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**Exploring EFL Learners' Levels of Complaint Speech Act
Realization**

The Case of EFL Students at Mohamed Boudiaf University, M'sila

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In Loving Memory of Beyzid

Benabdelouahab

Dedications

Alhamdulillah for blessing me with the opportunity to see this day.

I hereby adorn this dedication to my dearest, who has always supported me with the prayers, phone calls and swift embraces, all in spite of long distances, my handsome daddy, Yahia. To my lovely mother, Hayat, who endured all of our circumstances and her own to sculpt us into strong, loving individuals. To my gorgeous grandmother Mubaraka and to my beloved grandfather Abdelouahab. To My sweetest grandfather Omar, and my beautiful, wonderful grandmother Yamina. To my loveliest strawberry Soussan, the one with whom I cherished the smallest details. My sisters Mubaraka and Djoumana, and my brother Adam and Abdo. To my uncles, aunts, and cousins, and to the youngest members of the family.

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With Love, Amina Benabdelouahab

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Abstract

EFL pragmatics research, particularly research focusing on EFL speech act realization, has recently garnered more attention. Therefore, the purposes of this thesis are to evaluate the pragmatic competence of EFL students when they deliver a speech act of complaint, to ascertain the areas in which they face difficulty during the realization of the speech act of complaint, to explore their usage of various complaint strategies, as well as to discern whether gender plays an integral role in speech act realization. This descriptive study opted for the mixed research design in order to accomplish the study's goals, making use of both quantitative and qualitative data analysis and collection tools. Two tools were used for those purposes: the discourse evaluation task (DET) and the discourse completion task (DCT), respectively. These tests were administered to a sample of 30 EFL students ranging from the third year level to the master two level at the University of Mohamed Boudiaf, M'sila. The results of the study show that the EFL students had a good level of complaint realization on average, that they were consistently reasonable in their choice of complaint strategies and that they were flexible in switching complaint strategies when the situation necessitated it. Moreover, the study found that there was no statistically significant difference between the performance of male students and female students at the level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$. As such, EFL students' realization of complaints was tackled from various angles, and based on the findings of the study, training in pragmatic competence should be considered as an addition to the English syllabus.

Keywords: Pragmatic competence, speech act of complaint, EFL speech act realization

List of Abbreviations

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

DET: Discourse Evaluation Task

DCT: Discourse Completion Task

FTA: Face-threatening Act

ESL: English as a Second Language

TOEFL: Test of English as a Foreign Language

SPSS: Statistics Package for Social Sciences

List of Figures

Figure 1: Positive Politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987).....	26
Figure 2: Negative Politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987).....	27
Figure 3: Off Record strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987).....	28

List of Graphs

Graph 1: Students' performance in the overall test.....	48
Graph 2: Students' Performance in the DET.....	50
Graph 3: Students' performance in the DCT.....	52
Graph 4: Female students' performance in the overall test.....	54
Graph 5: Female students' performance in the DET.....	56
Graph 6: Female students' performance in the DCT.....	58
Graph 7: Male students' performance in the overall test.....	60
Graph 8: Male students' performance in the DET.....	62
Graph 9: Male students' performance in the DCT.....	64
Graph 10: Students' Complaint Structure in DCT Question one.....	68
Graph 11: Students' Complaint Structure in DCT Question two.....	69
Graph 12: Students' Complaint Structure in DCT Question three.....	71
Graph 13: Students' Complaint Structure in DCT Question four.....	72
Graph 14: Students' Complaint Structure in DCT Question five.....	73
Graph 15: Students' use of mitigators in DCT question one.....	75
Graph 16: Students' use of mitigators in DCT question two.....	76

Graph 17: Students' use of mitigators in DCT question three.....	77
Graph 18: Students' use of mitigators in DCT question four.....	78
Graph 19: Students' use of mitigators in DCT question five.....	79
Graph 20: Students' choice of directness in DCT question one.....	80
Graph 21: Students' choice of directness in DCT question two.....	81
Graph 22: Students' choice of directness in DCT question three.....	82
Graph 23: Students' choice of directness in DCT question four.....	83
Graph 24: Students' choice of directness in DCT question five.....	84
Graph 25: Students' choice of politeness strategies in DCT question one.....	86
Graph 26: Students' choice of politeness strategies in DCT question two.....	87
Graph 27: Students' choice of politeness strategies in DCT question three.....	89
Graph 28: Students' choice of politeness strategies in DCT question four.....	90
Graph 29: Students' choice of politeness strategies in DCT question five.....	91

List of Tables

Table 1: Students' Overall Performance in the Complaints Test.....	47
Table 2: Students' Performance in the DET.....	49
Table 3: Students' Performance in the DET items.....	50
Table 4: Students' performance in the DCT.....	51
Table 5: Students' performance in the DCT items.....	52
Table 6: Female students' performance in the overall test.....	53
Table 7: Female students' performance in the DET.....	55
Table 8: Female students' performance in the DET items.....	56
Table 9: Female students' performance in the DCT.....	57
Table 10: Female students' performance in the DCT items.....	59
Table 11: Male students' performance in the overall test.....	59
Table 12: Male students' performance in the DET.....	61
Table 13: Male students' performance in the DET items.....	62
Table 14: Male students' performance in the DCT.....	63
Table 15: Male students' performance in the DCT items.....	65
Table 16: Independent samples T test of the whole complaints test.....	66

Table 17: Independent samples T test of the DET.....66

Table 18: Independent samples T test of the DCT.....67

Table of Contents

General Introduction

1. Background of the Study.....	1
2. Statement of the Problem.....	3
3. Significance of the Study.....	4
4. Research Questions.....	5
5. Research Hypotheses.....	5
6. Objectives of the Study.....	6
7. Methodology and Data Collection.....	6
8. Structure of the Study.....	7
9. Operational Explanations of Research Variables.....	7

Chapter I – The Literature Review

Introduction.....	9
1.1 Speech Act Theory.....	10
1.1.1 Illocutionary Speech Acts.....	12
1.1.2 Analyzing Speech Acts	14
1.1.3 Types of Speech Acts.....	16
1.1.4 Speech Act Properties.....	18
1.2 Speech Act of Complaint.....	19
1.2.1 Typology of the Complaint Speech Act.....	20
1.2.2 Types of Complaints.....	21
1.2.3 Communication of Complaints.....	22
1.3 Pragmatic Competence.....	23
1.3.1 Pragmatic Competence for EFL Learners.....	29
1.3.2 Complaint Usage Strategies.....	30
1.3.3 Context and Pragmatics.....	31
1.3.4 Choosing a Speech Act Strategy.....	32
1.3.5 Studies in EFL Complaint Realization.....	34
Conclusion.....	39

Chapter II – Methodolgy, Results and Discussion

Introduction.....	42
2.0 Research Methodology.....	43
2.1 The Descriptive Method.....	43
2.2 Setting and Participants.....	44
2.3 Research Tools.....	44
2.3.1 Discourse Evaluation Task.....	45
2.3.2 Discourse Completion Task.....	46
2.1.0 Data Analysis and Discussion.....	47
2.1.1 Students’ Performance in the Test.....	47
2.1.2 Students’ Overall Levels in the Speech Act of Complaint.....	48
2.1.3 Students’ Performance in the DCT.....	51
2.1.4 Female Students’ Overall Levels in the Speech Act of Complaint.....	55
2.1.5 Female Students’ Performance in the DET.....	55
2.1.6 Female Students’ Performance in the DCT.....	57
2.1.7 Male Students’ Overall Levels in the Speech Act of Complaint.....	59
2.1.8 Male Students’ Performance in the DET.....	61
2.1.9 Male Students’ Performance in the DCT.....	63
2.1.10 Difference between Males and Females in Complaint Speech Act Performance.....	65
2.1.11 Difference between Male and Female Students’ Performance in the Overall Test.....	65

2.1.12	Difference between Male and Female Students' Performance in the DET.....	66
2.1.13	Difference between Male and Female Students' Performance in the DCT.....	67
2.2.0	Analysis of Students' Complaints.....	67
2.2.1	Students' Complaint Structures.....	67
2.2.1.1	Students' Complaint Structure in DCT question one.....	68
2.2.1.2	Students' Complaint Structure in DCT question two.....	69
2.2.1.3	Students' Complaint Structure in DCT question three.....	71
2.2.1.4	Students' Complaint Structure in DCT question four.....	72
2.2.1.5	Students' Complaint Structure in DCT question five.....	73
2.2.2	Students' Use of Mitigators.....	74
2.2.2.1	Students' Use of Mitigators in DCT question one.....	75
2.2.2.2	Students' Use of Mitigators in DCT question two.....	76
2.2.2.3	Students' Use of Mitigators in DCT question three.....	77
2.2.2.4	Students' Use of Mitigators in DCT question four.....	78
2.2.2.5	Students' Use of Mitigators in DCT question five.....	79
2.2.3	Students' Choice of Directness.....	80
2.2.3.1	Students' Choice of Directness in DCT question one.....	80
2.2.3.2	Students' Choice of Directness in DCT question two.....	81
2.2.3.3	Students' Choice of Directness in DCT question three.....	82
2.2.3.4	Students' Choice of Directness in DCT question four.....	83
2.2.3.5	Students' Choice of Directness in DCT question five.....	84
2.2.4	Students' Choice of Politeness Strategies.....	85

2.2.4.1 Students' Choice of Politeness Strategies in DCT question	
one.....	86
2.2.4.2 Students' Choice of Politeness Strategies in DCT question	
two.....	87
2.2.4.3 Students' Choice of Politeness Strategies in DCT question	
three.....	88
2.2.4.4 Students' Choice of Politeness Strategies in DCT question	
four.....	89
2.2.4.5 Students' Choice of Politeness Strategies in DCT question	
five.....	90
2.2.5 Students' Choice of Complaint Strategies.....	92
2.2.6 Discussion.....	102
2.2.7 Pedagogical Implications, Recommendations and Limitations.....	105
2.2.7.1 Pedagogical Implications.....	105
2.2.7.2 Recommendations for Future Research.....	105
2.2.7.3 Limitations of the Study.....	106

General Conclusion

References.....	111
Appendices.....	119
ملخص.....	122

General Introduction

1. Background of the Study

Recently, there has been an increase in interest in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pragmatic competence research, which in turn heightened the need for measuring EFL learners' speech act realization strategies. The speech acts in question are recurring patterns of words and phrases that can be used to express a wide range of uses, such as requests, refusals, compliments, gratitude, or complaints. Learners of any given language should be familiar with the many strategies for what, when, and how to employ speech acts, which may be direct or indirect. Choosing the correct strategy, when performing a speech act, is crucial because a strategy that is appropriate in one culture might not be appropriate in another. For instance, one culture may be tolerant with the degree of directness in speech acts while another may find it offensive.

Furthermore, the shifting of rules from one culture to another may cause embarrassment, confusion, and misunderstanding. Therefore, grammatical knowledge is not enough to accurately transform speech acts in the target language. Levinson (1983) states that there is a need to account for the rules that direct language use due to the differences in the realization strategies of speech acts. These differences are the result of individual, cross-cultural, and intercultural situational variability. Since there is an inclination for transferring rules of language use from the mother tongue to the target language as a result of these differences, efficient communication between speakers may be affected.

One component of language use that presents particular difficulties for EFL learners is pragmatic competence. To be able to use the language effectively in accordance with the socio-cultural values of second language (L2) users, L2 learners must improve their pragmatic competence. Crystal (1997) accordingly defines pragmatics as “the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in

using language in social interaction, and the effects that their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication” (p. 301). The production and interpretation of utterances are both governed by pragmatics, which are accepted norms of language. It specifically aids speakers in their analysis of the circumstances under which certain utterances are appropriate.

Speech act realization skills are important because users who lack knowledge of speech act conventions run the risk of failing to realize the speech act appropriately and offending the hearer (Moon, 2001.) Therefore, misunderstandings and breakdowns in communication may occur if the language user does not master the conversational standards necessary for producing speech acts (Thomas 1983.) Thus, pragmatic competence can be defined as the ability to convey and interpret meaning appropriately in a social situation (Taguchi 2009b). Additionally, the majority of linguists and educational experts underlined that when it comes to understanding and executing certain speech acts, learners of foreign languages frequently display notable distinctions from native speakers. According to Kasper (1997), a learner with great grammatical or linguistic proficiency may not always exhibit equivalent pragmatic progress. Therefore, pragmatics training is required if pragmatic competence is to develop naturally.

The speech act of complaint is a notable speech act indeed, as it can be realized in several diverse manners to differing effects. Because of that, non-native speakers of English find it difficult to perform speech acts due to a lack of socio-cultural knowledge (Mofidi & Shoushtari, 2012), and complaints are no exception.

2. Statement of the Problem

People need to use language every day in order to communicate in a way that allows them to not only impart information, but also to encourage taking certain actions or to discourage interlocutors from committing other actions. As a result, the notions of speech acts and speech act realization became an area of interest to researchers and linguists who wish to uncover more about how we use speech acts, how the usage of speech acts changes with language change, the influence of cultural, ethnic, and anthropological factors on speech act interpretation, and the dynamic between English norms of speech act usage and those of foreign languages.

However, the conventions of speech act usage used by native English speakers are not high on the priority list of most EFL teaching standards. Most notably, Algerian systems of education tend to give little care to the pragmatic facet of English language use in comparison to more traditional aspects such as grammar or vocabulary (Bader & Hamada 2020). Moreover, conventions of pragmatic use are not often showcased to learners, and very few EFL learners are fortunate enough to have the opportunity to talk to native speakers for an extended period of time. This means that students must actively seek ways to discover more about such features of English speech independently of the educational system if they wish to improve their pragmatic speaking skill.

Although more and more attempts have been made to research EFL learners' speech act realization in recent years, there is yet uncertainty in the level of speech act realization skills among M'sila University EFL learners, specifically the complaint speech act, as well as the difficulties that arise during the process of developing this skill.

A point is often made that linguistic competence entails pragmatic competence, and while it is true that they are very closely related (Infantidou, 2014), the notion that any EFL learner who displays linguistic competence will also display pragmatic competence is not the case in practical application. Many EFL students find difficulty adopting speech act strategies or lack the appropriate context inference abilities to properly interpret and perform speech acts. As such, this study aims to bridge that gap and assess the levels of EFL students' pragmatic competence in order to help EFL students and teachers find the areas of improvement in speech act realization so that they may develop this skill in an efficient manner.

3. Significance of the Study

Tanck (2002) asserts that a speaker engages in a speech act of complaint when they express their irritation or unhappiness at an action that has negatively impacted them. It follows, then, that complaining is a particularly face-threatening speech act. It endangers both the speaker's and the hearer's faces. An inappropriate expression of complaint could sour relationships and result in misunderstandings that can last a lifetime between the speaker and the hearer. In addition, because different cultures interpret and value face in different ways, it may be challenging for L2 learners from various cultural backgrounds to understand the intricacies of the speech act of complaining in the English language. Therefore, an inter-language pragmatic study on complaining is just as useful and fruitful as studies on any other speech behaviour.

The significance of this study lies in helping EFL learners improve their pragmatic competence and speech act realization skills by identifying their levels of pragmatic competence, the difficulties they face when performing the speech act of complaint, and the

challenges they face during the process of developing pragmatic competence. This study may also help teachers of English in improving their students' levels of pragmatic competence by raising their awareness of the difficulties and challenges involved in the process of pragmatic competence development.

4. Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the levels of M'sila University students' pragmatic competence when realizing the speech act of complaint?
2. Where do M'sila University students find difficulty during complaint speech act realization?
3. What are the complaint structures and complaint strategies preferred by EFL M'sila university students?
4. Does gender make a significant difference when it comes to the level of speech act realization?

5. Research Hypothesis

Based on the research approach adopted in this study and the questions above, one statistical hypothesis is assumed for the sake of statistical analysis of the significance of the differences in complaint speech act levels attributed to gender. Thus the fourth question hypothesis assumes:

- H₀: There is no statistically significant difference between male students and female students when performing the speech act of complaint.

