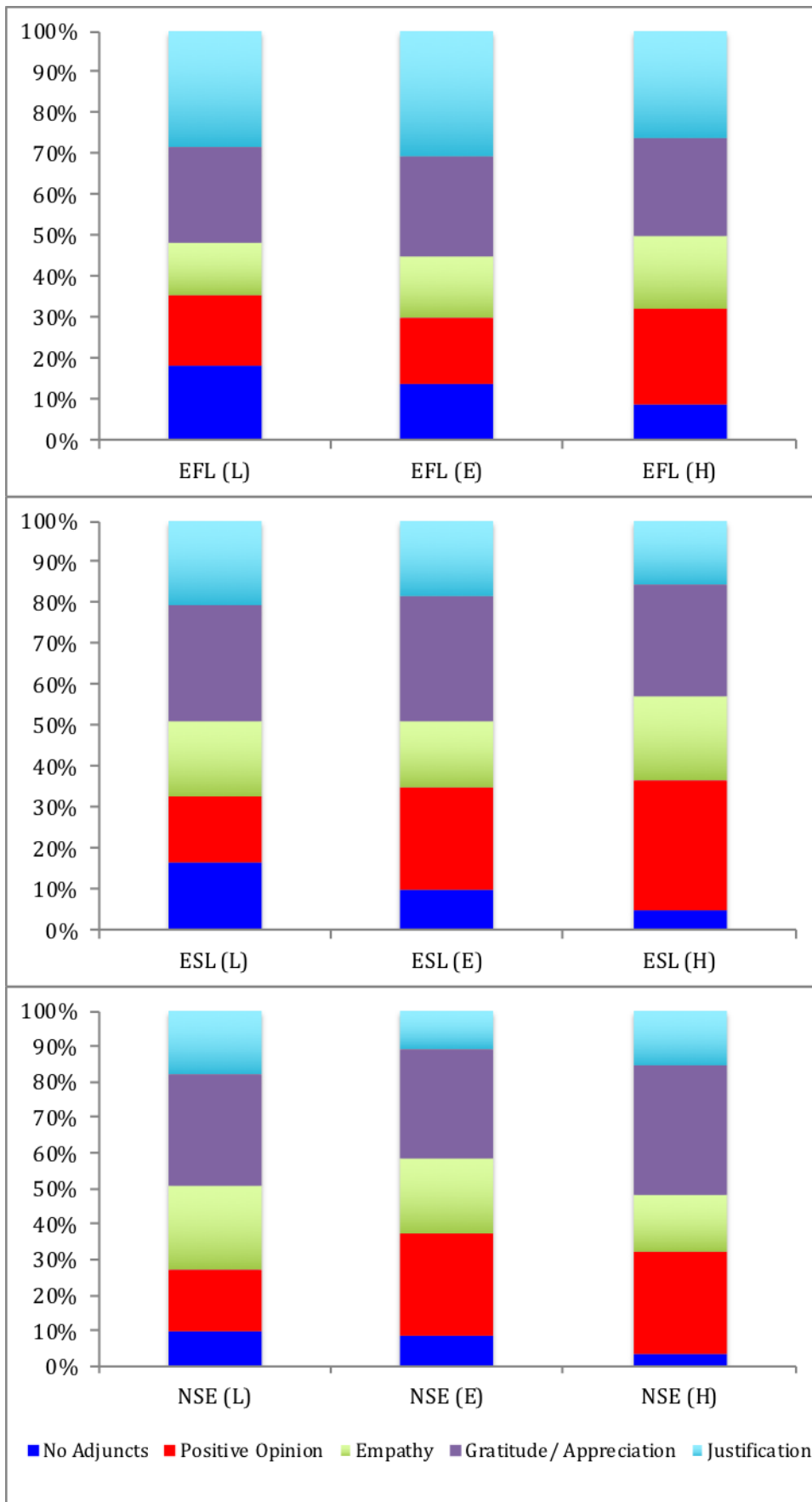
Figure 5.15. Adjuncts to refusals in RPT scenarios.

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The RPT results, like the DCT results, show that all groups used more adjuncts when refusing individuals of equal and higher status. In all RPT groups, refusals not involving modifications were more frequent when addressing interlocutors of lower status. Thus, based on the above results, it can be concluded that all groups demonstrated a significant shift toward using more adjuncts to their refusals when the social status of interlocutors increased, and that the ESL participants were the closest to the native group's productions in their choices.

5.2.4 Adjuncts to Refusals Based on Duration of English Learning

This section will examine the influence of the length of time spent learning English on the use of adjuncts to refusals, beginning by presenting the DCT results, as highlighted in the following table and graph:

Table 5.20. DCT adjuncts to refusals based on length of time spent learning English.

		ADJUNCTS TO REFUSALS %					
		No Adjuncts	Positive Opinion	Empathy	Gratitude/ Appreciation	Justification	Total No.
Less than 2yrs	EFL	20.3	16.75	13.75	23	26.2	72
	ESL	21.1	20.9	13.8	28.1	16	261
2-4yrs	EFL	12.2	18.8	15.7	25	28.3	468
	ESL	5.1	26.9	17.8	32	18.1	279
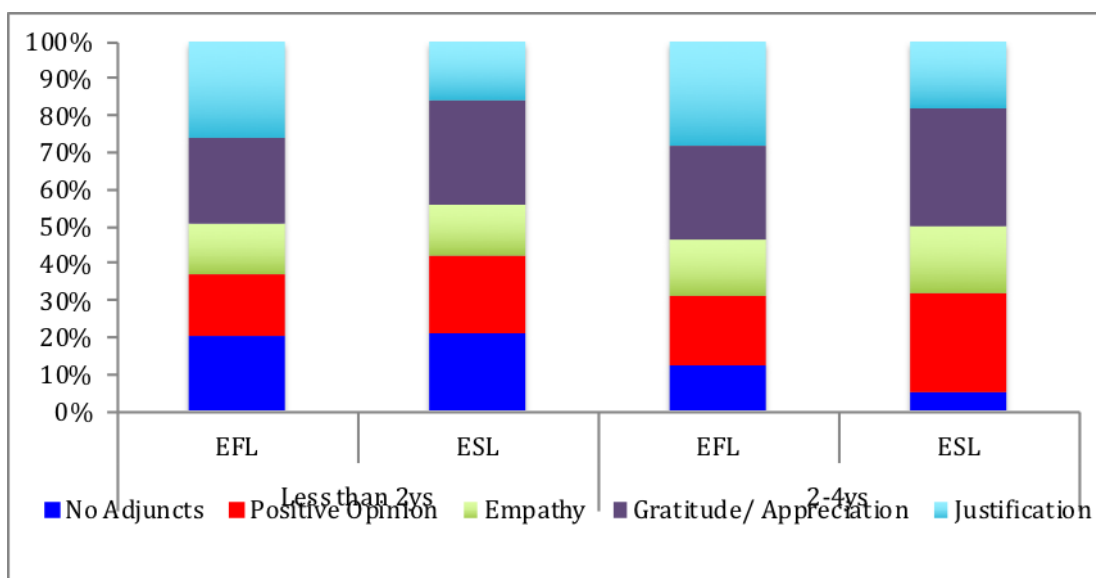
Figure 5.16. DCT adjuncts to refusals based on length of time spent learning English.

The DCT results strongly indicate that the length of time spent learning English influenced EFL and ESL pragmatic choices. Indeed, significant increases can be observed in the rates of the adjuncts to refusals by both EFL participants (p <0.05) and ESL participants as time spent learning English increased (p <0.01). The following table and graph present the effect of duration of English learning based on the RPT scenario data for the three groups.

Table 5.21. RPT adjuncts to refusals based on time spent learning English.

		ADJUNCTS TO REFUSALS %					
		No Adjuncts	Positive Opinion	Empathy	Gratitude/ Appreciation	Justification	Total No.
Less than 2yrs	EFL	18.3	16.6	16.6	21	27.5	66
	ESL	18	23.9	17.55	23	17.55	102
2-4yrs	EFL	10.3	19.2	18	23	29.5	204
	ESL	2	29.9	21.6	27	19.5	168
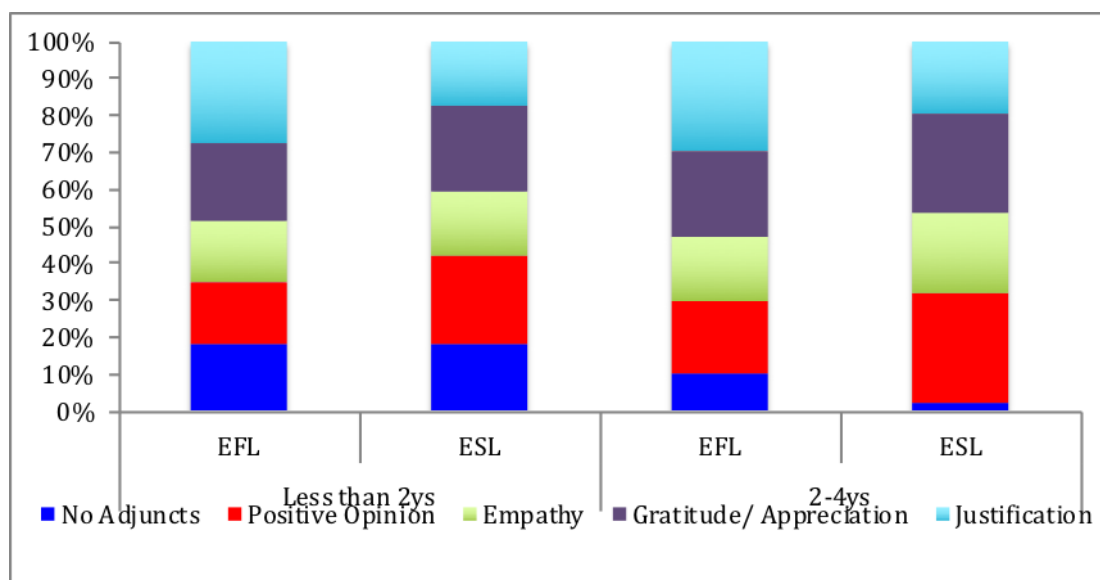
Figure 5.17. RPT adjuncts to refusals based on time spent learning English.