6. Objectives of the Study

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Assess the level of M'sila University students' pragmatic competence when performing the speech act of complaint.
2. Ascertain the areas in which M'sila University students experience difficulty during the process of speech act realization.
3. Identify the preferred complaint structures and complaint strategies employed by M'sila university students of English.
4. Discern whether gender is a controlling factor in the level of speech act realization.

7. Methodology and Data Collection

The researches adopted a descriptive study that uses a mixed-method approach, involving both quantitative and qualitative tools to collect and analyse quantitative and qualitative data. The target population of this study is comprised of master one, master two and third year EFL students within the faculty of Letters and Languages at the University of Mohamed Boudiaf M'sila during the academic year 2022/2023. The sample of this study totals thirty (30) students, chosen at random from the population. In order to collect data concerning the participants and their speech act realization, this study utilizes a Discourse Evaluation Task (DET) developed by Önalın & Çakır (2018) and a discourse completion task (DCT) to obtain quantitative and qualitative data respectively for analysis purposes

8. Structure of the Dissertation

This study is divided into two main chapters. Chapter 1 provides a holistic review of the relevant literature and is split into three sections: the first section revolves around speech act theory, provides an overview of speech act taxonomy, showcases the considerations that are involved in speech act performance, and clarifies the notion of illocutionary acts. The second section covers the speech act of complaint, types of complaints and communication of complaints. The third section deals with pragmatic competence and its standards, Grice's four maxim model, Brown & Levinson's politeness model based on Grice's maxims, pragmatic meaning in L2, the relationship between genres and pragmatic competence, and previous studies in complaint realization.

Chapter 2 revolves around the field work section of this study. It first highlights the research design, methodology and tools used, as well as the methods of data collection and data analysis. It later showcases the results found after conducting the field work and analysing the data, discusses the findings and limitations of the study and poses some suggestions for future research.

10. Definition of Research Key Variables

Speech act of complaint: According to Trosborg (1995) a complaint is an illocutionary speech act wherein the speaker (the complainer) communicates his or her dissatisfaction and unfavourable feelings towards the situation outlined in the argument, and makes the hearer (complainee) either directly or indirectly accountable for it.

Pragmatic competence: can be defined as the knowledge that the speaker and the listener employ to engage in communicative practices, including the successful implementation of speech acts.

Chapter I – The Literature Review

Introduction

In order to provide the necessary literary background and set forth the appropriate theoretical foundation, a literature review is necessary. As such, this chapter aims to give an in-depth overview of speech act theory and the notion of pragmatic competence, and it provides a holistic review of the relevant literature.

1.1 Speech Act Theory

The concept of speech act theory first originated with Austin's 1962 monograph "How to Do Things with Words." Austin (1962) started noting that some statements, such as "I christen this ship the Joseph Stalin," "I now pronounce you man and wife," and similar expressions, seem intended to do something rather than merely to say something. Austin (1962) referred to such sentences as "performatives," which are opposed to "constatives." He actually made the point that every ordinary utterance had both a descriptive and an effective aspect, and that speaking is equivalent to acting. He replaced this with a three-way distinction between the different types of acts that we carry out when we use language; namely the distinction of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts.

Ward (2006) defines Austin's locutionary acts as acts of speaking which are involved in the construction of speech. For example, uttering certain sounds or making certain marks, using particular words in conformity with the grammatical rules of a particular language and with certain senses and references as determined by the rules of the language from which they are drawn. According to Ward, Austin's illocutionary acts are acts done in speaking (hence illocutionary), including the sort of act with the apparent purpose for using a performative sentence, such as christening or marrying. Austin called attention to the fact that acts of stating

or asserting, which are presumably illocutionary acts, are characteristic of the use of canonical constatives, and such sentences are, by assumption, not performatives. Furthermore, we typically accomplish acts of ordering or requesting by using imperative sentences, and we ask whether something is the case by using interrogative sentences, though such forms are at best very dubious examples of performative sentences.

Ward adds that in Austin's (1962) lecture XXI, it was concluded that the locutionary aspect of speaking is what we attend to most in the case of constatives, while in the case of the standard examples of performative sentences; we attend as much as possible to the illocution. Moreover, Ward (2006) adds that the third of Austin's categories of acts is the perlocutionary act, which is a consequence or by-product of speaking, whether intended or not. As the name suggests, perlocutions are acts performed by speaking. According to Austin, perlocutionary acts consist in the production of effects upon the thoughts, feelings, or actions of the addressee(s), speaker, or other parties. For instance, they can cause people to refer to a certain ship as the Joseph Stalin, they can produce the belief that Sam and Mary are husband and wife, they can convince an addressee of the truth of a statement, or they can cause an addressee to feel a requirement to do something. Austin (1962) presents a preliminary, intuitive, five-way taxonomy of illocutionary acts that, he himself admitted, was neither particularly well motivated nor always unambiguous in its application to particular examples. Since he believed that illocutionary acts could always be made explicit through the use of performative sentences" (Ward 2006, p. 87)

He lists Austin's five classes, a brief description and a few instances of each:

- Verdictives: acts that include delivering a finding e.g., acquit, hold (as a matter of law), read something as.
- Exercitives: acts that involve expressing a preference for or opposition to a course of action.e.g.,Appoint, dismiss, order, sentence
- Commissives: acts that are intended to bind the speaker to a course of action, such as making a contract, making a promise, declaring an intention.
- Behavitives: expressions of views about the behaviour, success, or attitudes of others, such as “I apologize,” “Thank you,” “huge congrats,” “I’m glad you’re here.”
- Expositives: acts of communicating views, making arguments, and providing clarification, such as “deny,” “convey,” “admit,” “point.”

1.1.1 – Illocutionary Speech Acts

Searle (1985) believes that speaking or writing consists in performing speech acts of a specific kind called ‘illocutionary acts.’ These illocutionary acts are classified into categories based on their illocutionary purpose: directives, assertives, commissives, expressives and declaratives; each of which serves its own illocutionary purpose. Of course, Searle was not the first to propose such a taxonomy of illocutionary acts, as Austin had also proposed his own taxonomy, divided into the aforementioned five categories (verdictives, exercitives, commissives, expositives and behavitives.) However, Searle assumes a critical stance of this particular taxonomy due to a few issues that he sees in it, namely the fact that not all verbs are

illocutionary verbs, that the categories are too heterogeneous, and that there is no consistent principle of classification within the categories. It is also worth noting that while Searle did attempt to classify illocutionary acts, he had not attempted to classify illocutionary verbs, as it would prove too troublesome. In addition, Searle posits that the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he actually says when performing indirect speech acts through 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.” (Searle 1985, p. 31, 32)

Geis' (1996) claim that speech acts are essentially social fits well with the reality that the illocutionary function that a sentence can carry out depends on non-referential, socially contextualized factors. He presents an example in which a university professor might say: “can you solve this sort of quadratic equation?” to a student in a context in which she is attempting to decide whether or not to place him in an advanced mathematics course, or a desperate student might say the same thing to another student in an attempt to get the latter to help him with his homework. In the first case, the professor’s question counts as a request for information, while in the second, it counts as making a request for action (i.e., for help). As such, the social context (academic interview vs. homework session) and the relationship between the speaker and interlocutor (professor-student Vs. student-student) play a decisive role in determining what communicative action the speaker performs in uttering the sentence and these are social, not linguistic factors.

It would be impossible for a listener to understand indirect illocutionary acts without the aid of some sort of a strategy with which he/she infers illocutionary points (Searle 1985.) Searle posits that any given strategy should utilize apparatuses that include things such as contextual

information, which the speaker and listener(s) mutually share, as well as some general conversational principles. He also claims that politeness is the chief factor by which we choose the indirect strategy over another, but there are also other factors. Moreover, he sets forth two main features that are 'crucial' to the success of an indirect speech act: "the existence of an ulterior illocutionary point beyond the illocutionary point contained in the meaning of the sentence, and a device for finding out what the ulterior illocutionary point is." (Searle 1985, p. 47) He asserts that speech act theory, which serves as the device in question, is responsible for determining the point in the latter feature, while 'principles of conversation operating on the information of the hearer and the speaker' determine the point in the former feature. In conjunction, they serve as a means to analyse indirect illocutionary acts within a given utterance in order to discern the nature of the speech act.

1.1.2 – Analysing Speech Acts

Within the same framework Searle presents, he does admit that there are a few problems with conducting the analysis of any given speech act in the aforementioned manner. He believes that the main problem lies in the idea that if the mechanisms that tie into speech act realization are affected by cooperative principles of conversation and not by syntactic predeterminations, then why do some syntactic forms work better than others in terms of performing an indirect illocutionary act? To illustrate this, he displays the following comparison:

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. "Do you want to do A?" | 2. "Do you Desire to do A?" |
| and: | |
| 2. "Can you do A?" | 2. "Are you able to do A?" |

(Searle 1985, p. 49)

He argues that there is a difference in illocutionary act potential for each of the two pairs, and notes that the first member of each pair takes “please” more readily than the second pair. However, Searle does address this problem and provides an answer to it. He asserts that speech act theory and cooperative conversational principles provide a framework that allows us to understand indirect illocutionary acts, yet as we use language, some forms will become more conventionalized than other forms even though they keep their literal meanings (Searle 1985.) Insofar as this point goes, he suggests that expressions like “can you,” “could you” and “I want you to” are deceptively imperative, although they actually do not have an imperative meaning. Searle believes that this is because certain forms naturally become the conventional polite way to make an indirect request. Of course, this is in reference to English and not other languages, where the translation of certain forms may not convey the same indirect illocutionary force of the utterance, and it is likely to sound odd if we were to attempt to translate such forms directly for use in similar situations in another language. It is worth noting, though, that these mechanisms are not peculiar to one language over another according to Searle.

To add to the previous answer, Searle posits that a sentence has to be idiomatic to start with in order for it to be fit for usage as an indirect speech act. He explains that the presence and absence of an idiomatic dimension during speech connotes a change in the inferential behaviour of the listener. “If one speaks unidiomatically, hearers assume that there must be a special reason for it, and in consequence, various assumptions of normal speech are suspended.” (Searle 1985, p. 50) He justifies this phenomenon by adding another conversational maxim as a complement to Grice’s maxims: “speak idiomatically unless there is some special reason not to,” as non-idiomatic utterances encourage a suspension of certain indirect speech act possibilities as

opposed to idiomatic ones. This thus concludes that a sentence must be idiomatic in order to qualify for use as an indirect speech act.

Searle (1985) also admits the existence of another problem, and addresses it in a similar manner to the first. He claims there is an asymmetry between utterances like “Do you want to leave us alone?” and “You want to leave us alone” in that we may query indirect directives but not indirect requests or one’s own psychological states, as once again the former can take ‘please’ but the latter cannot. He believes that this is because each interlocutor is normally not in as good a position as the other is in terms of what he/she wants, believes and/or intends, and thus it is odd to ask other people about the existence of their elementary psychological states. In addition, he asserts that the difference between forms like “could you” and “would you” may pose difficulty during analysis, yet he comfortably concludes that that a satisfactory analysis of these forms constitutes in a satisfactory analysis of their subjunctive nature.

1.1.3 – Types of Speech Acts

So far, the examples highlighted in this section have covered indirect speech act realization in terms of directives, but that is not to say that other types do not exist. As previously mentioned in the taxonomy portion, Searle (1985) had inserted commissives into his classification of speech act types, and further analysis of indirect commissives has led him to the conclusion that much of the same patterns that we see in indirect directives are present here as well. He puts forth the following examples, where *S* refers to the speaker:

I. Sentences concerning the preparatory conditions:

A. that *S* is able to perform the act:

Can I help you?

I can do that for you

I could get it for you

Could I be of assistance?

B. that *H* wants *S* to perform the act:

Would you like some help ?

Do you want me to go now, Sally?

Wouldn't you like me to bring some more
next time I come?

Would you rather I came on Tuesday?

II. Sentences concerning the sincerity condition:

I intend to do it for you

I plan on repairing it for you next week.

III. Sentences concerning the propositional content condition:

I will do it for you

I am going to give it to you next time you stop by

Shall I give you the money now?

IV. Sentences concerning *S*'s wish or willingness to do *A*:

I want to be of any help I can

I'd be willing to do it (if you want me to).

V. Sentences concerning (other) reasons for *S*'s doing *A*:

I think I had better leave you alone

Wouldn't it be better if I gave you some assistance?

You need my help, Cynthia.

(Searle 1985, p. 54, 56)

Each of the previous examples expresses an offer (or promise), and they reinforce Searle's claim that one may not query his own psychological states when performing an indirect illocutionary act, but he may query the presence of those in other people. He also admits that his approach to the analysis of speech acts deviates from the traditional paradigms of analysis that were found in the philosopher's logically conditional paradigm or the linguist's structural paradigm, but claims that neither of these approaches would be appropriate for the problems that usually occur in speech act analysis.

1.1.4 –Speech Act Properties

There are many properties that exist in relation to speech act usage. Searle (1985) emphasizes the importance of phrasing when making an illocutionary act. He illustrates this by comparing the statements "Can you pass me the salt?" and "Salt is mined at the Tatra mountains," (Searle 1985, p. 46) where the former serves the function of what he refers to as a 'preparatory condition,' while the latter does not have that trait, and would thus fail as an appropriate illocutionary act. That preparatory condition makes the difference between one sentence that invokes or relates to a request (a request to pass the salt in the previous case) and another one that is not.

Searle expresses his thoughts on the use of speech act theory by saying that it will provide us with an explanation for how sentences that use illocutionary force can be used to perform acts with a different illocutionary force. "Each type of illocutionary act has a set of conditions that are necessary for the successful and felicitous performance of the act." (Searle 1985) Moreover, he believes that all linguistic communication involves linguistic acts, and that the main unit of linguistic communication is the issuance or production of the symbol, word or

sentence in the performance of the speech act. “More precisely, the production or issuance of a sentence token under certain conditions is a speech act, and speech acts (of certain kinds to be explained later) are the basic or minimal units of linguistic communication. (Searle 1970, p. 15)

Searle et al. (1980) define illocutionary logic as a subfield of philosophical logic that concentrates on the study of illocutionary acts (assertions, questions, demands, promises, orders and declarations.) that are carried out through the use of sentences in formal or natural languages. He admits that Illocutionary force is a crucial and unavoidable aspect of how a sentence makes sense in a natural language. Without realizing that a sentence’s literal utterance in a particular context of use entails the performance of illocutionary acts of such and such types, one cannot grasp the meaning of the sentence.

Searle adds that the majority of basic illocutionary acts use the form F(P), where F denotes an illocutionary force and P denotes a proposition. He exemplifies, the speech act produced by a (literal) utterance of the sentence “I assert that snow is white” has the illocutionary force of assertion and the proposition “that snow is white” as its propositional content. In a similar way, the speech act expressed by the utterance of the sentence “I promise that I shall come tomorrow” is a promise-based illocutionary act with the proposition that the speaker will arrive at a specific location the day after the day of the utterance as its propositional content.

1.2 Speech act of Complaint

Many scholars have investigated the actual forms and purposes of speech acts in various languages using Austin’s (1962) and Searle’s (1969, 1979) Speech Act Theory and its classifications. According to Trosborg (1995), a complaint is an illocutionary act wherein the speaker (the complainer) communicates his or her dissatisfaction and unfavourable feelings

toward the situation outlined in the argument and makes the hearer (the complaine), either directly or indirectly, accountable for it.

According to Austin (1962), a speech act can have three main functions: locutionary (using the words as they are intended), illocutionary (implying meaning or intent by the use of the words), and perlocutionary (the actual effect of the utterance on the hearer). A speech act's effectiveness depends on the listener's capacity to understand the intended message. According to Trosborg (1995: 174), a speech act of complaint is "an illocutionary act in which the speaker expresses his or her disapproval or negative feelings toward the state of affairs described in the proposition and for which he or she holds the hearer responsible, either directly or indirectly".