The RPT results show that participants who had been learning English for longer increased their use of adjuncts to refusals. However, chi-square tests revealed that the RPT results are not the same as the DCT results, and non-statistically significant differences could be observed between the two EFL subgroups. Thus, based on these findings, it can be stated that the ESL group significantly increased their use of adjuncts to refusals over time, as shown by the DCT and RPT data ($p < 0.05$). However, with regard to the EFL participants, the findings suggest that those who had been learning English for longer significantly increased their use of adjuncts to refusals, as revealed by the DCT data only ($p < 0.05$). This may be explained by the fact that the EFL participants had more time to choose the right strategy in a DCT. In addition, it is possible that the immediacy of the method meant that the length of time spent learning English had a greater effect in the role-play because the participants had a lower cognitive load and more time to answer the questions in a native-like way.

5.2.5 ESL Adjuncts to Refusals Based on the Intensity of Communication With Native English Speakers

The table and graph below first present the DCT data relating to the effect of the intensity of communication with native speakers on the ESL participants' use of adjuncts to refusals.

Table 5.22. DCT adjuncts to refusals based on the intensity of communication with native speakers.

		ADJUNCTS TO REFUSALS %					Total
		No Adjuncts	Positive Opinion	Empathy	Gratitude/ Appreciation	Justification	No.
Less than 5 hours a week	ESL	22.3	16.25	13.25	22.5	25.7	297
5 hours a week and more	ESL	10.2	19.3	16.2	25.5	28.8	243
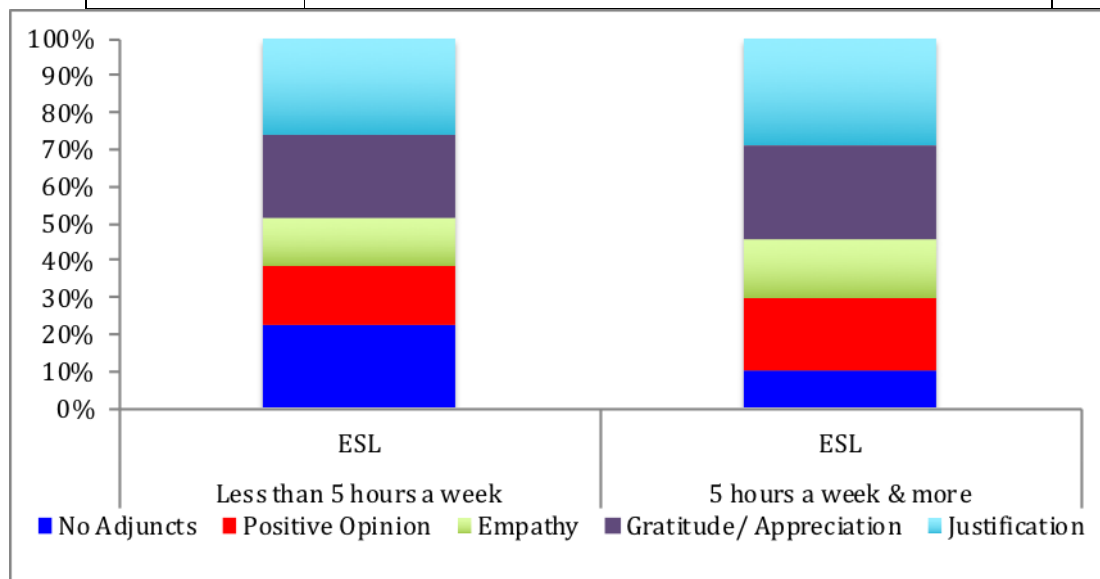
Figure 5.18. DCT adjuncts to refusals based on intensity of communication with native speakers.

Based on the DCT data analysis, statistically significant differences can be observed between the two ESL subgroups. The ESL participants increased their use of adjuncts as time spent communicating with native speakers increased ($p < 0.05$). In addition, an increase in their use of adjuncts was found as time spent communicating with native speakers increased, as shown in the RPT results presented below ($p < 0.05$).

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Table 5.23. RPT adjuncts to refusals based on the intensity of communication with native speakers.

| | | ADJUNCTS TO REFUSALS % | | | | | |
		No Adjuncts	Positive Opinion	Empathy	Gratitude/ Appreciation	Justification	Total No.
Less than 5 hours a week	ESL	19.3	16.35	16.35	20.75	27.25	129
5 hours a week and more	ESL	9.3	19.35	18.25	23.45	29.65	141
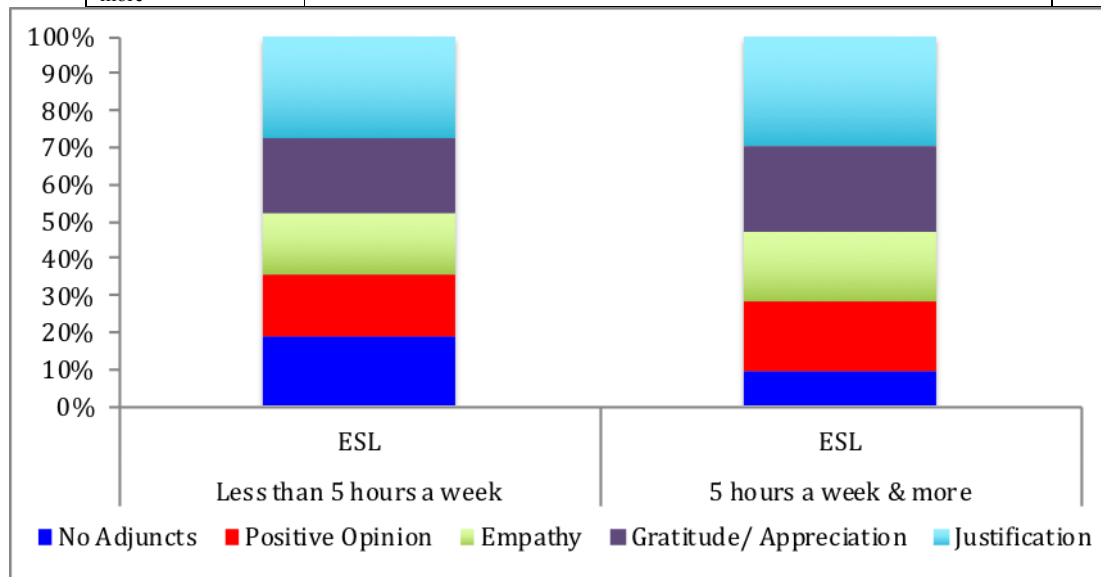
Figure 5.19. RPT adjuncts to refusals based on intensity of communication with native speakers.

Based on the above, it can be stated that the intensity of communication with native speakers had an impact on ESL participants' use of adjuncts to refusals. The ESL group with the highest intensity of communication with native speakers showed a significant increase in the frequencies of adjuncts to refusals. As these subsections have completed the presentation of the refusal results in detail, this chapter will now move on to summarising the major findings, which will be discussed and then linked to the literature.

5.3 Summarising and Concluding Remarks

In regard to refusal strategies, all of the participating groups, in both DCT and RPT tasks, made heavy use of two refusal strategies: *non-performative* (a direct strategy) and *excuses/explanations* (an indirect strategy). *Regret* and *alternatives*, which are also indirect refusal strategies, were, respectively, the third and fourth most used choices, while the

remaining four refusal strategies were rarely used. Although the results for the EFL group broadly reflect similar patterns (statements of *non-performative* and *excuses/explanations* were the most frequent) to the other two groups, the EFL participants were the most direct in their refusals: half of their responses were *non-performative* refusals, as seen in both the DCT and RPT results. The NSE and ESL groups were significantly less direct than the EFL group, and no statistically significant differences between the refusal strategies of the ESL and NSE groups, in terms of directness, were found. This indicates that the ESL group was successful in replicating native-like refusal strategies, unlike the EFL group. Regarding the use of adjuncts to refusals, the results have shown that the ESL and NSE groups applied more adjuncts to their refusals and were closer to each other in comparison to the EFL group. For example, the EFL group infrequently used *positive opinion* and overused *external justifications* as adjuncts to refusals, whereas the NSE and ESL participants showed the opposite trend, with significant differences. However, although the EFL group used significantly fewer adjuncts than the other groups, they were still largely similar in terms of patterns.

In addition to this, participants were less direct when refusing requests in comparison to invitations and offers. Although the EFL group shifted in the same direction as the other two groups, they were still significantly more indirect than the other two groups when refusing requests, as well as when refusing invitations and offers. Thus, the productions of the ESL group were significantly closer to the native patterns in both cases. With regard to the interlocutor's status, this influenced the refusal strategies used by participants, with significant differences between and across groups. Generally, all groups favoured direct strategies more often with equal and higher status individuals, and the use of *alternative* strategies was found to be higher in all groups when refusing individuals of lower status, compared to those of equal or higher status. It was also observed that the EFL group used *excuses* and *explanations* significantly more when refusing lower status individuals than they

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did for equal and higher status individuals, which is the opposite of what was found for the ESL and NSE groups. This study has found that the EFL and ESL participants applied more indirect refusal strategies if they had been learning English or communicating with native speakers for longer (see Chapter Six for more discussion of these results).