1.2.1 Typology of the Complaint Speech Act

Complaints come in two varieties: direct and indirect. Direct complaints are verbal face-threats used by speakers to voice their displeasure with a character or object in the speech act scene. An indirect complaint, often referred to as griping, is a non-face-threatening speech act in which the party who is to blame for the problem or the target of the complaint is not present when the speech act is delivered (Salmani-Nodoushan; 2008).

The complaint, in accordance with Searle's (1976) typology, falls under the category of expressive speech acts, indicating both the speaker's support and disapproval of the behaviour that the complaine has already engaged in or failed to engage in. A directive act may also be indicated in or added to a complaint once it has been issued. According to Trosborg (1995), this entails making the complainant make good on the harm they caused as well as taking steps to stop the deplorable act from occurring again. In order to make up for the speaker's loss, the speaker often requests the hearer to do some corrective action when they complain rather than

simply expressing moral condemnation or blame. The complaint as a speech act thus involves both the expressive function and the directive function.

The idea of a face threatening act (FTA) is derived from the Politeness Theory, which was first put forth by Brown and Levinson in 1978 and has subsequently undergone substantial development. “Face,” according to Brown and Levinson, is “the public self-image that every member (of a society) seeks to claim for himself.” (1987, p. 61) They understand that everyone has comparable face desires and make a distinction between positive and negative face. Negative face “represents the basic claim to territory, personal preserves, and rights to non-distraction,” whilst positive face “concerns the hearer’s wish to be appreciated and approved of by chosen individuals” (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 61)

1.2.2 Types of Complaints

The focus of previous studies on complaints was mostly on the definition of complaints, complaint realization patterns, and complaint classification. According to Laforest (2002), complaints are ways for an individual to convey their displeasure with someone else's behaviour that he/she finds to be unsatisfactory. Complaining is a speech act that is frequently used in regular conversation. Although it can be voiced to meet the complainer's good effects, such as bringing out one’s energy through speech and having the complaint be heard, this can be unpleasant. Additionally, the verbal act of complaining helps prevent interpersonal conflict. Moreover, the definition of complaint includes being irritated or unsatisfied with someone or something. As a result, it could be interpreted as an emphasis that the speaker disregarded the listener's expression and emotions. As in Trosborg's (1995) work, complaints can also be an

illocutionary act in which the speaker expresses his or her displeasure and discontent both directly and indirectly.

Complaints made by American speakers have distinct language characteristics, including:

- Use of the pronoun "we" as a negotiation tactic and to show that both parties are equally responsible
- Use of questioning to seek suggestions, gain the audience's approval to one's explanation of the situation, and persuade them to think again or explore the issue
- Depersonalization of the issue in order to shift responsibility from the respondent to the issue
- Use of mitigators (such as kind of, possibly, maybe) to soften the complaint
- The admission of partial responsibility for the problem.

(Deveci 2015)

1.2.3 Communication of Complaints

According to Leech (1983), the speech act of complaint is an example of the conflictive function, which also includes threats, accusations, expletives, and reprimands. These behaviours are intended to offend, and they pose a serious threat to the speaker-hearer social relationship. Complaints are also inherently face-threatening because they aim to target others' faces, which is one of its conflictive roles. Trosborg (1997) examines Leech's viewpoints, which hold that being nice is out of the question and that it is almost impossible to threaten or curse someone in a pleasant manner.

When a speaker complains, he/she may question, criticize, or outright refute the complainees's social competence. In light of the fact that the complainant has already broken this rule by committing a social offense, he contends that the complaint is legitimate. The complainant must also acknowledge that their actions have diminished or denied their social position. As per Trosborg (1997), passing moral judgment or assigning blame is a form of social rejection in which the accuser severs links of companionship, solidarity, and cooperation. As such, complaints can be openly expressed in various ways, from subtle glances and gestures of disapproval to serving challenges in which the complainer is explicitly labelled incompetent and irresponsible as a social member. Accordingly, the complaint eventually communicates moral outrage over the other's actions in a direct manner. Imprecations and other outward displays of outrage are overt indications that the complaint disapproves of someone's actions. By expressing their feelings of grievance in this way, complainants are able to describe the extent to which the other's behaviour has offended them.

1.3 Pragmatic Competence

The notion of pragmatic competence and theories of the criteria that constitute correct pragmatic usage of language have evolved substantially throughout the past century. Paul Grice's (1975) 'Logic and Conversation' was perhaps the most important catalyst that sparked further interest in studying the pragmatic usage of language, as his four maxim-based model of conversational implicature served as the foundation for future models of the pragmatic analysis of language usage, such as Brown & Levinson's (1987) politeness principle. Moreover, pragmatic competence requires the ability to correctly infer implicature (Grice 1975) and proficiently engage in 'mind-games' with the speaker/listener based on the context, genre, and background information shared between the interlocutors in order to correctly interpret the

encoded meaning. It is through such means that we, as speakers for example, choose to utter specific forms rather than others in order to convey a precise and 'hidden' meaning which we know that the listener will be able to infer correctly.

This also applies to speech act realization, wherein a speaker who wishes to issue a complaint may choose to employ a bald on-record face-threatening act (FTA) (Brown & Levinson 1987) in order to express his/her frustration over the reason for the complaint. Furthermore, Taguchi (2012) centres the guiding theoretical framework of pragmatic competence in her study on certain "models of communicative competence" in which performance involves both knowledge and processing. According to her study, the mastery of pragmatic norms of language use requires the mastery of two elements: the pragmatic knowledge required to assess which forms fit which contexts of use and the processing ability which allows us to focus on relevant parts of information within the context in order to automatize accurate performance in real-time (Taguchi 2012).

According to Grice (1975), there are four maxims that serve as a straightforward description of conversational guidelines for creating the most effective possible communication.

-Maxim of Quality: Be non-spurious (speak the truth, be sincere).

-Maxims of Quantity: (a) Don't say less than is required.

(b) Don't say more than is required.

-Maxim of Relevance: Be relevant.

-Maxim of Manner: Be perspicuous; avoid ambiguity and obscurity

These maxims outline for us the fundamental collection of presumptions underlying each discourse transaction. However, contrary to what Grice's detractors have occasionally believed, this does not mean that all utterances, or even those that are moderately frequent, must satisfy these requirements. The majority of genuine discussions, in fact, do not act in such a harsh manner at all.

In order to further the interest of achieving the discursual goal that Grice's maxims aim to achieve, Brown & Levinson's (1987) politeness principle sought to expand the scope of the maxims by setting forth a number of politeness strategies to be used during discourse. These politeness strategies are divided into four types:

1- Bald on record

The main justification for using bald-on-record may be summed up in the following way: in general, whenever S wants to carry out the f as effectively as possible more than he wants to satisfy H's face, even to the slightest degree, he will select the J bald-on-record technique. However, there are several forms of bald-on-record usage depending on the situation because S may have various reasons for wanting to complete the FTA as efficiently as possible. These can be divided into two categories: those where the face threat is not mitigated and where the face is essential; and those where, by performing the FTA boldly on record, S implicitly minimizes face threats. The use of bald-on-record is most evident in direct imperatives.

2- Positive Politeness

Positive politeness is a form of reparation meant to put the addressee's greatest face forward and satisfy his constant desire to have his wants (or the acts, property, or values that come from them) regarded as desirable. Redress involves communicating that one's own desires (or some of them) are, in some ways, similar to the addressee's desires.

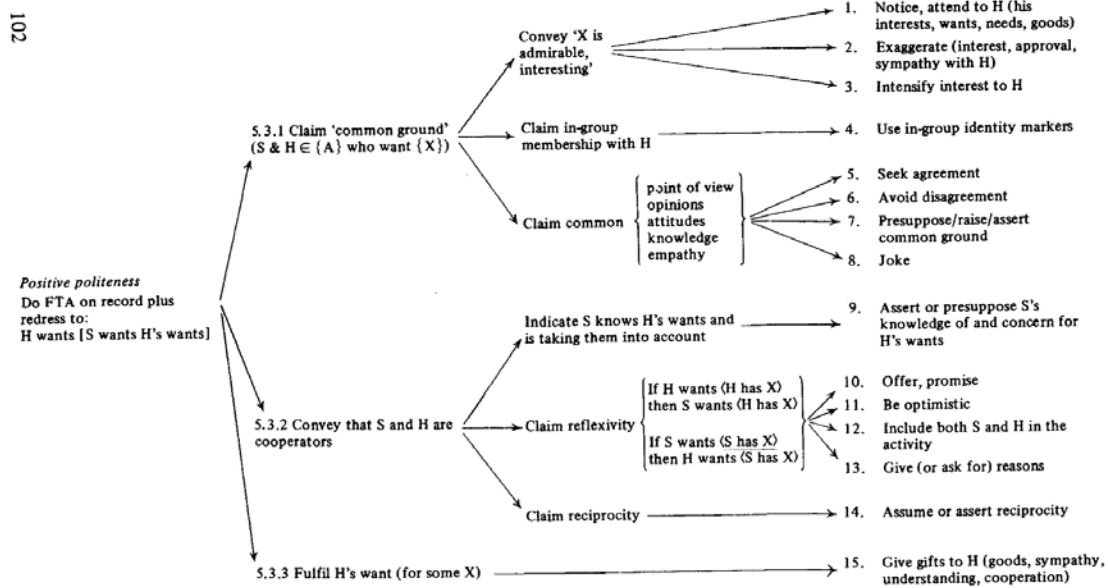


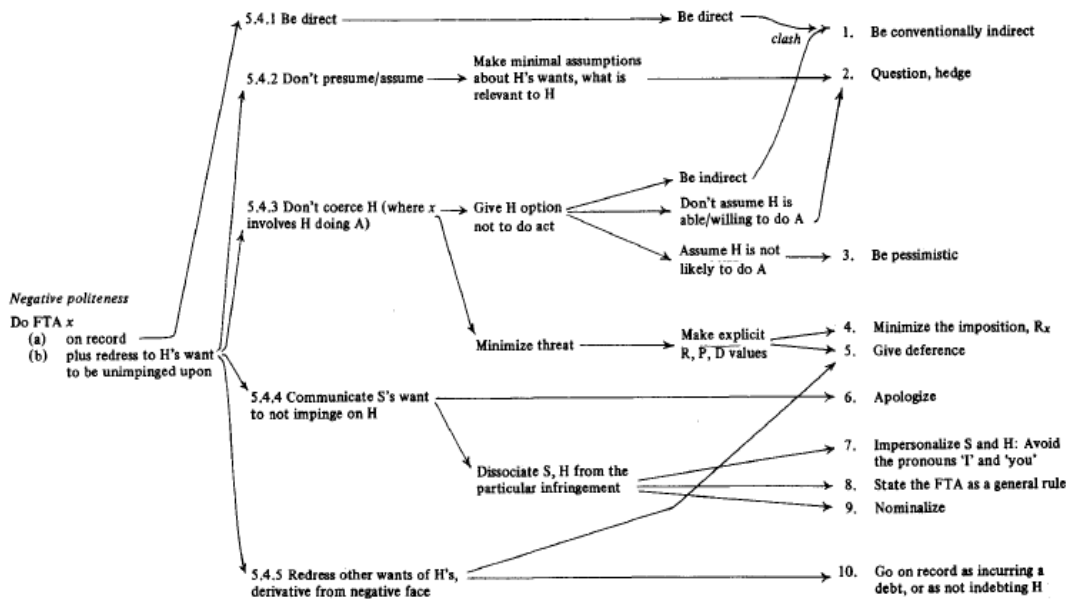
Fig. 3. Chart of strategies: Positive politeness

Figure 1 – Positive Politeness Strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987)

Positive politeness, in contrast to negative politeness, is not always redressive of the specific face want violated by the FTA; rather, the sphere of relevant redress in positive politeness is expanded to include acknowledging alter's wants generally or expressing similarities between ego's and alter's wants.

3- Negative politeness

Negative politeness is corrective action that is directed at the addressee's negative face, which is his desire to have his freedom of expression and attention unrestricted. Just as positive politeness is the foundation of "familiar" and "joking" behaviour, it is the core of behaviour that demonstrates respect. The "negative rites," or avoidance rituals, of Durkheim correspond to negative politeness. Negative politeness is precise and concentrated, as contrast to positive politeness, which is free-ranging. It serves the purpose of reducing the specific imposition that the FTA would inevitably cause.



131

Fig. 4. Chart of strategies: Negative politeness

Figure 2 – Negative Politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987)

4- Off record

When a communicative act cannot be clearly associated with a single, particular communicative intention, it is considered to have been performed off-record. In other words, the actor cannot be held to have committed himself to just one specific interpretation of his act because he has given himself a range of defensible interpretations. So, if a speaker wants to make an FTA but doesn't want to be held accountable for it, he can make it off the record and let the addressee determine how to interpret it. Such off-the-record statements are essentially passive uses of language; in order to make an off-the-record statement, one either says something that is broader or actually contradicts what one means. In either scenario, H will need to draw certain conclusions in order to determine the true intent.

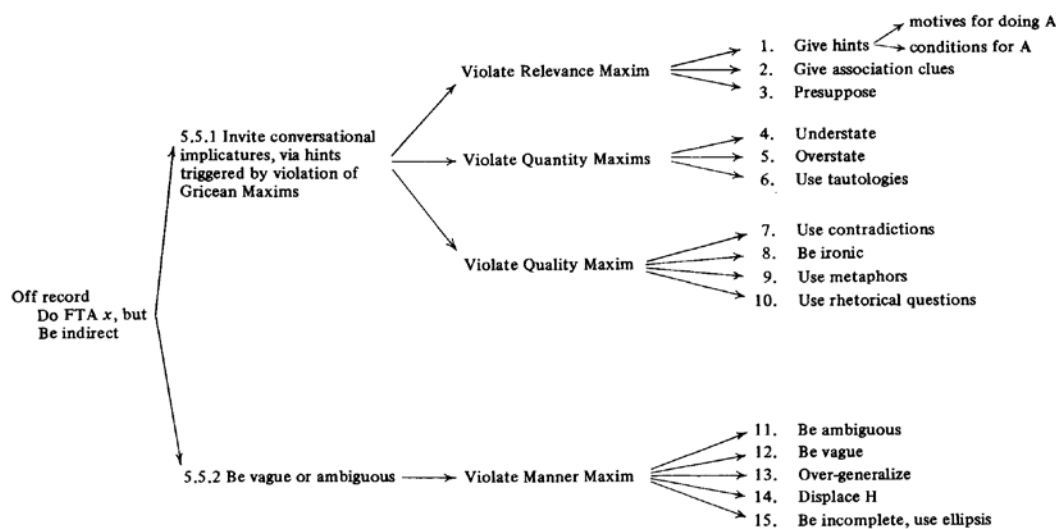


Fig. 6. Chart of strategies: Off record

Figure 3 – Off Record strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987)

1.3.1 Pragmatic Competence for EFL learners

It is crucial for EFL learners to have pragmatic competence, or the capacity to use language effectively. Giving students a pragmatics-rich setting should be a key part of EFL education, especially in contexts where learners of English as a foreign language have limited access to communicative practice in English (Taguchi, 2011). To put it another way, EFL students should be exposed to pertinent information and have ample opportunities to practice speaking English in communicative situations.

For many EFL learners, pragmatic competence is thus an unquestionably necessary prerequisite for effectively conveying meaning in both academic and real-world contexts. There are several reasons for this. When EFL learners engage in communicative activities with interlocutors from various first languages and cultural backgrounds, pragmatic competence specifically becomes more of a problem. This presumption is based, in part, on the possibility that the speakers' judgments of meaning in intercultural communication may be influenced by variations in language and culture (Gumperz 1982.)

Additionally, social rules governing language use control certain speech acts. Speakers should therefore be aware of their audience, their relationship to the listener, the topic of conversation, what they are discussing, and the appropriate speaking style for the situation.

Non-native speakers may fail to complain in an appropriate manner due to an unfamiliarity with all of the factors related to speech act norms, which then leads to offensive or inappropriate language usage. The following example illustrates two ways in which that may happen:

- a. “An Indonesian worker may want to complain about the bad behaviour of his American boss towards him, saying “do not treat me like a child.” If the complaint is considered inappropriate by your boss, you will probably be reprimanded or fired even after you say your complaint.
- b. An American student may want to defend himself after being accused by his Indonesian teacher of doing something he did not do. For example, in a situation where the student is accused of cheating when taking an exam. If the student presents his/her complaints inappropriately, the teacher can send him out of the class or even fail him in the course.”

(Hasyim 2020, p. 2)

1.3.2 Complaint Usage Strategies

Olshstain and Weinbach (1987) identify five key tactics for complaining that are frequently employed by speakers, including:

1. Below level of reproach. The speaker does not address the offense or the person who is performing the offense.
2. Expression of annoyance or disapproval. The speaker shows irritation or displeasure regarding the offense or the person performing it without specifically mentioning the offense.
3. Explicit complaint. The speaker refers directly to the offensive action and/or person in order to convey his complaint
4. Accusation. The speaker accuses the complainant of the wrongdoing explicitly and makes a warning, implying that the offender may face punishment.

5. Immediate threat. Immediately threatening the complainant by physically assaulting them.

The five main Olshstain & Weinbach strategies are then divided by Moon (2011) into two major categories of complaint strategies:

1. Implicit Strategy - With this strategy, the speaker fully avoids making direct reference to the offense or person (reproach.) By employing it, the speaker conveys irritation with the offending situation and person without specifically mentioning the offense.

2. Explicit Strategy - In this strategy, the speaker explicitly refers to the objectionable situation and individual by saying "you." The speaker does so by accusing and threatening the offender.

1.3.3 Context and Pragmatics

In addition to the aforementioned features of the pragmatic usage of language, Leech (1983) asserts that a “neutral metalanguage must be devised - one containing predicates which reflect the pragmatic significance themselves, and which is not tied to the senses of words of particular languages such as English.” This, in part, attests to previously mentioned criteria of proper pragmatic usage of language, wherein the speaker and listener must be aware of certain speech conventions with which to decode and infer information. However, this does not mean that conventional semantics play no part in the pragmatic usage of language. Leech further elaborates that semantic rules can be used to account for “logical relations” within utterances, such as affirmation and negation, in conjunction with syntax (Leech 1983). Semantic elements and pragmatic elements then converge to provide new meaning to utterances which are alike in syntax, which can be seen in situations where the same utterances can have different meanings

depending on the context of use, for example. Therefore, pragmatic competence necessitates the knowledge of those conventions, both semantic and metalinguistic, and of the different context which may affect the meaning of the utterances.

It follows, then, that any given variation in the speech situation has the capacity to influence the meaning of a pragmatic utterance. A speech situation, according to Leech (1983), is composed of the following criterion: the addressers and addressees, the context of the utterance, the goal of the utterance, the utterance as a speech act and the utterance as a product of the verbal act. Each of the criteria can affect the utterance or sentence in its own manner, and the degree of that effect will vary accordingly with any variance in context. This variance in context is not necessarily manifested in the same manner, nor is it manifested to the same effect, across different cultures (Brown & Levinson 1978, Leech 1983).

When it comes to non-native speakers of English, they often use their native culture's conventions for pragmatic usage of language rather than the conventions of the target language's culture (Hasyim 2020, Deveci 2015, Farnia et al. 2010, Noisiri 2002, Olshtain & Cohen 1990, El-Dakhs & Ahmed 2021, Murphy & Neu 1996). Yet this does not mean that it is not possible for the foreign speakers to attain higher pragmatic competence, as Olshtain & Cohen (1990) showed that it is possible, in some cases, to provide non-native speakers of English with training in proper pragmatic usage of language in terms of strategy choice and utterance structure.

1.3.4 Choosing a Speech Act Strategy

There are many reasons and criteria on which we may base our choices of speech act strategies, either as speakers or as listeners. One of the most reputable theories on that subject is Brown & Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. In it, they posit that each individual has the

desire to have their face wants fulfilled as a listener, and the liberty to either cater to the listener's face wants or to threaten their face as a speaker. Thus, the speaker may choose to perform a "face-threatening act" (FTA) to the speaker if he/she deems it necessary according to the situation of speech. Brown & Levinson further elaborate that choosing to perform the FTA or avoiding to perform it are not the only two choices of strategies; rather, the speaker may choose to perform the FTA and redress it in order to cater to the listener's face wants, and then that redress may either serve negative face wants or positive face wants, in accordance with various factors such as the context of the conversation or sociocultural and socio-pragmatic factors.

Within the context of the speech situation, Brown & Levinson (1987) propose three factors through which strategy choice on the collective level is affected, in so far as the speaker(s) and listener(s) mutually assume them to be true: the relative power of the speaker and listener (labelled 'P'), the social distance between the speaker and listener (labelled 'D') and the ranking of the impositions in the particular culture (labelled 'R').

Therefore, before a speaker engages in the FTA, he/she first 'computes' its weight in relation to the three P, D and R factors. When this is done, the speaker may then choose a strategy according to the perceived weight and intended effect of the pragmatic utterance. For example, a complaint is intended to threaten the listener's face in favour of remedying the issue of the complaint, yet the speaker may still opt for an off-record strategy if he/she deems that the weight of the FTA poses too much of a risk to either of the interlocutors' faces.

In addition to such a process for choosing a strategy, there are several options available to the complainer who wants to stay out of the complainant's face-to-face confrontation. In order to create a scale of complaint indirectness degrees, it is essential to consider the extent of the

complainant's and the complainer's specified involvement in an act of moral censure. Avoiding addressing the hearer, who is yet indirectly blamed, would be a very effective tactic for the complainer. A complainant may ignore the agent and instead concentrate on the unfavourable outcome and negative effects that, in his or her opinion, result from the complaint (Dlali 2003).

It is also possible to make a complaint sound more polite by using specific internal modifiers that minimize the effect a complaint will likely have on the accused. Including upgraders has the reverse effect, making a complaint more impactful on the hearer. It's crucial to include arguments in support of your complaints in order to defend the moral judgment you're making. It might be difficult to reject or contest a complaint that is backed up with evidence. Trosborg (1995) suggests that another option is to substitute different forms of communication for conflicting functions. A complaint might be made in the form of information or a request for information in order to avoid the direct confrontation that results from a straightforward accusation.

1.3.5 Studies in EFL Complaint Realization

Hasyim (2020) concluded that native speakers of English consider it more appropriate to complain using an explicit strategy if the listener(s) is socially distant from them, while they use implicit strategies when complaining to those who are closer to them, such as a friend or spouse. On the other hand, Indonesian speakers choose to employ an explicit strategy when dealing with an offense that comes from people who are close to them, and they tend to see no problem in resorting to immediate threat if they deem it appropriate. Other interesting differences included some Indonesian speakers choosing to stay silent instead of saying anything, variable usage of initiators when beginning the complaint, a higher social rank impact

in Indonesian complaints, and socio-cultural contrasts in the components of speech act competences of English and Indonesian speakers.

In a similar vein, Farnia et al. (2010) found an interesting dynamic between the patterns of American complaints and the structure of Malay complaints. Americans chose to either complain using an initiator followed by a complaint and/or a request for redress, or to complain or issue the request directly; Malay speakers, however, opted for an initiator followed by either of a complaint or a request. Moreover, American speakers took a much more direct approach to complaining than Malay speakers did, and they used significantly greater mitigation in a more formal context. Conversely, Malay speakers complained more than Americans in a situation where a university professor was involved in the complaint.

In terms of gender differences in the realization of complaints, Noisiri (2002) conducted a study that investigated the complaints of male and female native speakers of Thai. Social distance and rank played an important role in the choice of complaint strategy, yet there seemed to be minimal differences between the complaints made by each of the genders. Nevertheless, a different pattern was found among the complaints of men and women, where women chose to be less confrontational and used more hints, while men opted for immediate and sometimes modified blame (accusation) when performing the complaint.

Another study that sought to find gender differences within complaint strategies was one conducted by El-Dakhs & Ahmed (2021). They found minimal to no differences in complaint strategies caused by gender, yet they also found that gender did influence other factors of complaint realization. For instance, the initiators and modifiers used among the genders saw a considerable degree of variation, as male speakers used terms of endearment attention-drawing

statements more than female speakers, while female speakers opted for politeness markers and terms of address more than male speakers. In addition, there was more variation in complaint components when dialects were considered. In the Najdi portion of their sample, men swore by god and used hedges more often than women, who preferred to use politeness markers and intensifiers. On the other hand, Alexandrian men used more terms of endearment and Alexandrian woman used more intensifiers.

Aside from group cultural differences that affect the pragmatic competence of foreign speakers of English, individual differences may also play a part in pragmatic development. Taguchi (2012) studied individual differences in the pragmatic performance and pragmatic development of 12 Japanese students of varying ESL (English as a Second Language) levels, TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) scores (multiple times), degrees of language contact, average weekly hours of English language usage and the activity with the most hours spent using English. Many factors of pragmatic usage of language were focal to the study, such as the change in appropriateness in both low-imposition and high-imposition speech acts and the students' performance during various interactions with their friends in English. Each of the participants underwent pragmatic speaking tests and pragmatic listening tests. Every student displayed his/her own rate of development and degree of development, and some students did not improve very much in one of the tested aspects.

One of the findings of the study was that language contact did not seem to have any effect on perceived increase in the students' pragmatic performance; however, none of the students had a period of contact of more than two weeks with native English speakers. Moreover, due to the qualitative nature of the study, individual cases were examined in detail, and some of them

showed that factors like having a studious nature or having socio-pragmatic sensitivity can significantly impact pragmatic performance and pragmatic development.

Murphy & Neu (1996) investigated speech act sets that included complaints in American and Korean speakers. In a situation where a complaint is issued to a professor about the student's own grades, all of the American native speakers opted for an initiator (an "*explanation of purpose*") followed by the complaint they wish to issue, then a justification of the complaint, and finally a candidate solution for the issue. On the other hand, while the Korean speakers used an initiator and justified their speech act in parallel to the American speakers, only few of them decided to actually perform the complaint, and instead issued criticisms towards the professor, and a few of them did not express a candidate solution.

Consequently, Murphy & Neu (1996) used the data to conclude that the imbalance in power and rank between the student and the teacher necessitates an acceptance of responsibility on the student's part as a politeness mechanism. However, the criticism issued by the Korean speakers serves to disconnect the speaker from any responsibility that may be attached to the situation related to the speech act regardless of the power and rank differential, and they instead impart blame onto the professor and accuse him of bearing responsibility for the issue at hand.

Further in line with the findings of Murphy & Neu's study, Deveci (2015) encountered similar results with respect to some of the relevant factors. In terms of the components of speech act sets, he found that most participants produced a complaint, but there was still a "noticeable percentage" of participants who performed a criticism instead of a complaint, or a complaint accompanied by criticism. Furthermore, not all of the participants employed all of the basic components of the complaint speech act, as some participants did not opt for an initiator, and

some others did not justify their realization of the speech act. This pattern is similar to the patterns seen in Korean speakers in Murphy & Neu (1996), which suggests that non-native speakers from different cultures and parts of the world may still opt for the same kinds of speech act set components, as is the case with substituting the complaint for a criticism.

In addition to the aforementioned studies of speech act sets, Olshtain & Cohen (1990) investigated the speech act behaviour of advanced adult learners of English, whose mother tongue was Hebrew, in comparison to that of native speakers of English. The non-native speakers took a pre-test, and before they proceeded to the post-test, they were subjected to a training period in the usage and structures of apologies, consisting of three 20-minute sessions.

The results of the study showed that non-native speakers did not diversify their choice of strategies compared to the native speakers who often added an explicit apology to their strategy. Moreover, the length of the non-native speakers' utterances was longer, but the non-native speakers used significantly more intensifiers than they did in the pre-test thanks to the training period. Despite there being no difference in overall variation compared to native speakers' apologies, there were some areas where the non-native speakers improved their judgment of the appropriateness of the realization of apology.

Further in line with studies in EFL pragmatic competence, one study in Taguchi (2009b) examined the effect of pragmatic language instruction on the requests of learners of Japanese as a foreign language. The main area of improvement post-instruction included improvements in the use of request strategies and sequential organization of talk, as well as the moves involved in it. Taguchi posits that the inclusion of sequences and relevant socio-pragmatic information is just as important as teaching the different forms that may arise in pragmatic utterances. The

results of this study further support the results in Olshtain & Cohen (1990), meaning that it is possible for pragmatic instruction or training to improve foreign language learners' pragmatic competence and pragmatic appropriacy.

Yet another study tackled the refusal strategies of native and foreign (American) speakers of Japanese in telephone conversations (Taguchi 2009b). The study found that the American speakers showed significantly more variance in the type of refusal strategies they used and a higher number of different strategies than their Japanese counterparts. However, the American speakers compensated for their lack of knowledge on Japanese refusal formulae by using semantic moves in an attempt to convey intentions of refusal. Other notable patterns, used to varying degrees by both groups of speakers, include the incorporation of agreement, disagreement, delays, apologies and excuses into the refusal patterns during performance of the pragmatic utterance.

Conclusion

The literature surrounding speech acts, and more specifically the speech act of complaint, has been extensive indeed. The work that has been done throughout the past decades by the likes of Grice, Brown & Levinson, Austin, Leech and others stands as a testament to the rich nature of research in speech acts, as well as a stable groundwork for future research. It is for that reason that speech acts are a very ripe area of study with much possibilities for improvement and for new discoveries to be made.

After having established the theoretical background of the study, the path is set for the core part of the research: the practical field work and analysis section. The theories that have been covered in the literature review serve the practical portion of the study in a fundamental manner, and as

such, the study aims to use what has already been established in previous research in order to build new knowledge in the field.

Chapter II Methodology, Results and Discussion

Introduction

After reviewing the relevant literature in the previous chapter, it is only appropriate to move on to the practical portion of the dissertation. In this chapter, the methodology of the research and its design shall be presented and discussed, as well as the results of all of the analyses that have been undertaken during the research process. An overview of the method of the study will also be provided, as well as a description of the tools used and the means in which the answers procured using those tools were analysed.

2.0 Research Methodology and Design

The starting point of this study was an interest in the pragmatic competence of EFL learners at the University of Mohamed Boudiaf in M'sila. The speech act of complaint is one of the forms in which EFL learners may manifest their pragmatic competence, and was therefore chosen as the focus of the study. This study is also different from other studies in speech acts, as it not only analyses speech act realization, but it also examines the differences in performance between male and female EFL learners. As such, the researchers have opted for a mixed-method approach, using quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis tools, in order to answer the research questions. A mixed method approach allows for the collection and analysis of data of a qualitative and quantitative nature, which in turn provides a more holistic understanding of the data (Shorten & Smith 2017).

2.0.1 – The Descriptive Method

Descriptive research seeks to improve our understanding of a given phenomenon by describing and measuring the distribution of related variables, with the goal of “providing data

about the sample that describe basic relationships” (Thyer 2010). Hence, this study opted for a descriptive analysis of the collected qualitative and quantitative data pertaining to the EFL learners’ complaint patterns.

2.0.2 – Setting and Participants

This study chose first and second year master students, in addition to third year undergraduate students, in the department of English at the University of Mohamed Boudiaf, M’sila as its population. The population in question was comprised of male and female linguistics students as well as literature and civilizations students. The sample was randomly selected using systematic random sampling, containing fifteen (15) male students and fifteen (15) female students, for a total of thirty (30) students.