6 Chapter Six: Further Discussion and Conclusion

Having presented all the results in detail (in chapters 4 and 5), the current chapter (6) summarises and further discusses the major findings, sums up and concludes this study, and also identifies areas in which further work may be undertaken. Therefore, this chapter is divided into two main sections: discussion of results (6.1) and conclusion of the study (6.2). The first main section (6.1) is also subdivided into two subsections: discussion of results of requests (6.1.1), and discussion of results of refusals (6.1.2). These two subsections address the research questions one by one, discuss how the results answer these questions, and finally compare the findings with previous studies. The second main section (6.2) is to conclude this study by providing a summary of the major findings of the study (6.2.1), suggesting several implications of those findings (6.2.2), presenting the limitations of this study, and giving recommendations for teaching and further research (6.2.3).

6.1 Discussion of Results

In Chapters 4 and 5, the research findings (including differences in the use of requests and refusals across groups) were fully presented, as were the four variables that influenced their use (the degree of imposition, the interlocutor's status, the length of time that the learner had been learning English, and the intensity of communication with native speakers). The current section (6.1) aims to provide a general discussion of the study findings by addressing the research questions, one by one, and discussing how the results answer these questions. The following subsection is devoted to discuss the results of requests.

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6.1.1 Discussion of Results of Requests

RQ1: How do Saudi ESL and EFL learners produce the speech acts of requests in contrast with British NSEs?

To answer this question, this section summarises how each group performs the speech act of request combining the three elements together (request strategies, internal modifiers and external modifiers). The following DCT and RPT tables illustrate first how the NSE group framed requests in term of directness strategies, and then provides the percentages for the internal and external modifiers used with each category (more details of these percentages and their distribution are provided in Chapter 4).

DCT requests of the NSE group (Total No. 360)		
Direct	Conventionally Indirect	Non-conventionally Indirect
7.5%	**80.2%**	**12.3%**
Internal Modifiers 93%	83.9%	45.6%
External Modifiers 94.9%	83.3%	67.5%

Table 6.1 DCT requests of the NSE group

The above DCT results clarify that the NSE group used direct strategies only in 7.5% of their requests, with the majority of their requests 80.2% using conventionally indirect strategies, and 12.3% non-conventionally indirect ones (i.e. hints). As detailed in section 4.2, this confirms that conventionally indirect strategies (especially query preparation strategies) are judged the most appropriate request strategies by participants from the NSE speech community, a finding that correlates with the majority of previous studies (e.g. Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Cenoz & Valencia, 1996; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008; Faerch & Kasper, 1989; Hassall, 2001; House, 1989; House & Kasper, 1981; Hutz, 2006; Tanaka, 1988; Yu, 1999). Additionally, 93% of NSE's direct requests included internal modifiers, 84% of conventionally indirect strategies did so also, and only 47% of non-conventionally indirect ones did. This means that when native speakers made direct requests, which they did

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infrequently, they typically softened them through heavy use of internal modifications, especially the politeness marker please, as detailed in section 4.3. This aligns with House's (1989) claim, that the more direct the request is, the more likely it is to be accompanied by a *please* (for example: "move a bit please"). With regard to external modifications, the NSE participants used them in 82% of cases (see section 4.3) as follows: 94.9% of NSE directs requests included external modifiers, 83.3% of conventionally indirect strategies did, whereas just 67.4% of non-conventionally indirect ones did so. Therefore, the NSE group preferred to include external modifications (specifically linguistic devices and grounders) more often with direct requests, to mitigate the impact of direct requests on hearers. The above table summarised how British native speakers of English generally make requests in the DCT setting, and the following table shows the results for the requests for the NSE group in the RPT:

	RPT requests of the NSE group (Total No. 120)		
	Direct Strategies	Conventionally Indirect	Non-conventionally Indirect
	10.8%	**85%**	**4.2%**
Internal Modifiers	100%	92.8%	50%
External Modifiers	100%	98.3%	94.7%

Table 6.2 RPT requests of the NSE group

The overall RPT results largely reflected the findings obtained from the DCT. The above RPT table shows the NSE group used direct strategies for 10.8% of requests, compared to 85% of requests being conventionally indirect strategies, and 4.2% non-conventionally indirect ones. They also employed internal modifications in 81.7% of their requests (detailed in section 4.2) as follows: 100% of direct requests contained internal modifiers, while 92.8% of conventionally indirect strategies were accompanied by internal modifiers, and just 50% of non-conventionally indirect ones were internally modified. The majority of the participants used at least one type of external modification in every request uttered. Although the results above reveal that the NSE preferred to use slightly more direct requests in the RPTs than in

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the DCTs, there was a significant increase in their use of internal and external modifications in the RPT requests. This could be attributed to the nature of RPTs, which involve face-to-face interactions, causing speakers to feel the need to smooth their requests more by using additional internal and external modifiers. Furthermore, RPTs, unlike the DCTS, involve verbal conversation between interlocutors, and so communication begins with various types of conversation openers (e.g. linguistic devices and pre-request statements) that Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) classify as external modifiers.

Since the NSE group is used in this study to provide standard language usage, the above results are compared to the non-native participants' requests below, commencing with how the ESL group made their DCT and RPT requests.

	DCT requests of the ESL group (Total No. 540)		
	Direct Strategies	Conventionally Indirect	Non-conventionally Indirect
	17.1%	**77.3%**	**5.6%**
Internal Modifiers	81.7%	70.9%	36.8%
External Modifiers	95.9%	88.5%	65.7%

Table 6.3 DCT requests of the ESL group

	RPT requests of the ESL group (Total No. 180)		
	Direct Strategies	Conventionally Indirect	Non-conventionally Indirect
	18%	**77.8%**	**4.2%**
Internal Modifiers	90.7%	83.6%	44.9%
External Modifiers	100%	98.5%	90%

Table 6.4 RPT requests of the ESL group

As illustrated in the above tables, although the ESL group used indirect strategies for around 80% of their DCT and RPT requests, extensively modifying their strategies, they were significantly more direct than the native group, as detailed in the previous sections. However, the ESL group's results did not diverge considerably from the NSE group's results; although the rates of modification were lower the patterns were similar. The RPT results also revealed

that ESL speakers preferred internal and external modifications with direct requests rather than DCT results, thereby imitating native speaker patterns. Generally speaking, the ESL results have shown more similarities than differences with the NSE results, a finding correlating with the majority of previous studies (e.g. Felix-Brasdefer, 2007; Hassall, 2001; Otcu & Zeyrek, 2008; Tanaka, 1988; Yu, 1999). To compare the results of the NSE and ESL groups with the EFL group and thereby answer the above question, the following DCT and RPT tables contrast the EFL groups' requests with those of the NSE and ESL groups.

DCT requests of the EFL group (Total No. 540)		
Direct Strategies	Conventionally Indirect	Non-conventionally Indirect
22.2%	**74.8%**	**2.9%**
Internal Modifiers	75.4%	80.7%	25.5%
External Modifiers	71.9%	77.5%	59.6%

Table 6.5 DCT requests of the EFL group

RPT requests of the EFL group (Total No. 180)		
Direct Strategies	Conventionally Indirect	Non-conventionally Indirect
25.5%	**73.9%**	**0.6%**
Internal Modifiers	72%	81.5%	16.9%
External Modifiers	85.4%	90.5%	100%

Table 6.6 RPT requests of the EFL group

From the above EFL results, it is apparent that these learners were notably more direct, also using remarkably fewer internal and external modifications with their direct requests relative to the other two groups. Therefore, it can be generalised that the EFL group is less competent than the ESL group at performing requests in English, since the former group used more direct requests carrying a greater threat to the face of hearers, impeding their desire to be free from imposition. The EFL group also used fewer internal and external modifiers to soften their requests, a finding in line with several previous studies (e.g. House & Kasper, 1987; Cenoz & Valencia, 1996; Faerch & Kasper, 1989; Trosborg, 1995). However,

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it is noteworthy that the EFL group shares some similarities with both the other two groups (ESL and NSE groups); the rates are significantly lower but the patterns are similar in several situations, as detailed in chapter four. The ESL participants' requests, however, were more similar to those of NSE (the control group) in terms of directness strategies, politeness strategies and adjuncts to requests than those of the EFL group. The following research questions and their answers are presented below to contribute further details to the overall results.

Q2 Are there any differences between the three groups when making requests with high and low impositions?

The answer to this is yes, at least partially. The DCT and RPT results show that the three groups all tended to be less direct when making high imposition requests, but the NSE group avoided directness to a greater degree, then followed by the ESL group (see subsection 4.2.2). Indirect requests, as discussed in the literature review, are generally considered more suitable in most situations than direct ones, with high imposition requests being highlighted in particular. However, the EFL group was the most direct in terms of low and high imposition requests with little difference in significance emerging between the two contexts. This means the EFL group showed less consideration of this factor, treating low and high imposition requests in a similar way in terms of level of directness – such findings were also reported in recent similar studies such as Cenoz & Valencia, 1996; Faerch & Kasper, 1989; Trosborg, 1995. In addition to this, the EFL group was less sensitive to the degree of imposition they were making, as apparent from the fact that it did not have a notable effect on how they modified their requests. They used almost the same number of internal modifiers in both contexts, and there were no statistically significant differences between their choice of internal modifiers in the DCT and the RPT. On the other hand, the NSE and ESL groups used significantly more internal modifiers when formulating high imposition requests, which is in

line with what has been reported in most previous studies (see subsection 4.3.2 for more details).