This specific population was deliberately chosen for a few reasons. Master students, after having graduated and obtained their licence degree, have had at least three years of experience and exposure to the English language during their academic career. Third year undergraduate students have also had a significant amount of time to become accustomed with English. This helps eliminate any noisy variables that may have otherwise surfaced from a lack of understanding of language usage norms surrounding speech act realization. Moreover, linguistics students at the department of English receive instruction on language pragmatics theory, while literature and civilizations students do not; therefore, including both of the majors in the sample helps provide a more generalized overview, and it helps in avoiding preference based on the students’ major during sampling.

2.0.3 – Research Tools

In line with the goal of collecting and analysing qualitative and quantitative data, this study opted for the usage of two research tools. The first tool, the Discourse Evaluation Task (DET) was adapted from Önalán & Çakır (2018), and the second tool, the Discourse Completion Task, was adapted from Olshtain & Weinbach (1993), Tanck (2002) and Mayouf (2013), in order to fit the objectives of the study.

2.0.3.1 – Discourse Evaluation Task

Conventionally, studies in speech acts often use DCTs as the optimal research tool for the purposes of analysing variables related to speech act realization. However, Önalán & Çakır (2018) devised a new tool based on the concept of DCTs, which aims to “minimize some of the observed limitations of the DCT.” The DET is comprised of a 5-likert scale questionnaire and a structured discourse completion task situation. This study makes use of the questionnaire portion of the DET in order to collect quantitative data on the students’ preconceived notions of appropriate and inappropriate responses to the situation given in the questionnaire. Each of the answers was scored and given one point or half a point, depending on its proximity to the correct answer, for a maximum total of ten points in ten answers.

2.0.3.2 Discourse Completion Task

Discourse completion tasks are commonly used in interlanguage pragmatics studies and speech act-related research to collect qualitative data on speech act realization. One of the main qualities of the DCT is that it serves as a more practical alternative to other tools such as role-plays, especially for the purpose of collecting data on situation-based language performance or pragmatic performance.

The situations of the DCT present in this study were adapted from Olshtain & Weinbach (1993), Tanck (2002) and Mayouf (2013) in order to preserve diversity in the P, D and R values of the situations while reinforcing the reliability of the tool. Moreover, both qualitative analysis and quantitative analysis were used with the DCTs, namely in collecting quantitative data on patterns of speech act realization based on Rinnert & Nogami (2006), and in collecting qualitative data on the properties of complaints based on Brown & Levinson's (1987) politeness principle and Demir's (2021) categorization of complaint strategies. Like the DET, the DCT answers were scored for a total of ten points, a maximum of two points for each of the five situations, based on their usage of initiators, complaints and requests for repair, as well as their usage of mitigations and the level of directness in their realization. Moreover, the qualitative analysis was undertaken based on the structure of the complaint, the level of politeness, the usage of mitigators, the choice of directness, the choice of politeness strategies, and complaint strategies.

2.0.4 - Procedures

The tests were distributed twice; once in the form of physical copies presented to the students during class time, and once more in an online digital form through the Google Forms platform. The online test was distributed to a different set of students from those who had taken

the physical test due to issues with the number of male students during sampling, but the tests were otherwise identical. Furthermore, the physical tests were only given to master one and master two students, while the online test included master one, master two and third year students. The data was then coded, compiled, analysed and interpreted to achieve the goals of the study.

2.0.4.1 – Data Analysis Procedures

Both quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis were used when analysing the answers from the two tests. The DET answers were scored according to Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies, and each of the items were assigned a correct answer (1 point) and an acceptable answer (0.5) points on the 5 scale Likert model (from Very Rude to Perfectly Appropriate). This data was analysed quantitatively using the IBM Statistics Pacakage for Social Sciences (SPSS), wherein descriptive statistics were conducted, analysed and interpreted. In terms of the DCT, quantitative scoring was undertaken similarly to the DCT using politeness strategies, and descriptive statistics were performed using IBM SPSS. Qualitative analysis on the students' complaint structures, their use of mitigators, their choice of directness, politeness strategies and complaint strategies was conducted on the DCT answers as well. The statistical portion of the study discusses the DCT's descriptive statistics, but frequencies were also conducted for the purposes of the qualitative analyses. Finally, the students' scores in each of the overall test, the DET and the DCT were compared based on their gender, with fifteen students in each gender group, and a T test was conducted through IBM SPSS in order to discern whether there were any statistically significant differences between them.

2.1.0 Data analysis and Discussion

2.1.1 Students' Performance in the Complaints Test

The tests were distributed to EFL learners at M'sila University and the participants' answers were analysed thusly. The results of the analysis are as follows:

Students' overall Levels of Complaint Speech Act

The table displays the descriptive statistics of students' overall performance in the whole test.

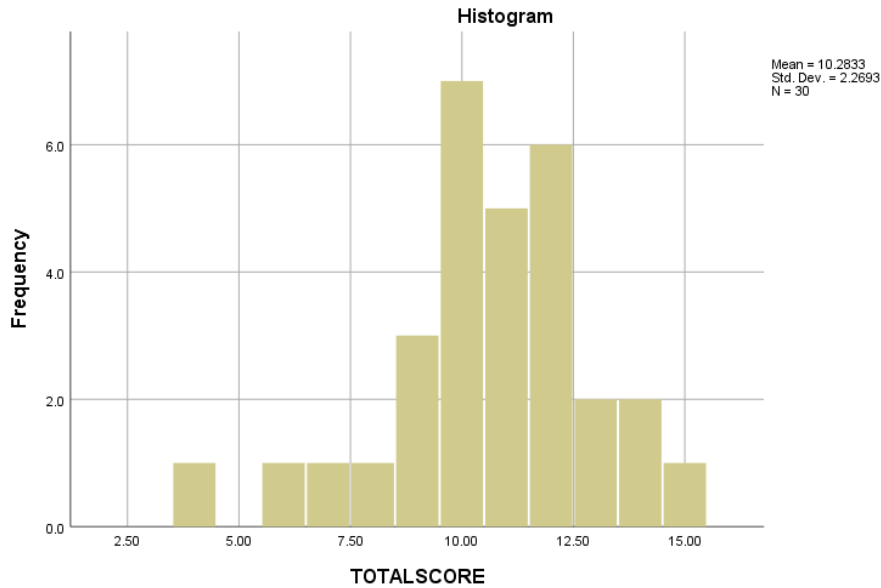
Table 1

Students' Overall Performance in the Complaints Test

N	Valid	30
	Missing	0
Mean		10.2833
Median		10.5000
Mode		9.50
Std. Deviation		2.26930
Minimum		4.00
Maximum		14.50

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

The mean value $\bar{X}= 10.08$ indicates a good level of performance among the participants, with a (Std.D=2.26). Based on these descriptive values, the spread of scores away from the mean value of 10.08 is relatively small, revealing that most of the scores are around 10. The mode (Mo=9.5) reveals that the most repeated score is 9.5 which is an average score. As such, the students' level of complaint realization was found to be average. The following graph clearly shows the spread of scores and their frequencies.



Graph 1 – Students’ performance in the overall test

From the histogram, it seems that most scores range from below average to good scores as it seems that the highest frequencies are between 7.5 and between 12.5. However, the most repeated scores lie in the 10-point range, which is an average score.

2.1.2 Students Performance in the DET

The scores obtained by students in the DET section of the test were analysed separately to examine students DET levels. Table... displays students’ performance in the first part of the test.

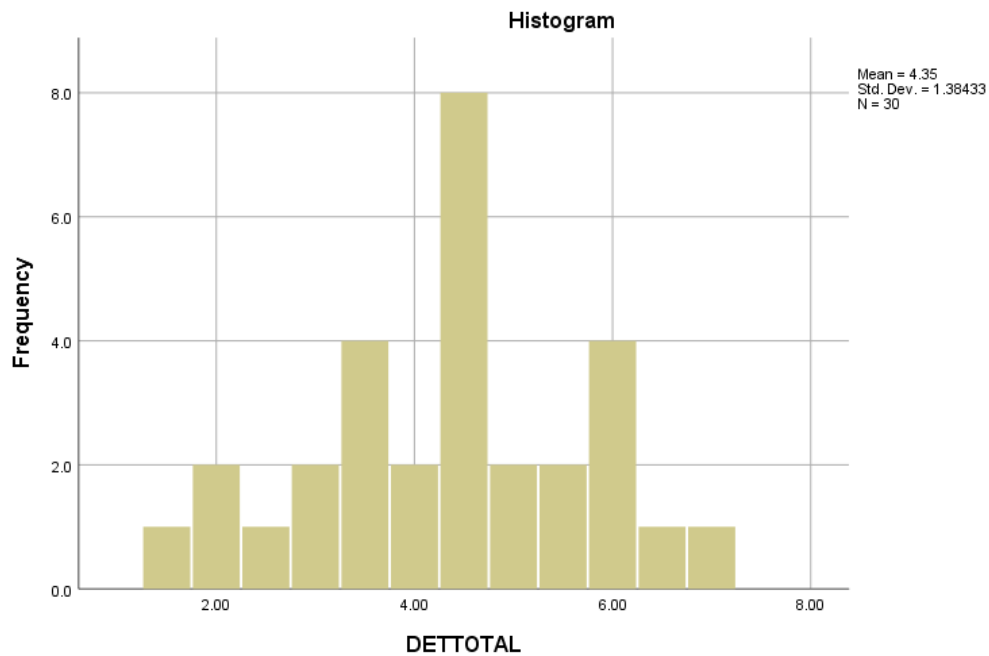
Table 2

Students’ performance in the DET

N	Valid	30
	Missing	0
Mean		4.35
Median		4.50

Mode	4.50
Std. Deviation	1.38
Range	5.50
Minimum	1,50
Maximum	7,00

The highest score obtained in this section was 7 while the smallest was 1.5 with a range of almost 7, which is a high variance in the students' performance. The mean value $\bar{X}=4.35$, which is an average value compared to the highest score of this section, reveals that the levels of students in the DET is average. Most scores are around the average level as confirmed by the standard deviation (std.V=1.5). The following graph shows the distribution of scores.



Graph 2 – Students' performance in the DET

From the graph, it is clear that the students' performance is average, as the most repeated scores lie in the 4 to 5 point range. However, not many students scored highly, and no students attained a score of 8, while many students' score lie below the average. As such, the students' DET scores were found to be average to weak.

Further analysis of students' performance in the items of the DET was conducted. The following table displays the performance of students in the questions of DET.

Table 3

Students' performance in DET items

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
N Valid	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	.2667	.5333	.3833	.4000	.5000	.4833	.3500	.3167	.6500	.4500
Median	.0000	.5000	.5000	.5000	.5000	.5000	.5000	.5000	1.0000	.0000
Mode	.00	.50	.50	.50	.00 ^a	.50	.00	.50	1.00	.00
Std. Dev	.40965	.39246	.31303	.27543	.47343	.35920	.37486	.30747	.41833	.49741
Range	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Minimum	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Maximum	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

The highest mean value is 0.65 of question 9, indicating that the students performed best in item 9 ("Could you spare five minutes to show me my overall grade?"). On the other hand, the mean of 0.26 in item 1 ("I was hoping you could explain why I got a 10/20.") is especially low, which reflects that the students found difficulty in evaluating the appropriateness of the utterance as a

speech act of complaint. Otherwise, it seems that the students' performance was acceptable in the remainder of the questions.

2.1.3 Students' performance in the DCT

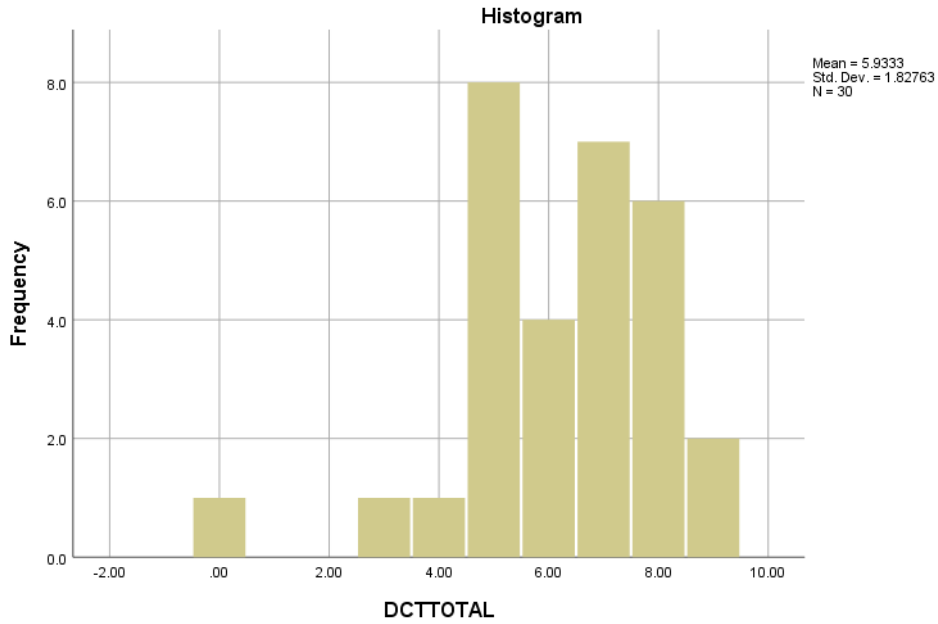
The table displays students' performance in the second part of the test:

Table 4

Students' performance in the DCT

N	Valid	30
	Missing	0
Mean		5.9333
Median		6.2500
Mode		7.50
Std. Deviation		1.82763
Range		9,00
Minimum		,00
Maximum		9,00

The mean value of 6 points with a standard deviation of 1.8 indicates that the students scored well in the DCT portion of the test. These values also show a low variance in the scores, which means that most scores do not spread away from 6. As such, these slightly above average scores are stable. The following graph displays the frequencies of scores:



Graph 3 – Students’ performance in the DCT

Unlike the students’ DET scores, the DCT scores are significantly higher in proportion. There are only a few low scores, and almost all of the scores range from average to good. Overall, it can be said that the students’ DCT scores are good. The following table displays the students’ performances in the DCT questions:

Table 5

Students’ performance in the DCT items

		DCT1	DCT2	DCT3	DCT4	DCT5
N	Valid	30	30	30	30	30
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		1.2333	1.1500	1.6167	.7167	1.2167
Median		1.5000	1.2500	2.0000	.7500	1.0000
Mode		2.00	1.50	2.00	.00	1.00
Std. Deviation		.73968	.55940	.59717	.66544	.65236
Range		2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00

Minimum	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Maximum	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00

The highest mean value is $\bar{X}=1.61$ of question/item 3 (the rock music situation), while the lowest mean value of 0.7 represents question/item 4 (the test material situation). This indicates that students found it easy to complain to the neighbour in the situation, but it also indicates that they found difficulty in responding to the friend's refusal to share the courses. The remaining mean values indicate that the students' responses to items 1, 2 and 5 were average, and it is thus assumed that the students found no difficulty in answering them.