In terms of the use of external modifications in requests, the results revealed that the groups were also conscious of the degree of imposition made when making requests. With high imposition requests, for instance, all the groups used (with varying degrees) more diverse internal modifications, combining more than one external modification with single requests compared to low imposition requests. Requests made not involving external modifications were also relatively more frequent in low imposition contexts compared to high imposition contexts. However, statistically significant differences were exposed by both the DCT and RPT results regarding the two degrees of imposition for the ESL and NSE groups. This suggests less pragmatic competence in the performance of requests among the members of the EFL group.

Q3 Are there any differences between the three groups with regard to making requests when interacting with interlocutors from higher, equal and lower statuses?

The answer here is also yes. The DCT and RPT data suggests that direct strategies fell in all groups when the interlocutor's social status increased, especially in terms of the requests of the NSE and ESL groups. The DCT results confirmed a significant shift towards less direct strategies in the ESL and NSE groups only, while no statistically significant differences were found in the EFL results. For the RPT results, no statistically significant differences were apparent in relation to the status of interlocutors. Concerning the sub-strategies of *query preparatory*, more casual strategies (i.e. *mind/possibility/wondering*) were integrated into all the groups' requests when speaking with higher status people. This was most apparent from the NSE and ESL groups results, where statistically significant differences were found across the three levels in association with social status, a finding correlating with the majority of previous studies (e.g. Felix-Brasdefer, 2007; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2003; Martínez-Flor,

2009; Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2006; Otcu & Zeyrek, 2008; Rose, 2000; Scarcella, 1979; Trosborg, 1995).

Regarding the use of internal modifiers, all the groups tended to use more internal modifiers (especially please) when interacting with people of a higher social status, and significant differences were found only in the DCT results (details in subsection 4.3.3). With regard to the use of external modifications, all the groups used external modifiers differently when making requests of people of different statuses. They all used relatively more external modifications when making requests to equal and higher status individuals, and requests not involving modifications in all groups were higher in number when addressing people of a lower status. We also observed that all groups used more external modifications when addressing requests to higher status individuals than when targeting equal and lower status interlocutors. In this regard, there were statistically significant differences in all DCT and RPT groups, which suggests this factor has a significant impact on the use of external modifications in all groups as strongly suggested in most previous studies (see section 2.8.1).

Q4 Are there any pragmatic differences between the two non-native groups based on the length of time spent learning English?

The data answers this in the affirmative; specifically, the ESL participants applied more indirect request strategies over time than their EFL counterparts did. The request strategies used by the ESL group proved very similar to those of the NSE group as their duration of learning increased, but they did not attain native level, possibly because the time spent in the UK was not sufficient to do so, or maybe because not all Saudi ESL participants communicated intensively with native speakers. However, it was apparent that the length of stay in the L2 environment had a significant and positive impact on the pragmatic competence of the ESL learners' ability to use request strategies in a manner that imitated native speaker usage. With regard to internal modifiers, the ESL group significantly increased their use of internal modifications over time, as the DCT and RPT results revealed. However, those EFL

learners who had spent a longer period of time learning English relative to their counterparts also significantly increased their use of internal modifications, as revealed by the DCT results. Regarding external modifiers, the EFL results were differed notably from those of the ESL group. The EFL subgroup that had spent a longer period of time studying English employed slightly fewer external modifiers, and this was the reverse of the ESL subgroup. This means that the length of time spent learning English did not enhance the use of external modifiers. This factor slightly influenced the ESL's pragmatic competence, as the rates of internal modifications used by ESL participants in their RPTs were higher for participants who had spent a longer period of time learning English. This corresponds with earlier research, which reports that length of stay in an English speaking setting has a considerable impact upon the communicative and pragmatic competence of English language learners.

Q5 Are there any pragmatic differences among the ESL participants based on the intensity of communication with native speakers?

The answer to this is also yes, to some extent. As shown by the DCT and RPT results, the ESL sub-group that reported higher levels of communication with native speakers used significantly more indirect requests than the other sub-group. With regard to *query preparatory* sub-strategies, the DCT and RPT results showed the high intensity group used a more extensive range of *query preparatory* sub-strategies, which could be classified as similar to that of the native group. The evidence also clarifies that although the intensity of communication did influence the request strategies of the ESL group, it did not influence their use of internal modifications. Both ESL subgroups show similar frequencies in their selection of internal modifications. In terms of the use of external modifications, there were statistically significant differences noted between the DCT and RPT results across the two subgroups, whereby the ESL group increased their use of external modifiers when the intensity of their communication with native speakers increased ($p < 0.05$).

6.1.2 Discussion of Results of Refusals

Q1 How do Saudi ESL and EFL learners produce the speech acts of requests and refusals in contrast with British NSEs?

In regard to refusal strategies, all of the participating groups, in both DCT and RPT tasks, made heavy use of two refusal strategies: *non-performative* (a direct strategy) and *excuses/explanations* (an indirect strategy). *Regret* and *alternatives*, which are also indirect refusal strategies, were, respectively, the third and fourth most used choices, while the remaining four refusal strategies were rarely used. Although the results for the EFL group broadly reflect similar patterns (statements of *non-performative* and *excuses/explanations* were the most frequent) to the other two groups, the EFL participants were the most direct in their refusals: half of their responses were *non-performative* refusals, as seen in both the DCT and RPT results. The NSE and ESL groups were significantly less direct than the EFL group, and no statistically significant differences between the refusal strategies of the ESL and NSE groups, in terms of directness, were found. This indicates that the ESL group was successful in replicating native-like refusal strategies, unlike the EFL group. Regarding the use of adjuncts to refusals, the results have shown that the ESL and NSE groups applied more adjuncts to their refusals and were closer to each other in comparison to the EFL group. For example, the EFL group infrequently used *positive opinion* and overused *external justifications* as adjuncts to refusals, whereas the NSE and ESL participants showed the opposite trend, with significant differences ($p < 0.05$). However, although the EFL group used significantly fewer adjuncts than the other groups, the EFL group was still largely similar in terms of patterns – such results are generally similar to those observed in early studies (see Abdul Sattar et al., 2010; Al-Eryani, 2007; Al-Issa, 2003; Al-Kahtani, 2005; Aliakbari & Changizi, 2012; Allami & Naeimi, 2011; Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1991; Beebe et al., 1990; Chang, 2009; Chen, 2006; Felix-Brasdefer, 2004; Gass & Houck, 1999; Henstock,

2003; Ikoma & Shimura, 1994; Li, 2007; Liao & Bresnahan, 1996; Nelson et al., 2002; Ramos, 1991; Sadeghi & Savojbolaghchilar, 2011; Stevens, 1993).

In order to answer the above research question thoroughly and concisely, the following DCT and RPT data tables combine these two aspects of refusals for each group. The tables classify the request strategies into direct and indirect, and show the percentages of adjuncts of each type used (for detailed percentages, please see subsections 5.1.1 and 5.2.1). The following tables summarise how the NSEs performed the speech act of refusal:

DCT refusals of the NSE group (360 refusals)	
Direct Strategies (147)	Indirect Strategies (213)
40.8%	**59.2%**
Adjuncts used with 140 of the direct strategies, comprising **95.2%**	Adjuncts used with 187 of the indirect strategies, comprising **87.9%**

Table 6.7 DCT refusals of the NSE group

RPT refusals of the NSE group (180 refusals)	
Direct Strategies (68)	Indirect Strategies (112)
37.5%	**62.5%**
Adjuncts used with 65 of the direct strategies, comprising **95.6%**	Adjuncts used with 101 of the indirect strategies, comprising **90.2%**

Table 6.8 RPT refusals of the NSE group

The above tables show the overall percentages of direct and indirect strategies used by the NSE group. They reveal that the NSEs' use of adjuncts increased when using direct refusal strategies in order to make the refusals more polite, as direct refusals are seen to be less polite than indirect refusals. This is how the NSE group performed the speech act of refusal, as they used considerably more indirect strategies when refusing, and significantly modified their requests through employing more adjuncts. This will now be compared to the

non-native groups. The following tables show first how the ESL group performed the speech act of refusal:

DCT refusals of the ESL group (540 refusals)	
Direct Strategies (212)	Indirect Strategies (328)
39.3%	**60.7%**
Adjuncts used with 194 of the direct strategies, comprising **91.5%**	Adjuncts used with 275 of the indirect strategies, comprising **83.8%**

Table 6.9 DCT refusals of the ESL group

RPT refusals of the ESL group (270 refusals)	
Direct Strategies (99)	Indirect Strategies (171)
36.7%	**63.3%**
Adjuncts used with 92 of the direct strategies, comprising **92.9%**	Adjuncts used with 151 of the indirect strategies, comprising **88.3%**

Table 6.10 RPT refusals of the ESL group

The above ESL tables show that the use of adjuncts increased with direct refusal strategies; however, this increase was not as significant as for the NSE group. The ESL group used significantly more indirect strategies in their refusals, and significantly modified the directness of their requests through employing more adjuncts with direct refusals. This suggests that the ESL group succeeded in replicating, to some degree, the native use of refusals.

The following tables show how the EFL participants performed the speech act of refusal in comparison to the other two groups:

DCT refusals of the EFL group (540 refusals)	
Direct Strategies (274)	Indirect Strategies (266)
50.7%	**49.3%**
Adjuncts used with 231 of the direct strategies, comprising **84.3%**	Adjuncts used with 221 of the indirect strategies, comprising **83.1%**

Table 6.11 DCT refusals of the EFL group

RPT refusals of the EFL group (270 refusals)	
Direct Strategies (130)	Indirect Strategies (140)
48.3%	**51.7%**
Adjuncts used with 116 of the direct strategies, comprising **89.2%**	Adjuncts used with 115 of the indirect strategies, comprising **82.1%**

Table 6.12 RPT refusals of the EFL group

The above tables show that, unlike the other two groups, the EFL participants' use of adjuncts did not increase with their use of direct refusal strategies, which suggests that the EFL group was the most direct and the most unique group in terms of refusal strategies and adjuncts to the refusals.

Q2 Are there any differences between the three groups when refusing offers, invitations, and requests?

With regard to the refusal strategies, all groups significantly changed their refusal strategies according to the types of initiating speech acts. Participants were less direct when refusing requests in comparison to invitations and offers. Although the EFL group shifted in the same direction as the other two groups, they were still significantly more indirect than the other two groups when refusing requests, as well as when refusing invitations and offers. Thus, the productions of the ESL group were significantly closer to the native patterns in both cases. Regarding the use of adjuncts to refusals, all groups used significantly fewer adjuncts when refusing invitations and offers, but significantly increased the use of adjuncts of *positive*

opinion, empathy, and *justification* when refusing requests. Statements of *gratitude and appreciation* were extensively used by all groups when refusing *invitations* and *offers*. However, the EFL group made significantly fewer *gratitude and appreciation* choices compared to the other two groups when refusing invitations and offers. The EFL group also showed fewer instances of *positive opinions* and *empathy* compared to the other two groups when refusing invitations and offers, and used more *justifications* than the other two groups in both cases. The results for the ESL group were closer in both cases to those for the NSE group.

Q3 Are there any differences between the three groups with regard to making refusals when interacting with interlocutors of higher, equal, and lower status?

With regard to the interlocutor's status, this influenced the refusal strategies used by participants, with significant differences between and across groups. Generally, all groups favoured direct strategies more often with equal and higher status individuals, and the use of *alternative* strategies was found to be higher in all groups when refusing individuals of lower status, compared to those of equal or higher status. It was also observed that the EFL group used *excuses* and *explanations* significantly more when refusing lower status individuals than they did for equal and higher status individuals, which is the opposite of what was found for the ESL and NSE groups. Thus, it can be generally concluded that the EFL group was different from the other two groups, and that the ESL group was closer in their production choices to the native group. The DCT and role-play results regarding the impact of interlocutor status on refusal strategies again showed no differences. Regarding the use of adjuncts to refusals, all groups showed a significant shift toward using more adjuncts to their refusals as the social status of interlocutors increased. The data has also shown that the ESL participants were the closest in their choices to the native group.

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Q4 Are there any pragmatic differences between the two non-native groups based on the duration of English learning?

This study has found that the EFL and ESL participants applied more indirect refusal strategies if they had been learning English for longer. However, the DCT and role-play data revealed that the refusal strategies of the ESL participants was significantly more similar to the NSE results when the duration of English learning increased. Regarding the use of adjuncts to refusals, the DCT and role-play findings tended to suggest that the ESL participants significantly increased their use of adjuncts to refusals over time. However, the EFL participants who had been learning English for longer significantly increased their use of adjuncts to refusals in the DCT results only. The literature review has not much discussed the impact of the duration of English learning on the production of refusals, and such findings need to be further investigated in future studies.

Q5 Are there any pragmatic differences amongst the ESL participants based on their intensity of communication with native speakers?

With regard to the ESL participants' intensity of communication with native speakers, the DCT and role-play results have shown that this variable did have an impact on their refusal strategy choices. The more the members of the ESL group had communicated with native speakers, the more indirect refusal strategies they used. Regarding the use of adjuncts to refusals, a statistically significant difference was found between the two subgroups in regard to the frequencies of adjuncts to refusals, as the DCT and role-play data revealed that the ESL participants who had communicated more with native speakers increased their use of adjuncts. However, the impact of the intensity of communication with native speakers on the production of refusals has not been discussed at all in previous studies, and these results need to be further checked in future studies.

6.2 Conclusion

As stated in Chapter Two, in our increasingly connected world, it is becoming ever more important that L2 learners of English attain true communicative competence, which "entails both linguistic competence (for example, knowledge of grammatical rules) and pragmatic competence (for example, knowledge of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour in a particular situation)" (Ellis, 1994, p. 696). Pragmatic competence has been regarded as one of the main factors in successful communication, as *linguistic competence* alone would not allow learners to use the target language meaningfully. Not only do people need to learn the content of the languages, it is also desirable that they learn what to say and when during global encounters. Taking this into consideration, this study aimed to contribute to the ILP research by discussing the pragmatic competence of different groups of English speakers. More specifically, this thesis was designed to investigate whether differences exist in the pragmatic competences of Saudi EFL speakers, Saudi ESL speakers, and NSEs when performing the speech acts of requests and refusals. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do Saudi ESL and EFL learners produce the speech acts of requests and refusals with comparison to British NSEs?
2. Are there any pragmatic differences between the three groups when making requests and refusals with high and low impositions?
3. Are there any pragmatic differences between the three groups with regard to making requests and refusals when interacting with interlocutors from higher, equal and lower statuses?
4. Are there any pragmatic differences between the two non-native groups based on the length of time spent learning English?
5. Are there any pragmatic differences among the ESL participants based on the intensity of communication with native speakers?

The first three chapters of this study introduced and described the theoretical, conceptual, and methodological treatment of the topic being researched. In Chapters 4 and 5,

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the research findings (including differences in the use of requests and refusals across groups) were fully presented, as were the four variables that influenced their use (the degree of imposition, the interlocutor's status, the length of time that the learner had been learning English, and the intensity of communication with native speakers). This chapter (6) discussed first the results of the study in the first main section (6.1), and now aims to conclude this thesis by summarising the major finding of the study (6.2.1), suggesting several implications of those findings (6.2.2), presenting the limitations of this study, and providing recommendations for teaching and further research are presented (6.2.3).

6.2.1 Summary of the Major Findings of the Study

The chapters (4 and 5) dedicated to the results detailed the pragmatic differences between the three groups in terms of the performance of the speech acts of requests and refusals. The analysis focused on two aspects of these two speech acts: request/refusal strategies and modifications/adjuncts used in conjunction with these strategies. Since request/refusal strategies represent the actual illocutionary acts and are important elements in the formation of those speech acts (see subsections 2.8.1 and 2.9.1), these strategies will be reviewed here before discussing the politeness modifications and adjuncts that accompany these strategies. The overall findings of this thesis have shown that the NSE group used considerably more indirect than direct strategies when performing both requests and refusals; this supports the findings reported in the literature (see Beebe et al., 1990; Bella, 2011; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Cenoz & Valencia, 1996; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008; Faerch & Kasper, 1989; Hassall, 2001; House, 1989; House & Kasper, 1981; Hutz, 2006; Tanaka, 1988; Yu, 1999). The studies conclude that, for both requests and refusals, the use of indirect strategies is closely linked with politeness. Thus, as discussed in the literature review chapter, competent L2 learners of English are expected to follow this pattern of directness in their requests and refusals. This thesis found that, although the two non-native (EFL and ESL)

groups also employed more indirect than direct strategies in their responses, they were significantly more direct than the native group. This suggests that the non-native groups succeeded, to some extent, in replicating the pragmatic norms of requests and refusals in terms of directness, even though notable pragmatic differences remained.

When examining how the two non-native groups use strategies for making requests and refusals, the results showed that, with regard to directness and the types of strategies used, the ESL group was the closest to the NSE group. In other words, the ESL group displays more pragmatic competence in the use of directness strategies than the EFL group. Thus, it was inferred that the learning environment had influenced their acquisition of pragmatics. These findings are in line with those of many studies that suggest that, in general, non-native speakers tend to be more direct than native speakers when performing FTAs in English (e.g. House & Kasper, 1987; Cenoz & Valencia, 1996; Faerch & Kasper, 1989; Trosborg, 1995). However, there has, to date, been a lack of studies comparing EFL and ESL pragmatics. In this regard, this study has revealed that EFL participants are more direct (and therefore less polite) when requesting or refusing than their ESL counterparts.

The level of imposition (high/low) involved in the speech acts was one of the factors reported in the literature as affecting the ways in which speech acts (especially FTAs) should be performed. Firstly, with regard to the impact of the degree of imposition on the use of request strategies, the results clarified that all three groups tended to be less direct when making high-imposition rather than low-imposition requests. However, this occurred to a greater degree in the NSE group, followed by the ESL group. Conversely, the EFL group appeared to give much less consideration to this factor, suggesting they had not acquired the level of pragmalinguistic ability required to perform different types of requests in the same way that native speakers would do. With regard to the speech acts of refusals, it was also found that all groups varied in their refusal strategies according to the initial speech act soliciting assistance. In every group, the differences between the two contexts (refusing

requests and refusing invitations/offers) were statistically significant. Groups (especially the NSE participants) were significantly less direct when refusing requests (high imposition) than when declining invitations and offers (low imposition). Once again, the ESL participants were, in both cases, better able to replicate the ways in which NSEs would refuse, as there were no statistically significant differences in the use of direct and indirect refusals between the two groups in either context. However, the EFL group were still significantly more direct than the other two groups when refusing requests, and also when refusing invitations and offers. Such differences between the EFL and ESL groups further suggest the pragmatics of English is acquired differently by different groups of English learners when learning environments diverge.