2.1.4 - Female Students' Overall Levels of Complaints Speech Acts

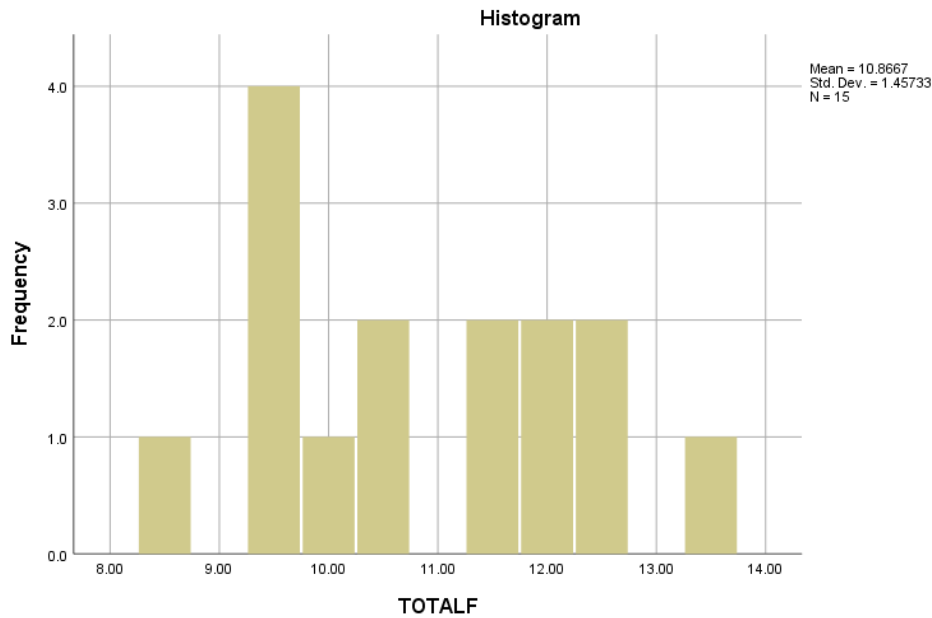
The female students' scores were analysed independently of the male students' scores in order for detailed optical comparison to take place. The following table reveals the female students' performance in the complaints test:

Table 6

Female Students' performance in the overall test

N	Valid	15
	Missing	0
Mean		10.8667
Median		10.5000
Mode		9.50
Std. Deviation		1.45733
Minimum		8.50
Maximum		13.50

The mean value of 10.8 in the female students' scores, along with a standard deviation of 1.45, indicates a squarely average performance in the overall test. Moreover, the lowest and highest scores further indicate that low scorers did not stray too far from the average, while higher scorers performed well in comparison to the mean. The following graph illustrates the frequencies of the female students' scores:



Graph 4 – Female students' performance in the overall test

The graph clearly displays that there is a good portion of female students that scored rather well in the test. The lowest and highest scores were only obtained by one student each, meaning that these scores are outliers. In total, the average score of female students in the overall test is concluded to be good.

2.1.5 Female Students' performance in the DET

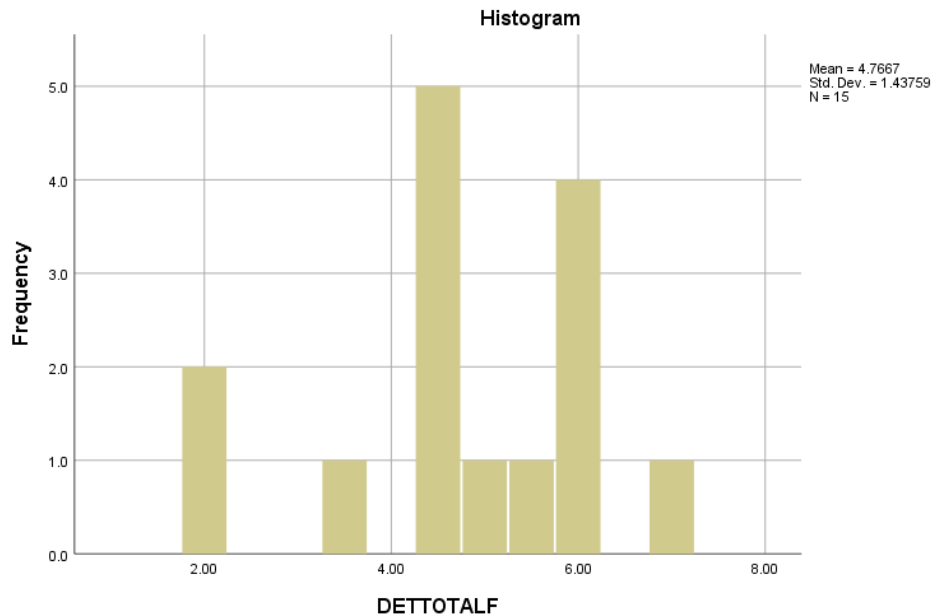
Despite what the overall results show, female students' performance in the DET was low in comparison. The following table showcases their scores:

Table 7

Female Students' performance in the DET

N	Valid	15
	Missing	0
Mean		4.7667
Median		4.5000
Mode		4.50
Std. Deviation		1.43759
Minimum		2,00
Maximum		7,00

In terms of DET scores, a mean of 4.76 with a standard deviation of 1.43 was recorded. These values indicate that female students' performance in the DET was barely average. The lowest and highest scores spread away significantly from the mean, which indicates some variance in their performance. The following graph illustrates the frequencies of these scores:



Graph 5 – Female students' performance in the DET

As per the graph, it can be seen that the most repeated score is in line with the mean value at 4.5 points. Moreover, highest value was only scored by one student, making it an outlier. Most of the scores do not spread away significantly from the mean. It can thus be concluded that the female students' performance in the DET was average.

Table 8

Female Students' performance in the DET Items

		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
N	Valid	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		.16	.60	.33	.40	.56	.50	.43	.36	.83	.53
Median		.00	.50	.50	.50	.50	.50	.50	.50	1.00	1.00
Mode		.00	.50 ^a	.50	.50	1.00	.50	.00	.50	1.00	1.00
Std. Deviation		.36	.38	.30	.28	.45	.32	.41	.29	.30	.51
Maximum		1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Minimum		.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00

In accordance with the overall mean in DET items, the highest mean value is 0.83 of question 9, reflecting the overall sample's high performance in item 9("Could you spare five minutes to show me my overall grade?"). The similarity to the overall trend persists in the lowest mean value of 0.16 in item 1 as well ("I was hoping you could explain why I got a 10/20."), which further reflects the findings in the total sample that the students found difficulty in evaluating the appropriateness of the utterance as a speech act of complaint.

2.1.6 Female Students' performance in the DCT

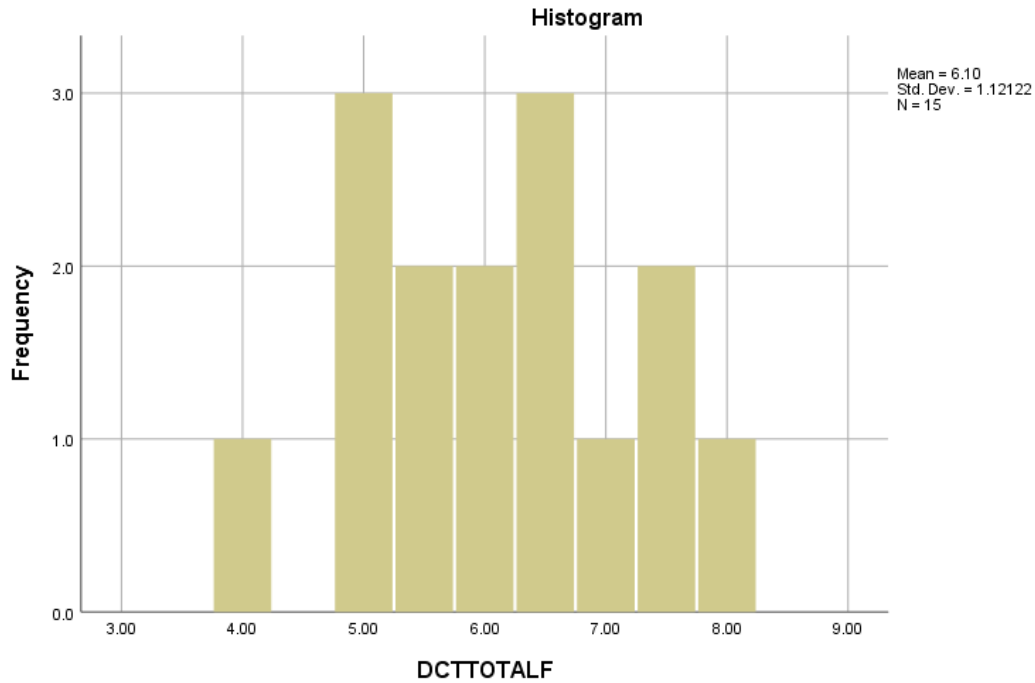
Female students performed better in the DCT portion of the complaints test than they did in the DET portion. The following table describes their scores:

Table 9

Female Students' Performance in the DCT

N	Valid	15
	Missing	0
Mean		6.10
Median		6.00
Mode		5.00
Std. Deviation		1.12
Range		10.50
Minimum		4
Maximum		8

A mean value of 6 (rounded down) with a standard deviation of 1.1 indicates that the female students performed slightly above average in the DCT. The lowest score of 4 is not bad, and the highest score of 8 is very good. These values show that the female students' performance in the DCT was rather good. The following graph illustrates the frequency of these scores:



Graph 6 – Female students’ performance in the DCT

The graph displays a high frequency of scores in the middle range, with more scores trending towards the higher range. In fact, only one student scored the lowest and highest scores of 4 and 8 respectively, meaning that the average score of the female students ranges from average to good. Overall, the female students’ performance in the DCT can be concluded as good.

Table 10

Female Students’ performance in the DCT Items

		DCT1	DCT2	DCT3	DCT4	DCT5
N	Valid	15	15	15	15	15
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		1.26	1.23	1.80	.60	1.20
Median		1.50	1.50	2.00	.50	1.00
Mode		.50 ^a	1.50	2.00	.00	1.00

Std. Deviation	.62	.37	.36	.57	.52
Maximum	1.50	1.00	1.00	1.50	2.00
Minimum	.50	.50	1.00	.00	.00

Once again, the female students' performance in the DCT items is in line with the trends in the overall performance charts. The highest mean value is 1.8 of question/item 3 (the rock music situation), while question/item 4 (the test material situation) holds the lowest mean value of 0.6. This displays that female students found it trivial to complain to the neighbour in accordance with the total sample, and it displays that they found difficulty in managing the situation with the friend's refusal to share the courses like the overall sample. The other DCT scores in items 1, 2 and 5 reflect an average performance.

2.1.7 Male Students' Overall Levels of Complaints Speech Acts

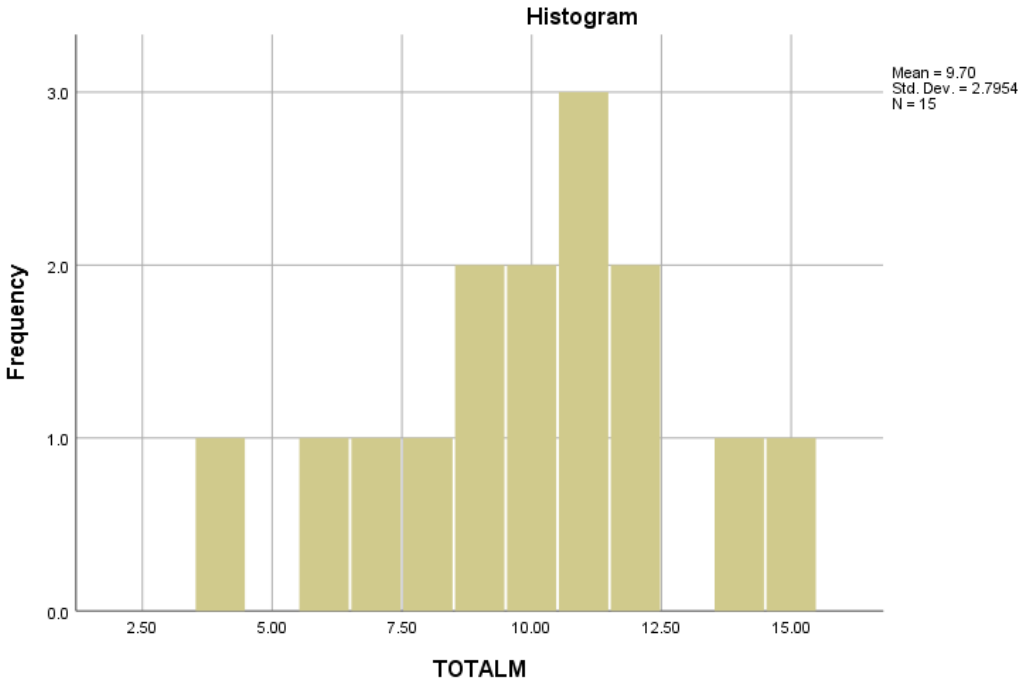
As with the female students, the male students' responses were also analysed independently. The following table shows their scores in the complaints test:

Table 11

Male students' performance in the whole Test

N	Valid	15
	Missing	0
Mean		9.70
Median		10.00
Mode		11.00
Std. Deviation		2.79
Range		10.50
Minimum		4
Maximum		14.50

The mean of the average male scores is also average at a value of 9.7, however this time the standard deviation is rather high at a value of 2.79; almost 3 full points. This indicates that there was a high variance in male students' performance in the overall test. Moreover, the difference between the lowest value and the highest value is an entire ten points apart, making the range of the scores quite high. The following graph illustrates the frequencies of their scores:



Graph 7 – Male students' performance in the overall test

The graph reflects the aforementioned high variance, as the scores are significantly spread apart. The highest overall score of the entire sample is present in the male portion, but so is the lowest score of the whole sample. Still, most scores are set between below average levels and above average levels. Overall, the performance of male students in the test is concluded to be average.

2.1.8 Male Students' Performance in the DET

Similarly to the case of the female students, the DET performance of male students returned lower values than the mean suggests. This table displays their scores in the DET:

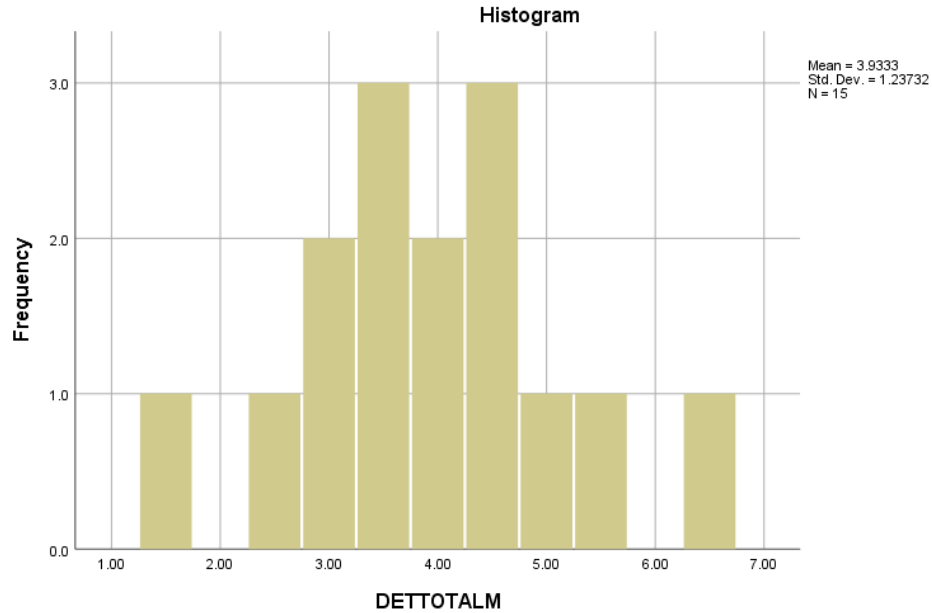
Table 12

Male students' performance in the DET

N	Valid	15
	Missing	0
Mean		3,93
Median		4,00
Mode		3,50 ^a
Std. Deviation		1,23
Range		5,00
Minimum		1,50
Maximum		6,50

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

The mean of male performance in the DET is comparatively low, as the value of the mean is 4 (rounded up) with a standard deviation of 1.2. In line with the males' overall test results, the range is also significantly high at a value of 5. These values show us that the performance of males in the DET was slightly below average. The following graph illustrates the frequencies of male students' DET scores:



Graph 8 – Male students’ performance in the DET

From the graph, it is clear that there is a large degree of disparity in the male students’ scores. Moreover, the lowest DET score of the entire sample is present in the male sample at 1.5 points. Regardless, most of the scores still converge around the mean. It is thus concluded that the male students’ performance in the DET is slightly below average.

Table 13

Male students’ performance in the DET Items

		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
N	Valid	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		.36	.46	.43	.40	.43	.46	.26	.26	.46	.36
Median		.00	.50	.50	.50	.00	.50	.00	.00	.50	.00
Mode		.00	.50	.50	.50	.00	.50	.00	.00	.00	.00
Std. Deviation		.44	.39	.31	.28	.49	.39	.31	.31	.44	.48

Range	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Minimum	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Maximum	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00

In terms of male students' performance in individual DET items, there is a tie for the highest mean between items 2, 6 and 9. The rest of the items are approximate to each other, with the exception of the low scores in items 7 and 8. As a result, it can be concluded that the DCT items where male students faced the most difficulty were items 7 and 8; though the rest of the mean values do not indicate any particular affinity in answering any of the remaining items.

2.1.9 Male Students' performance in the DCT

The male students, like the female students, performed better in the DCT than they did in the DET. The table below displays their scores in the DCT portion of the complaints test:

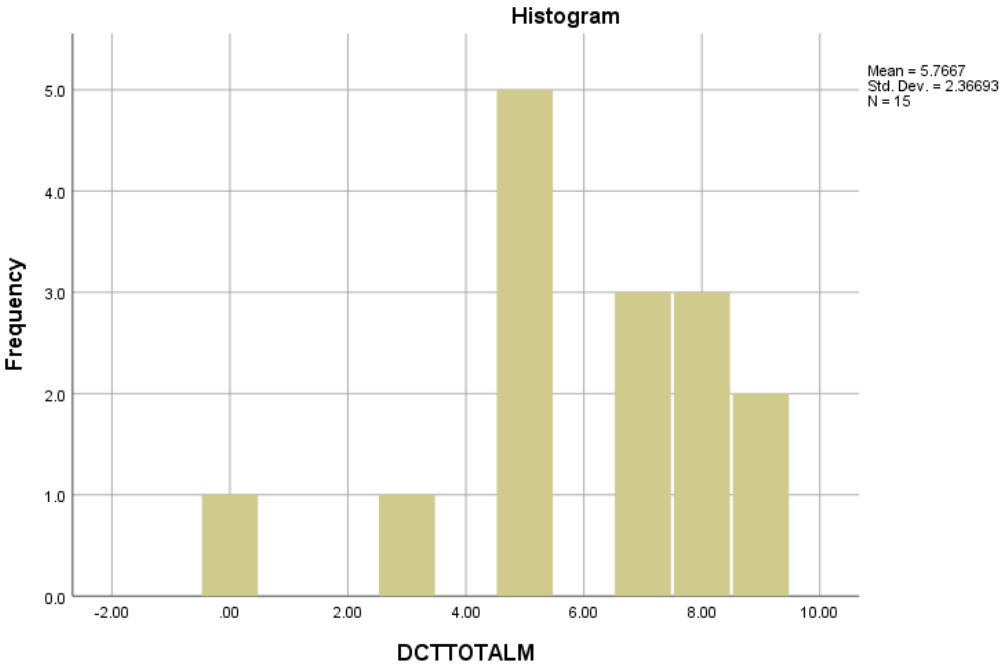
Table 14

Male students' performance in the DCT

N	Valid	15
	Missing	0
Mean		5.7667
Median		6.5000
Mode		4.50
Std. Deviation		2.36693
Range		9.00
Minimum		0.00
Maximum		9

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

As the mean value of 5.76 and the standard deviation value of 2.36 indicate, the performance of the male students in the DCT portion was about average. However, there are not as many outliers as the other results indicate have indicated so far, and there is a fair amount of concentration in the higher scores in proportion. The following graph displays the frequencies of their scores:



Graph 9 – Male students’ performance in the DCT

As the graph indicates, there is only one outlier with a score of 0, as the score of 3 is well within standard deviation in comparison to the mean. The rest of the scores display an average to a very good performance in the DCT portion. Overall, it can be concluded that male students’ performance in the DCT is good.

Table 15

Male students’ performance in the DCT Items

		DCT1	DCT2	DCT3	DCT4	DCT5
N	Valid	15	15	15	15	15
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		1,2000	1,0667	1,4333	,8333	1,2333
Median		1,5000	1,0000	2,0000	1,0000	1,5000
Mode		2,00	1,00	2,00	,00	2,00
Std. Deviation		,86189	,70373	,72866	,74801	,77613
Range		2,00	2,00	2,00	2,00	2,00
Minimum		,00	,00	,00	,00	,00
Maximum		2,00	2,00	2,00	2,00	2,00

The male students' performance in the individual items reflects the whole sample's performance well. In accordance with the entire sample's performance, the male students found item 3 to be the easiest to answer, and item 4 to be the most difficult. The male students performed well in the rest of the items.

2.1.10 The Difference Between Male and Female Students' Performance

An independent samples T-test for equal groups was chosen to conduct difference analysis between male and female students. The first difference analysis was conducted between the females' and males' overall performance in the whole test. Then, the analysis of the difference in their performance in the two separate sections of the test was conducted. The following sections include the data analysis performed during this stage.

2.1.11 The Difference between Male and Female Students' Performance in the Overall Test

The first set of analysis was conducted between the males' and females' overall performance. Table 16 displays the data obtained from the first T-test:

Table 16*Independent sample T-test of the whole complaints test*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
TOTAL SCORE	Equal variances assumed	4.148	.051	1.433	28	.163	1.16667	.81397
	Equal variances not assumed			1.433	21.087	.166	1.16667	.81397

As the table shows, according to the value $t(28)=1.433$, at the level of significance $\alpha=0.05$, the conducted t-test proves that there is no statistically significant difference between the male and female students' performance in the overall test.

2.1.12 The Difference in Male and Female Students' Performance in the DET

Table 17*Independent samples T-test of the DET*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
DET SCORES	Equal variances assumed	.231	.634	1.702	28	.100	.83333	.48974
	Equal variances not assumed			1.702	27.393	.100	.83333	.48974

According to this table, there is no statistically significant difference between the DET performance of male and female students in the sample, with a value of $t(28)=1.702$ at the level of significance $\alpha=0.05$.

2.1.13 The Difference in Males and Female Students' Performance in the DCT

Table 18

Independent samples T-test of the DCT

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
DCT TOTAL	Equal variances assumed	7.458	.011	.493	28	.626	.33333	.67624
	Equal variances not assumed			.493	19.982	.627	.33333	.67624

In line with the results of the two previous t-tests, the value $t(28)=0.493$ at the level of significance $\alpha=0.05$ reflects no statistically significant difference in male and female students' performance in the DCT.

2.2 Analysis of Students' Complaints

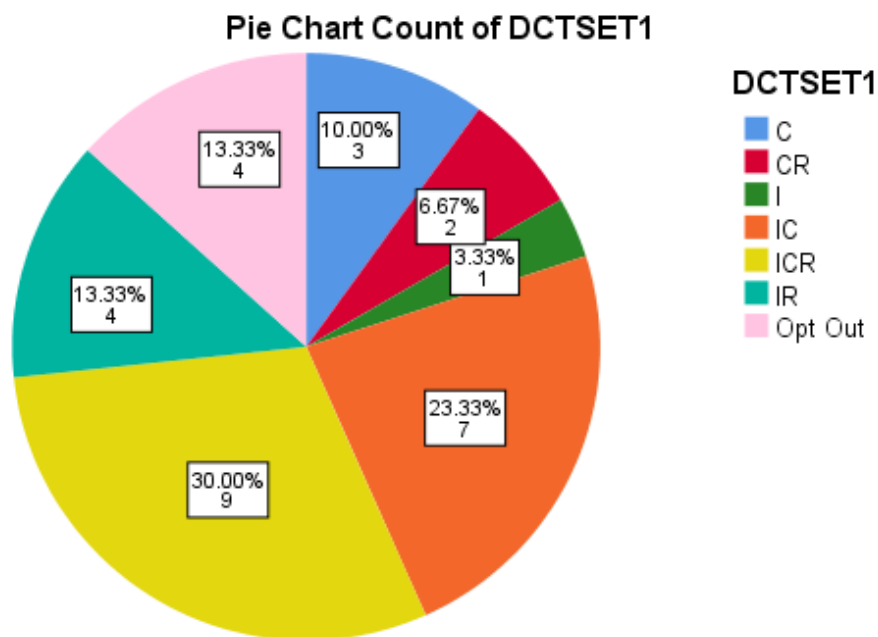
2.2.1 Students' Complaint Structures

The structure of the students' speech act sets of complaint was analysed according to Rinnert & Nogami (2006), wherein a taxonomy with three individual parts of the speech act of complaint was put forth: an initiator ("I"), the complaint ("C") and a request for repair ("R"). The speaker may choose any combination of those three components when formulating the speech act, and they may also choose to opt for a complaint only or a request only. Moreover, the speaker may choose not to say anything at all, effectively opting out of pursuing the

realization of the speech act. The results of the analysis are separated into parts according to the number of questions in the DCT test.

2.2.1.1 Students' Complaint Structures

In the first DCT question, the students were faced with a situation where the speaker suspects that one of their professors might not have sent a recommendation letter for him/her as the student had requested prior. The following chart shows how the students chose to respond to the situation:



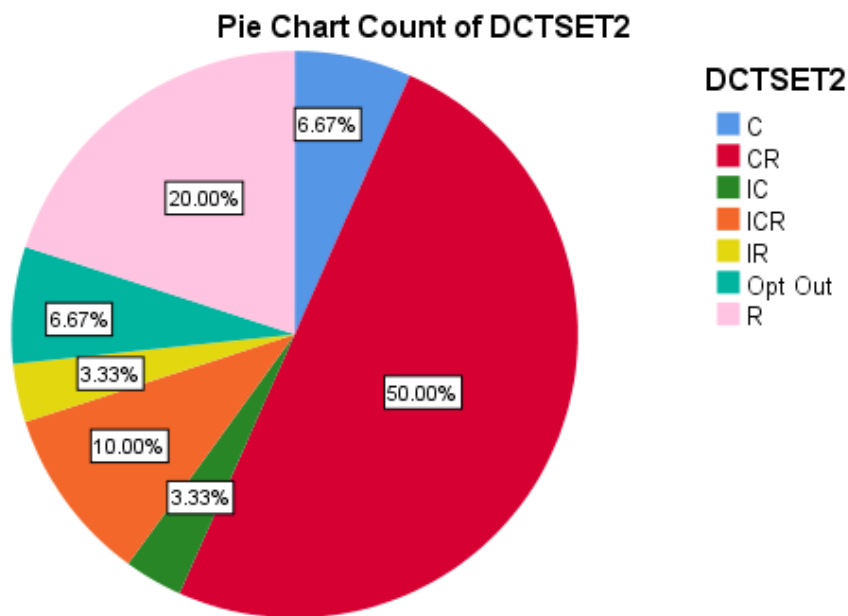
Graph 10 – Students' Complaint Structure in DCT Question One

It can be immediately observed that there is a significant degree of variance in the manner in which students chose to realize their complaint. The majority of the responses chose the safest option of using an initiator coupled with a complaint and a request for repair, and the next largest

percentage of students opted for an initiator and complaint only. These results are rather compatible with the results of a similar professor situation in Rinnert & Nogami (2006), wherein 32% of Japanese speakers of English chose the I+C+R structure and 28% of them chose the I+C structure. Because the P, D and R values of the professor situation connote a high FTA weightiness value, it is logical that the majority of responses opted for such structures with a low risk of offending the listener.

2.2.1.2 Students' complaint structure in DCT question two

Situation two of the DCT presented the student with a predicament in which the photocopy shop does not have his/her printing order for a thesis booklet, which had been placed one day prior, while the student only has one hour left to deliver their copies to the evaluation committee. The students' responses are visualized in the following chart:

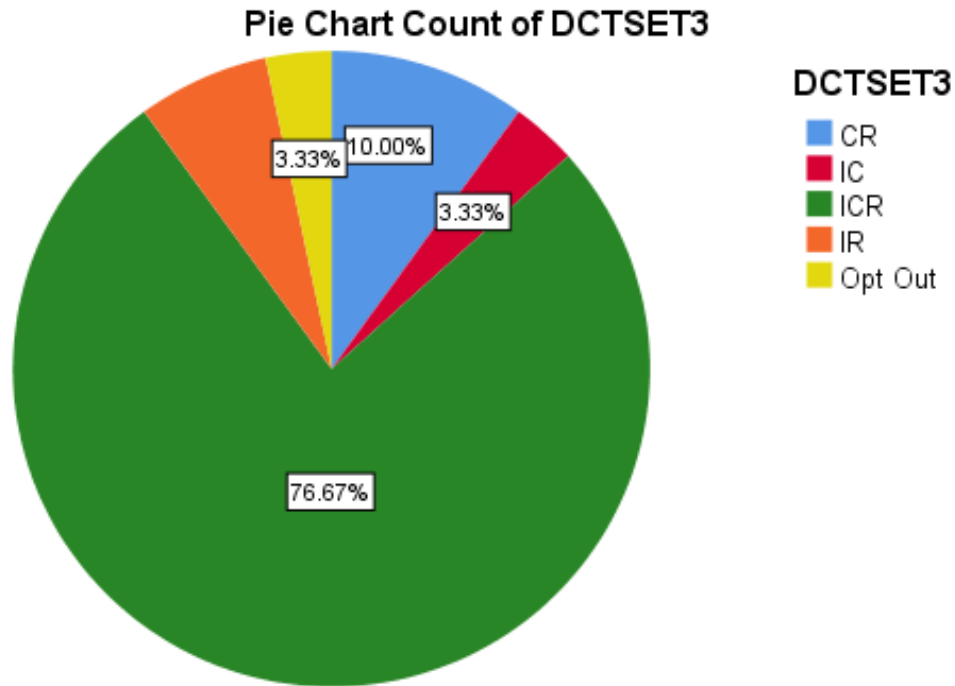


Graph 11 – Students' complaint structures in DCT question two

From the chart, it is clear that the complaint structure which the students favoured most was a complaint followed by a request for repair. Conversely, some of the students decided to opt for a request for repair only. It should be noted that, in this situation, an initiator had already been placed in the conversation prior to the student's response. These results tell us that even though most of the students had no issue in continuing with the realization of the FTA, especially considering the urgency of the situation, some of the students were still willing to forgo the expression of frustration in the complaint due to their interest in solving the issue at hand. In terms of the students' calculation of the FTA's weightiness according to the P, D and R values within the situation, they seemed to have no problem with performing the FTA and risking to offend the listener.

2.2.1.3 Students' complaint structure in DCT question three

The third DCT situation places the students inside of a dormitory at 11:30 p.m. As the student studies for their final exam, his/her neighbour is playing rock music in the next room, and keeps increasing the volume of the music. The student then goes to knock on the neighbour's door to complain about it. The students formulated their answers as the following:



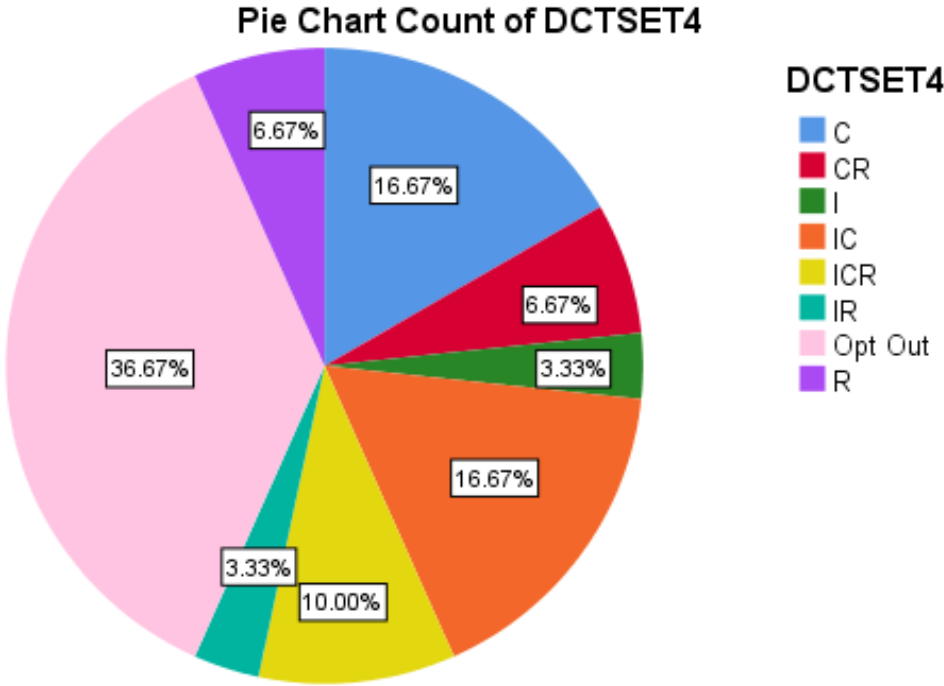
Graph 12 - Students' complaint structures in DCT question three

The pie chart shows that the majority of students opted for an initiator followed by a complaint and a request for repair once again. As it is the safest option to avoid offending the listener and to avoid any other altercations, it is logical for the students to have opted for such a structure. The students seemed to prioritize treating their neighbour with respect over expressing their frustration. In a sociocultural sense, these results are very logical, as Muslims are expected to respect their neighbours and treat them with kindness (Bensaid & Machouche 2019). As such, the students calculated the weightiness of the FTA in relation to the P, D and R values in an appropriate manner.