In addition to the role of imposition in the performance of FTAs, the impact of social status on the performance of request and refusal strategies was also examined. In the speech acts of requests, for example, this sociopragmatic factor was shown to have influenced the use of request strategies, with significant differences being observed within and between groups. The results show that, in all groups, the use of direct strategies in requests reduced when requests were being made to interlocutors with a higher social status; this was particularly the case for the NSE and ESL groups. When comparing the results of the two non-native groups, the ESL group demonstrated greater sociopragmatic understanding of the use of requests than the EFL group, as they were more conscious about the role of social status when requesting (see subsection 4.2.3 for more details). Moreover, in the speech acts of refusals, all groups opted to use a *non-performative* strategy (a direct strategy) significantly more often when interacting with people of equal or higher social status than with those of lower status. Conversely, the use of an *alternative* strategy (an indirect strategy) was significantly more frequent in all groups when refusing requests from people of lower statuses than when refusing those from people of equal or higher statuses. However, it can be concluded that the EFL group was the most direct when refusing people from all statuses; this is because they are

the most direct overall, for the reasons discussed above. The EFL group also used *excuses and explanations* significantly more than the two other groups when refusing requests from lower status people when refusing those from equal and higher status individuals. Thus, we can generally conclude that the EFL group is different from the other two groups in terms of refusal strategies. Furthermore, the ESL group was closer to the native group in this regard, despite not reaching native-level competence in most of their responses (see subsection 5.1.3 for more details).

The summary of the results above shows that there are general pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic differences in the use of request/refusal strategies between the three groups. In addition, the study has investigated the role of two other factors that are believed to have an impact on the pragmatic competence of non-native learners (i.e. the length of time that the person has been learning English and the intensity of their communication with native speakers of English). With regard to the length of time that the individual has been learning English, the results pertaining to requests suggest that, over time, the ESL participants used more indirect request strategies than their EFL counterparts. The request strategies used by the ESL group tended to mirror the NSEs' ways of requesting as their duration of English learning increased but they did not achieve a completely native level of proficiency in this regard. This may be explained by the fact that the participants in this group had not spent sufficient time in the UK to reach this level, or indeed by the fact that not all Saudi ESL participants communicated intensively with native speakers (see the following paragraphs). As detailed above, the length of time spent learning English had less impact on the request strategies used by the EFL participants. This leads us to believe that other factors besides the duration of language learning, such as greater exposure to the L2 culture, are responsible for enhancing the pragmatics of ESL learners. Generally speaking, it is fair to say that the results above have been in line with previous studies, which have suggested that that both learning in the L2 environment and the length of stay in the L2 environment have a positive impact on

the pragmatic awareness and pragmatic competence of English language learners. This result was also confirmed by the findings relating to the use of refusals, as the duration of learning English also influenced the pragmatics of non-native groups. For example, both the DCT and RPT data show that, for both EFL and ESL participants, the longer the participants had been learning English, the more they used indirect refusal strategies, thereby resembling the patterns of the native group. This suggests that, in terms of performing refusal strategies, the length of time spent learning English plays a role in the pragmatic development of both groups. However, the use of indirect refusal strategies more frequent in the ESL as the duration of learning increased; this can be attributed, as already mentioned, to the role of the learning environment (see subsection 5.1.4 for more details).

Finally, with regard to request/refusal strategies, several pragmatic differences can be observed within the ESL group resulting from the intensity of their communication with native speakers. The findings pertaining to requests, for example, demonstrate that the ESL sub-group that had more opportunities for communication with native speakers was significantly less direct (less imposing and more polite) than the other sub-group that had less communication with native speakers. With regard to the *query preparatory* sub-strategies, the DCT and RPT results have shown that ESL participants who communicate more with native speakers used a greater range of *query preparatory* sub-strategies. In this aspect, they behaved in a similar way to the native speakers. The results relating to refusals also show that the ESL sub-groups that had a higher intensity of communication with native speakers were significantly less direct and much closer to the native speakers in their use of refusal strategies. This seems to suggest that participants with less intense communication with native speakers were not aware of which strategies would be appropriate. With more exposure to the L2 culture, they learn what is expected in that culture and then adopt a more appropriate strategy (see subsection 5.1.5 for more details).

The above summary explains how the three groups dealt with strategies (the core part of requests and refusals). Chapters 4 and 5 also examined the modifications and adjuncts used along with these strategies to soften and mitigate the effect of such FATs. Firstly, with regard to the use of modifiers in requests, it was found that the NSE group used significantly more internal modifications (especially *please*) than the non-native groups. The ESL group used more internal modifications (including *please*) than the EFL participants but the difference between the two non-native groups was only statistically significant in RPTs, and not in DCTs. The results suggest that the behaviour of the ESL group was the closer to that of the NSE group in the use of internal modifiers that smooth requests and minimise the interlocutor's discomfort (see subsection 4.3.1 for more details). The analysis of the differences in the use of external modifiers between groups revealed that the NSE and ESL groups used significantly more external modifiers than the EFL group. However, the non-native groups (especially the EFL group) were more likely to combine more than one external modifier in a single request (mostly *linguistic devices* with grounders) than the native group (see subsection 4.4.1 for more details). In the speech acts of refusals, the findings show that the ESL and NSE groups made similar choices of adjuncts (specifically statements of *positive opinion*, *empathy* and *gratitude/appreciation*) in the DCT and RPT tasks. The EFL group, on the other hand, made very different choices with regard to the use of adjuncts. Moreover, the frequencies with which adjuncts were used, as detailed in subsection 5.2.1, were also different between groups. However, it can be said that the choices and frequency rates of adjuncts to refusals were similar for the ESL and NSE groups.

The impact of the degree of imposition on the use of modifiers and adjuncts to the speech acts under study also was examined. Generally speaking, the EFL group was less sensitive to the degree of imposition when using internal and external modifiers in their requests. The NSE and ESL groups used more internal and external modifiers when making high-imposition requests, and the differences between the two degrees of imposition in both

groups were statistically significant in both the DCT and RPT results. Thus, it can be said that the ESL group is the closer to the native group as far as the use of internal and external modifiers is concerned. From the analysis of refusals, it can be concluded that all DCT and RPT groups used fewer adjuncts when refusing invitations and offers. Specifically, they used more adjuncts of *positive opinion,* and *empathy and justification* when refusing requests, whereas the statements of *gratitude and appreciation* were extensively used when refusing *invitations* and *offers*. However, the EFL group tended to display less *gratitude & appreciation* than the other two groups when refusing invitations and offers, and also, compared to the other two groups, produced fewer instances of *positive opinions and empathy* when refusing requests. Thus, it can be safely said that the ESL group has learned many of the pragmatic patterns used by native speakers.

The results also highlight the role that the interlocutor's status (lower/equal/higher) plays in the use of modifiers and adjuncts in requests and refusals for the three participating groups. With regard to the speech act of requests, all three groups were conscious of the role of social status in the use of internal modifiers; they all increased the use of internal modifiers (specifically *please*) as the social status of the hearer increased: this was confirmed by the DCT results. The data strongly suggest that all groups tended to use more external modifiers when interacting with people of a higher social status. This was statistically significant for the DCT and RPT results of the ESL and NSE groups, but in the EFL group, this was only the case for the DCT results. With regard to refusals, the results show that all groups used more adjuncts when refusing requests from individuals of equal and higher status. In all RPT groups, refusals not involving modifications were more frequent when addressing people of a lower status. Thus, the findings above indicate that, in all groups, there is a significant shift towards using more politeness adjuncts in refusals when the social status of interlocutors increased. We can also see that the ESL participants were the closest in their choices to the language used by the native group.

As for the impact of length of learning on the modifications and adjuncts produced by the three groups, the results revealed that, in the ESL group, the use of internal modifications increases significantly over time. In the EFL group, however, only the DCT results indicate that learners who have been learning English for a longer period of time display a significantly greater use of internal modifications. The results relating to external modifiers show that EFL participants who have studied English for a longer period of time employed external modifiers with a similar frequency to those who have been learning English for a shorter period of time. This finding confirms that the time spent learning English has no influence on EFL speakers' use of external modifiers. However, a significant increase could be noted in the rates of external modifications used by ESL participants who have spent a longer period of time learning English. The findings relating to the speech acts of refusals suggest that those who had been learning English for longer used significantly more politeness adjuncts to refusals.

With regard to the intensity of communication with native speakers, it is worth bearing in mind that, although intensity of communication has influenced the request strategies of the ESL group, the data suggest that this factor has no impact on their use of internal modifications in requests. In both ESL subgroups, participants used internal modifications at a similar rate, regardless of the amount of communication that they had with native speakers. This may suggest that, for ESL learners, the intensity of communication with native speakers does not play an important role in the development of internal modifications. Although intensity of communication with native speakers has no impact on the ESL participants' use of internal modifications (as discussed in Section 4.2), it did influence their use of external modifications. The ESL group that communicated more with native speakers used external modifications more frequently. In the speech acts of refusals, we can confirm that the intensity of communication with native speakers has an impact on ESL participants' use of adjuncts to refusals. The ESL group with greater levels of communication with native

speakers used significantly more to refusals. To conclude this section, it is worth repeating that detailed answers to the research questions of this thesis can be found in Chapters 4 and 5, in which the findings are presented.

6.2.2   Implications of the findings

The implications of this study were twofold: pedagogical implications and implications for researchers. Firstly, this thesis has several pedagogical implications, as numerous examples have shown that non-native speakers (especially EFL students) occasionally have gaps in both their pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge of English. Clearly, these must be addressed if native-level competence is the aim. Accordingly, it is vital to focus on both types of knowledge when teaching or learning English. With regard to sociopragmatic competence, it is important to highlight the importance of sociopragmatic features and how they affect communication. For instance, the findings of the present study clearly show that the variables of status and distance were crucial in determining how requests and refusals were realised and performed by groups. With regard to pragmalinguistic competence, it is important, as was observed in this study, to highlight how request and refusal strategies are socially formed and accepted in English. The study also showed that Saudi EFLs, Saudi ESLs and British NSEs have many request and refusal strategies in common, but these strategies are sometimes used and distributed differently. Thus, it is also important for EFL and ESL learners to learn about the pragmatic functions of certain syntactic structures in English in order to be able to perform speech acts adequately. However, there had been no overt teaching of this for the ESL group; it is most likely that they have acquired this knowledge through contact with native speakers. Towards the end of the analysis section, some findings suggested that certain variables have no effect on EFL participants. It is possible that this is due to the learning environment, poor design of their course books, or that these items are simply not taught at all. Thus, no matter how long they spend learning

English, they will never acquire this knowledge over time if it is not properly observed or taught. It is possible that English courses in Saudi Arabia need to be reviewed to ensure that syllabi, materials, and role-play situations reflect what actually happens and replicate the ESL environment more accurately.

This study may help education providers or classroom teachers to produce materials that reflect the target culture more accurately and raise L2 learners' awareness of pragmatic factors. The findings of this research could be also useful for L2 teacher-training courses. In addition, fixed expressions that are commonly used in everyday interactions should be taught explicitly to students, who should also be taught to use these expressions appropriately, taking into account all relevant contextual factors. *Awareness raising* is the best way to teach students this type of pragmatic information; this approach is advocated by a number of researchers (see Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Rose, 1999). In this approach, students are encouraged to discover pragmatic information by themselves, rather than being taught this information explicitly. This could be achieved by paying close attention to context and examining how different contextual factors affect communication. Furthermore, it is very important to point out that English language teachers need to be particularly sensitive when teaching sociopragmatic information to their students. Thomas (1983, p. 104) explains that:

> [S]ociopragmatic decisions are social before they are linguistic, and while foreign learners are fairly amenable to corrections which they regard as linguistic, they are justifiably sensitive about having their social judgment called into question.

Therefore, teachers should provide sociopragmatic information to learners and let them choose how to express themselves in the target language (Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Thomas, 1983).

This study also has implications for research design. The coding schemes of speech acts are indispensable for coding and classifying data in this type of study. It is important to see coding schemes as a set of keys by which data is arranged, rather than a set of rules to

which data should be confined. As was done in this study, researchers need to modify the coding schemes in order to fit their collected data because further research into the coding schemes of speech acts is required. There is scope for improving most of the coding schemes used in previous studies so as to reflect the pragmatics of different speakers of English language, for example.

6.2.3 Strengths, limitations and suggestions for further research

The main strength of this thesis lies in the fact that it examines two speech acts rather than one, as well as in the combination of two data collection methods instead of using just one. The examination of how different groups of speakers perform two speech acts is thought to provide a comprehensive account of their pragmatic knowledge. In terms of methodology, it must be acknowledged that this study is one of the very few ILP studies to combine two methods of data collection (i.e. DCT and RPT). Although the DCT task has been found to be efficient in pragmatic studies, RPTs are very effective in the sense that, much like real-life events, they unfold freely. Furthermore, they produce very useful data for analysis and also compensate for some of the limitations of the DCT. Another strength of this study was that the numbers of participants were notably higher than in similar studies covering three different groups of English speakers.

In spite of the strengths summarised above, this study also has some limitations. For instance, a salient issue is the difficulty of classifying data, which proved to be somewhat challenging. Although measures for data classification were put in place, it was sometimes confusing to decide whether certain utterances should be classed as direct or indirect. Furthermore, it was difficult to analyse internal and external modifications to requests and adjuncts to refusals alongside the actual requests or refusals and then count them separately in this study. This made it hard to learn which modifiers go with which request/refusal strategies and also caused problems with the accurate categorisation of utterances in accordance with

Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987). However, in the last section of each results chapter, efforts have been made to combine and analyses these elements together. Additionally, this study did not examine how the speech acts of requests and refusals are performed in the Arabic language, as this was not a focus of the study. However, this information could, if studied, reveal whether or not transfer from the Arabic culture is an influential factor for Saudi learners of English.

Finally, the study also makes some recommendations for future research into interlanguage pragmatics in Saudi Arabia, where such studies have been very scarce. The theoretical and methodological parts of the present study can be used as a baseline for exploring other speech acts performed either in English or in Arabic. Given that gender, educational background, and age were not examined in this study, different insightful findings may be obtained by studying the effects of these variables on the performance of speech acts by Saudi learners of English. Additionally, the transfer of the pragmatics of L1 when using L2 was not discussed in the present study, thus providing a research opportunity for those who are interested in examining this cross-cultural issue. As this study examined the pragmatic competence of Saudis when performing requests and refusals, further research could be conducted into other speech acts in order to gain a fuller understanding of pragmatic competence in those speech acts.

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Appendix (1)

Discourse Completion Task (DCT)

Thank you for taking part in this study. The aim of this research is to explore and compare the pragmatic competence of two groups of English language learners: <u>Saudi learners of English</u> in Saudi Arabia where English is taught and used as a foreign language (EFL Group), and <u>Saudi learners</u> who have been sponsored by the Saudi Ministry of Education to begin learning English in the United Kingdom for at least two years before continuing their education at British universities (ESL Group). <u>A third group of native speakers of English (NSE)</u> will act as a control group. This research contributes to interlanguage pragmatic studies by examining how the pragmatics of requests and refusals are acquired and used by ESL and EFL learners. This study also will examine and discuss the factors influencing the acquisition of pragmatics.

The data that you provide will be held confidentially. I have fully anonymised your data and discarding all information that may identify you. You retain the right to withdraw your data without explanation by contacting the researcher named below, this right also applies retrospectively. If you have any questions about this study or your participation in it, please contact:

Muhammed Altheeby,

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School of English, Communication & Philosophy,

Cardiff University

CONSENT FORM

1. I understand that my participation in this project will involve completing a Discourse-Completion Task (DCT) <u>and/or</u> Role-Play Task in regard to how I request and refuse in English, and that it will require approximately 30 minutes of my time.

2. I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

3. I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time. If, for any reason, I experience discomfort during participation in this project, I am free to withdraw or discuss my concerns with the researcher.

4. I understand that the information provided by me will be used for research purposes only, and will be held totally anonymously, so that it is impossible to trace this information back to me individually. I understand that this information may be retained indefinitely.

5. I understand that information provided by me for this study, including my own words, may be used in the research report, but that all such information and/or quotes will be anonymised.

6. I also understand that I will be provided with additional information and feedback at the end of the study.

I, _____(PRINT NAME), consent to participate in the study conducted by *Muhammed Altheeby,* School of English, Communication & Philosophy, Cardiff University under the supervision of *Dr Mercedes Durham.*

Date:

PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Gender:……………..   2. Age: ………………..

The following questions to be answered only by the non-native speakers of English

3. What is the most recent language-proficiency test that you have taken and what was your score?

	Test	Score
( )	IELTS	………
( )	TOFEL	………
( )	STEP	………

4. How would you rate your communication in English?

(   ) Fair   (   ) Good   (   ) Excellent

5. Length of learning English:

(   ) Less than 2 years   (   ) 2 – 4 years   (   ) 5 years or more

The following questions to be answered only by ESL learners

6. Hours per week socialising with native speakers of English in the last two years:

…………… hours a week

7. Length of residence in English-speaking countries (e.g. USA, UK, etc.):

……………….. years

INSTRUCTIONS

This questionnaire consists of two sections. In Section One, you will read nine incomplete scenarios and you will need to complete each scenario by requesting something. Section Two also comprises nine incomplete scenarios that need to be completed by making a refusal, as explained in each scenario. You need to imagine yourself in the following scenarios, and then write down what you would usually if you were a participant in an actual situation.

SECTION (1)

REQUEST SCENARIOS

1- You are a new student at the university and are looking for your classroom (B123). While searching, you find a student in the corridor and you want to ask him where your classroom is. You say:

…………………………………..…………………………..…………………………………………

…………………………………..………………………..…………………………………………

…………………………………..………………………..…………………………………………

……….…………………………………………………………..

2- You are now in your classroom (B123). It is very hot and stuffy. You look around and see that your lecturer is near to the window, and you want him/her to open the window. You say:

…………………………………..………………………..…………………………………………

…………………………………..………………..…………………………………………

…………………………………………..……………..…………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………..

3- You have very long questionnaires that need to be filled in by students from another department. You go there and see a student in the hallway. You say:

…………………………………..…………………………..…………………………………………

…………………………………..…………………..…………………………………………………

…………………………………………..…………………..……………………………………………

………………………………………………………………..

4- You have a crucial meeting with your professor this Wednesday, but you cannot attend for some reason. This is the second time that this has happened this month. You need to ask your professor to reschedule your meeting. You say:

…………………………………..…………………………..…………………………………………

…………………………………..…………………..…………………………………………………

…………………………………………..…………………..……………………………………………

………………………………………………………………..

5- You are now a professor going to your classroom (B123). Two students are talking in the doorway. You need to ask them to move away from the door. You say:

…………………………………..…………………………..…………………………………………

…………………………………..…………………..…………………………………………………

………………………………………………..……………..…………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………..

6- You are a professor and have been away for a week. You go to your office and find a number of overdue tasks that you need to do. You decide to go to one of your postgraduate students and ask for help. You say to your student:

………………………………….…………………….………………………………………

…………………………………..…………………….………………………………………

………………………………………..…………………….………………………………………

………………………………………………………………..

7- You are an undergraduate student. You need a book from the library in order to finish your assignment on time. The library is closed and the only person you know who has a copy of this book is one of your classmates. You meet your classmate in the corridor:

………………………………….…………………….………………………………………

…………………………………….…………………….………………………………………

………………………………………..…………….………………………………………

………………………………………………………………..

8- This time, you are a postgraduate student. You need a book from the library to in order to finish your assignment on time. The library is closed and the only person you know who has this book is one of your lecturers. You meet your lecturer in the corridor:

…………………………………………..…………………………..………………………………………………
…………………………………………..……………..…………………………………………………
…………………………………………..…………………..…………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………..

9- You are a university professor. You need a book from the library so that you can finish your research this week. The library is closed and the only person you know who has this book is one of your students. You meet your student in the corridor:

…………………………………..…………………..…………………………………………
…………………………………………..……………..…………………………………………………
…………………………………………..……………..…………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………..

SECTION (2)

REFUSAL SCENARIOS

10- It is Friday afternoon. You meet a friend in front of your department. He says that he is going to the beach next Sunday and invites you to join, but you cannot go.

<u>Your friend:</u> "Hey, I am going to the beach next Sunday, do you want to come along?"

<u>You</u>:……………………………..………………………..…………………………………

………………………………………………………….………………………………………

……………………………………………..……………..………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………..

11- You are about to leave your office and your boss stops you and invites you to have dinner with him. You cannot go, and you have to refuse his invitation.

<u>Your boss:</u> "Oh by the way, I am going to have a dinner in a nearby restaurant. I would be very pleased if you could come"

<u>You</u>:……………………………….……………………..…………………………………

…………………………………………….………………….………………………………………

……………………………………………..……………..………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………..

12- You are a senior undergraduate student. During your break time, you happen to have a brief chat with a lecturer who is organising some events for fresher's week orientation. The

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lecturer – who is going to teach you next semester – asks if you can help with this, but you do not want to.

Lecturer: "We are going to have some activities for fresher's week orientation. As you are a senior student, we would be very pleased if you could help us."

You:………………………………….…………………………..…………………………………

………………………………………………….…………………….…………………………………

………………………………………………….…………………….…………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………..

13- Your colleague's laptop has been infected by a computer virus while downloading files from the company website. He has tried some new anti-virus software, but this has not been effective. He then asks to borrow your laptop so that he can finish his work. However, you decline his request.

Colleague: "Oh! I have to finish these files today. Can I use your laptop please?"

You:………………………………….…………………………..…………………………………

………………………………………………….…………………….…………………………………

………………………………………………….…………………….…………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………..

14- You are a lecturer at a university. You are in an administrative office busily packing books and folders for your office. One of your students appears and asks you to help him choose some books. You are busy and you decline the request.

Student: "I'm glad that you are here, could you please help me choose some books from here?"

You:…………………………………..…………………………..……………………………………

…………………………………..……………………..…………………………………………

………………………………………..……………..…….……………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………..

15- You are a manager in a company. One of your good workers needs a car right now so that she can pick her children up from school. She was hesitant about asking to use your car, but you are the only person in the office that has a car today. She comes to you and says "I need a car to pick up my children from school. Can I borrow your car for 15 minutes?"

You:……………………………..…………………………..…………………………………

…………………………………..…………………..…………………………………………

………………………………………..……………..…….……………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………..

16- You visit your friend's home. He invites you in and offers you something to drink but you have just had a drink.

Your friend: "Would you like a drink?"

You:…………………………………..…………………………..…………………………………

…………………………………..……………………..…………………………………………

………………………………………..……………..…….……………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………..

17- You visit your boss's home. He invites you in and offers you something to drink, and you have just had a drink.

Your boss: "Would you like a drink?"

You:……………………………………..…………………………………..……………………………………

…………………………………………………..……………………..…………………………………………

…………………………………………………..……………………..…………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………..

18- You visit your student's home. He invites you in and offers you something to drink but you have just had a drink.

Your student: "Would you like a drink?"

You:………………………………..…………………………..……………………………………

…………………………………………………..……………………..…………………………………………

…………………………………………………..……………………..…………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………..

Thank you

Appendix (2)

Open Role Play Task

<u>INSTRUCTIONS:</u>

These conversations will take place between a pair of students – you and another student. You will be given cards with descriptions of scenarios. In each scenario, one student has to request something and the other student has to refuse the request, following the descriptions given on each card. You will be allowed to prepare for a few minutes before your conversation is tape recorded. You will need to imagine yourself in the following situations and write down what you would usually say if you were a participant in such a situation in real life.

Role Play I

Card 1 (Requesting something of a supervisor):

You are an undergraduate student, and you are in a project group that consists of five students. You did not get along with your group as you realised that you were the only person in the group who was actually working on the project. You told the project supervisor about this and all he did was email the other group members to ask them to cooperate with you. However, you continued doing all the work. Your project, which is due soon, is now far from completion. You want to see your supervisor and ask to be allowed to join another group.

Your Role: asking your professor to allow you to join another group.

Card 2 (Refusing a request made by a student):

You are a lecturer and a supervisor of five project groups. Each group consists of five students who have been told from the first day that they should choose their topics and groups carefully as no changes can be made later. The groups have been working on their projects for six weeks and completed projects must be submitted to you in five days' time. You know that there has been a lack of cooperation among the members of one group (Group A), and a hard-working student from group A is in your office now.

Your Role: You will listen to your student's request and you will have to refuse it.

Role Play II

Card 1 (requesting something from a classmate):

You are a third-year student, and you are taking a more advanced course. You have found some parts of this course to be very challenging for you. You have a test in three days' time, and you need help with understanding one of the points. One of your classmates has demonstrated that he has a great grasp of this course and you want him to help you. You have known him for three semesters and you helped him last semester. You are now face to face with him.

Your Role: asking your classmate to explain some aspects of this course.

Card 2 (refusing a classmate's request):

You are a third-year student, and you are very busy this semester. You are busy with your courses and busy with your part-time job. One of your classmates (a helpful one) asks to see you after the course. It seems that your classmate wants to ask you something.

Your Role: You will listen to your classmate's request and you will have to refuse it.

Role Play III

Card 1 (making a request to a student):

You are a professor, and a supervisor of five MA students. You are working on new research. You have designed questionnaires and you are about to distribute them in order to collect data. You need someone to help you with data collection. One of your MA students is now in your office and you will ask your student to help you.

Your Role: you will ask your student to help you with distributing your questionnaires.

Card 2 (refusing a request made by a professor):

You are an MA student and are very busy. You are now in your professor's office. You came for a regular meeting, but your professor asks you to stay for a bit longer because your professor wants you to help out with something.

Your Role: You will listen to your supervisor and you will have to refuse the request.

Role Play IV

Card 1 (requesting a favour from a worker):

You work in a coffee shop as a manager. You are outside your shop calling your mother, and your mobile phone battery dies before she has finished talking to you. You go back inside the shop and ask one of your workers to lend you their mobile phone so you can call your mother (who lives in the same city) for just one minute.

Your Role: You will ask a worker to lend you their mobile phone.

Card 2 (refusing a request from a boss):

You work in a coffee shop. You are waiting for a very important call this morning. You put your mobile in front of you and keep looking at it every minute. Your manager was outside calling somebody, and then your manager comes back in and asks to borrow your mobile to make a short call. You have to refuse your manager's request.

Your Role: You will listen to your manager's request and you will have to refuse it.

Role Play V

<u>**Card 1**</u> (Requesting something from a supervisor):

You have a crucial meeting with your professor this Wednesday, but you cannot attend for some reason. This is the second time that this has happened this month. You are now in your professor's office and you need to ask your professor to reschedule your meeting.

Your Role: You will ask your professor to reschedule your meeting.

<u>**Card 2**</u> (Refusing a request made by a student):

You are a professor with a very busy schedule. You know that most of your students are not happy because you do not meet them in your office as often as they want. One of your hard-working students is in your office asking to reschedule a meeting from this week to next week but you cannot accommodate this request.

Your Role: You will listen to your student's request and you will have to refuse it.

Role Play VI

Card 1 (making a request to a colleague):

You are a lecturer, and have a lecture in ten minutes. You are now in your office with some visitors who will be staying for another twenty minutes. You decide to go to your colleague in the next office and ask him/her to go and tell your students that you will be late.

Your Role: You will ask your colleague to tell your students that you will be late.

Card 2 (refusing a colleague's request):

You are a lecturer and you have just finished a long lecture. You have a headache and you decide to have a rest for 40 minutes before your next lecture. A colleague comes to you asking you to go to his students in another building and tell them that he is going to be late.

Your Role: You will listen to your colleague's request and you will have to refuse it.

Role Play VII (Offers-Invitations)

1- It is Friday afternoon. You meet a friend in front of your department. He says that he is going to the beach next Sunday and invites you to join him, but you cannot go.

<u>Your friend:</u> "Hey, I am going to the beach next Sunday, do you want to come along?"

<u>You:</u>…………………..

2- You are about to leave your office and one of your employees stops you and invites you to have dinner with him. You cannot go, and you have to refuse his invitation.

<u>The employee:</u> "Oh by the way, I am going to have a dinner in a nearby restaurant. I would be very pleased if you could come"

<u>You</u>: ……………………

3- You are about to leave your office and your boss stops you and invites you to have dinner with him. You cannot go, and you have to refuse his invitation.

<u>Your boss:</u> "Oh by the way, I am going to have a dinner in a nearby restaurant. I would be very pleased if you could come"

<u>You</u>: ……………………

4- You visit your friend's home. He invites you in and offers you something to drink but you have just had a drink.

<u>Your friend:</u> "Would you like a drink?"

<u>You:</u>………………..

5- You visit your boss's home. He invites you in and offers you something to drink but you have just had a drink.

Your boss: "Would you like a drink?"

You: ……………………..

6- You visit your student's home. He invites you in and offers you something to drink but you have just had a drink.

Your student: "Would you like a drink?"

You:……………..

Thank you