2.2.1.4 Students' complaint structure in DCT question four

In the fourth situation, the students are met with a friend whom had declined to share some course materials for the final exam prior. The student had helped him/her in the past with

course materials. The frequencies of the students' responses can be seen in the following chart:

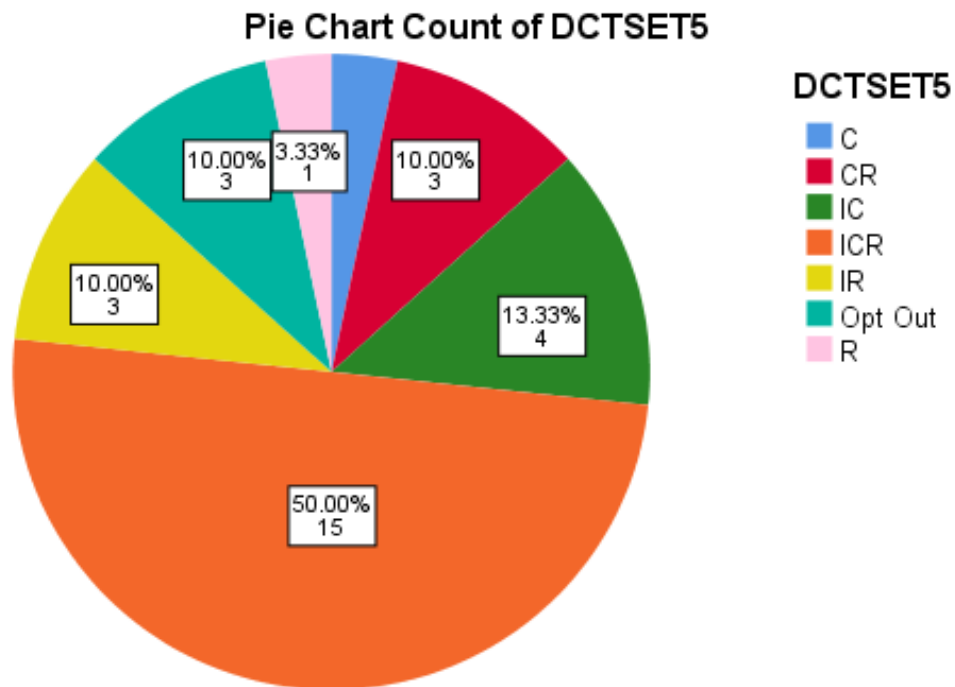


Graph 13 – Students' complaint structures in DCT question 4

This situation saw the highest variance in structure of any of the DCT questions. The option most favoured by the students was to simply opt out of realizing the speech act. Other notable responses to the situation where an initiator coupled with a complaint, preferred by 16.67% of students, and a complaint only, preferred by another 16.67% of students. The students who opted out had calculated that the weightiness of the FTA is not worth the possible altercation that may follow, or that it is not worth further damaging the relationship with their friend. However, the students who chose to use the I+C or the C structure calculated that the weightiness of the FTA does not outweigh their desire to express their frustration towards the complainable. Each of the two options is an appropriate way to manage the situation at hand.

2.2.1.5 Students' complaint structure in DCT question five

The final situation in the DCT places the students in the office of one of their professors. The professor had handed the student's paper back to him/her, to which he/she is startled by the grade marked on it, as he/she had felt that the bad grade was due to a disagreement with the professor's point of view rather than any flaws in analysis. The student had worked hard for a long time to produce the paper, and so, she/she confronts the professor about it. The following chart represents the students' responses:



Graph 14 – Students' complaint structures in DCT question five

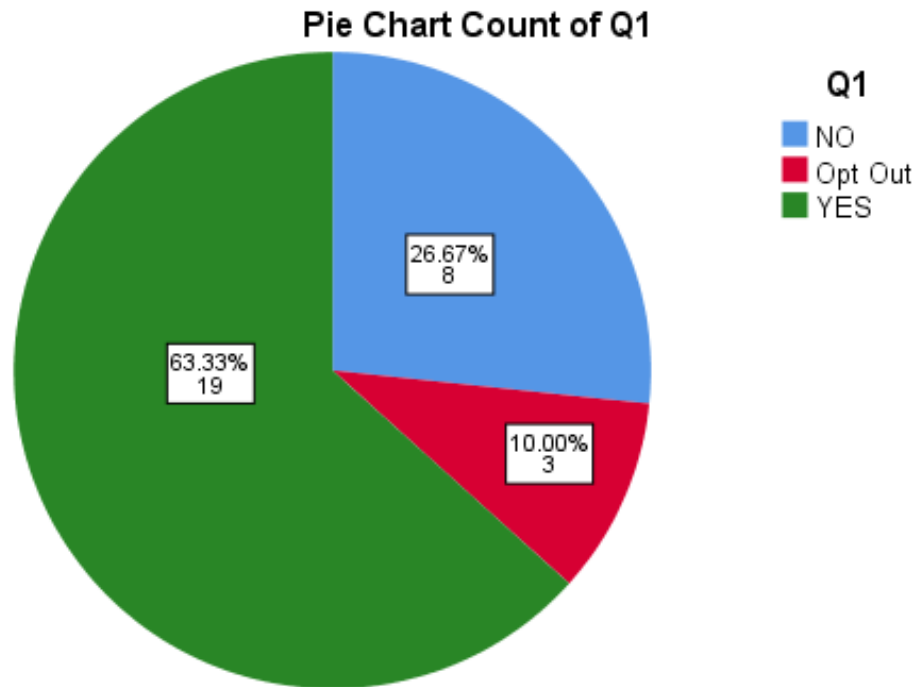
According to the chart, the structure most preferred by the students is once again the I+C+R structure. Still, there is a reasonable amount of variance in the structure of the remaining students' answers. A small percentage (10%) of students even decided to opt out of

complaining altogether. For half of the students, calculating the weightiness of the FTA relative to the professor's higher P value (in light of the students' interest in resolving the grading issue) had led them to continue with the realization of the complaint in an appropriately polite manner. For the other half of students, some of them (13.33%) chose to forgo the complaint for a request for repair instead, while another set of students (10%) opted for a C+R structure instead. This last half of the students has either valued the weightiness of the FTA as too high to realize, or as justifiable to realize based on their beliefs over the bias in grading, respectively. With all of these factors considered, it can be concluded that each of the FTA calculations are within reason.

2.2.2 Students' Use of Mitigators

The students' usage of mitigators in their responses to the DCT questions was investigated. Mitigators are words or expressions that are used by the complainees in order to soften the complaint, like "just" or "I think" or "maybe" (Murphy & Neu 1996). This section analyses mitigator usage in each of the DCT questions.

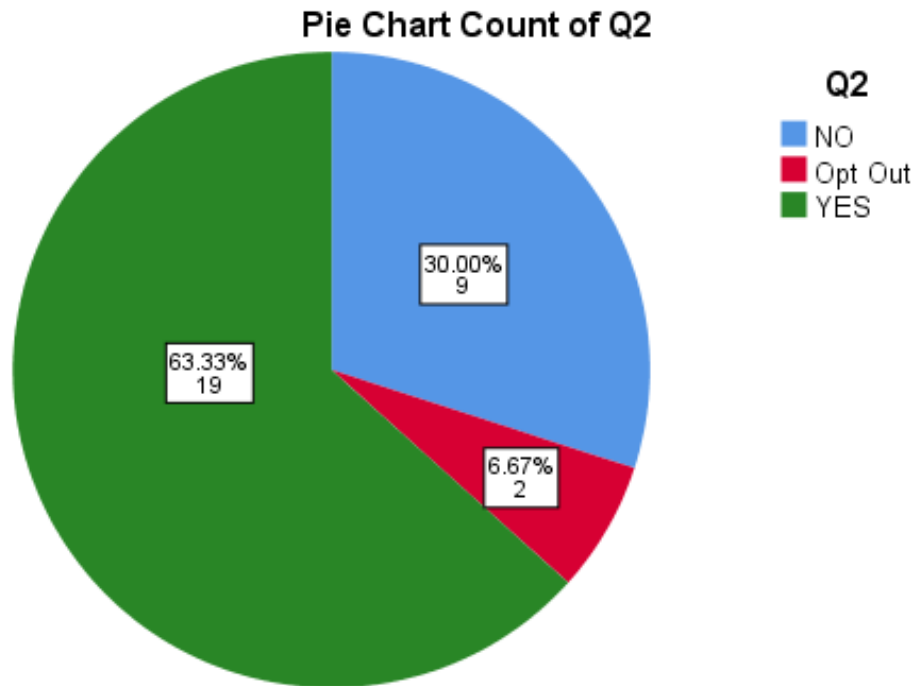
2.2.2.1 Students' use of mitigators in DCT question one



Graph 15 – Students' use of mitigators in DCT question one

From the graph, it can be observed that the majority of students (63.33%) chose to use mitigators in their realization of the complaint to the professor. It is reasonable for mitigators to be used in this situation if the student believes that the rank of imposition (R) of their complaint is high, and that some form of redress should take place. Conversely, some students (26.67%) opted not to use any mitigators, and they complained in a more formal manner instead. In this case, it seems that the students viewed the complainable issue to be reasonable, and saw no need to soften the complaint with mitigators. In each of these cases, the students evaluated the situation logically and complained accordingly.

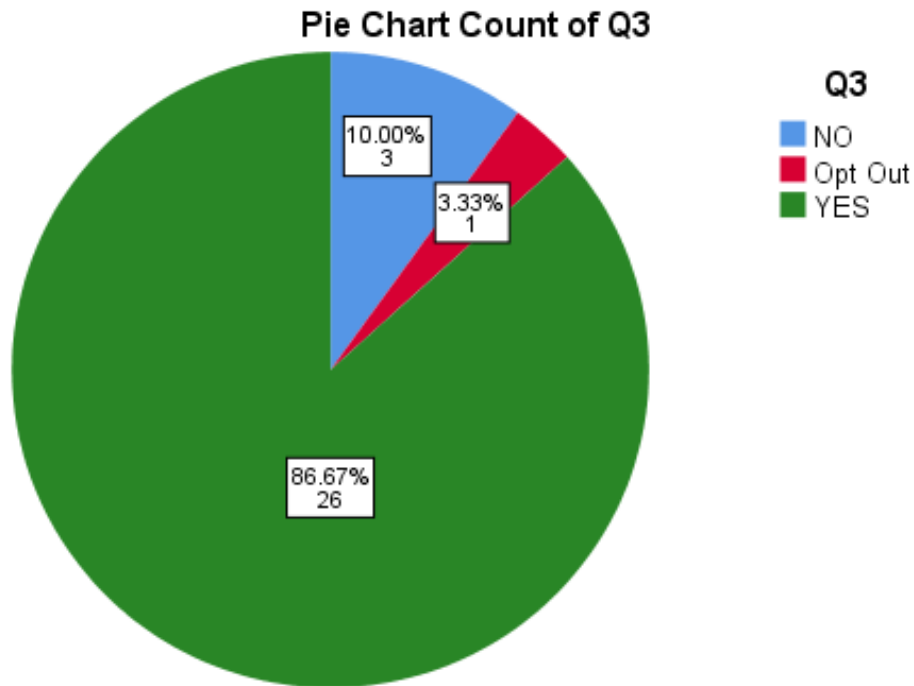
2.2.2.2 Students' use of mitigators in DCT question two



Graph 16 – Students' usage of mitigators in DCT question two

Once again, the majority of students (63.33%) opted to use mitigators as part of their complaints for the second situation. Similarly to the previous situation, the students valued the rank of imposition of the complaint concerning the missing order as high, and so, they decided to use mitigators in the interest of increasing the likelihood of repairing the situation. On the other hand, 30% of students decided not to use any mitigators, either due to the urgency of the situation or due to their low valuation of the R value. Each of the approaches to complaining in the second situation are perfectly valid.

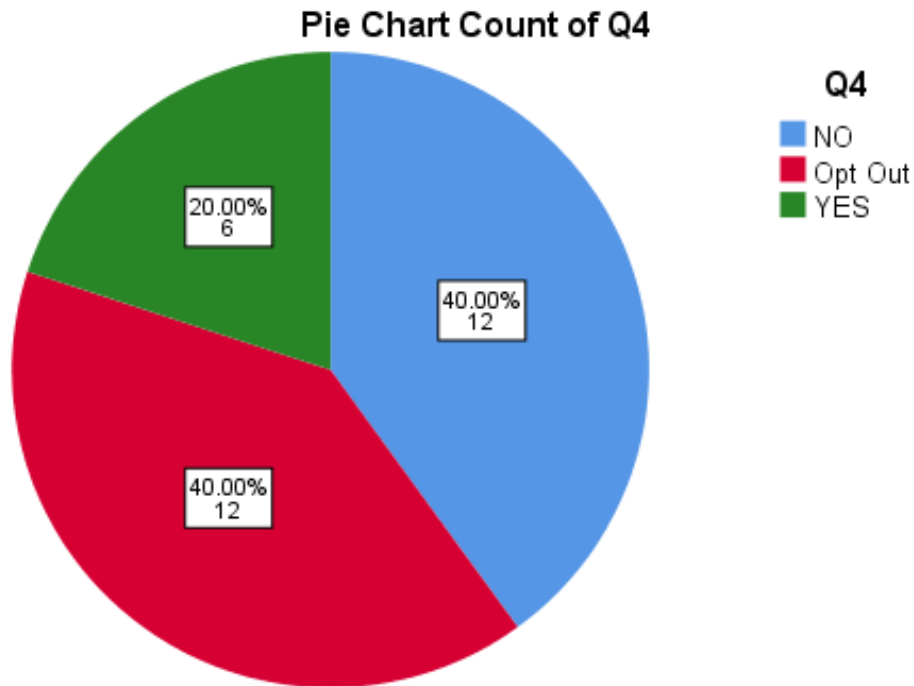
2.2.2.3 Students' use of mitigators in DCT question three



Graph 17 – Students' use of mitigators in DCT question three

The third DCT situation displays a vast preference for the use of mitigators, as 86.67% of students chose to use them, which is the largest percentage yet. These results are very logical, as the students prioritized avoiding offending the neighbour over all else, while still seeking to solve the complainable issue, likely due to the aforementioned tendency of Muslims to treat neighbours with kindness (Bensaid & Machouche 2019). As for the remaining 10% of students who chose not to use mitigators, their complaints still followed the same principle of kindness despite what the absence of mitigators might suggest. Therefore, the students' complaints were considered appropriate.

2.2.2.4 Students' use of mitigators in DCT question four

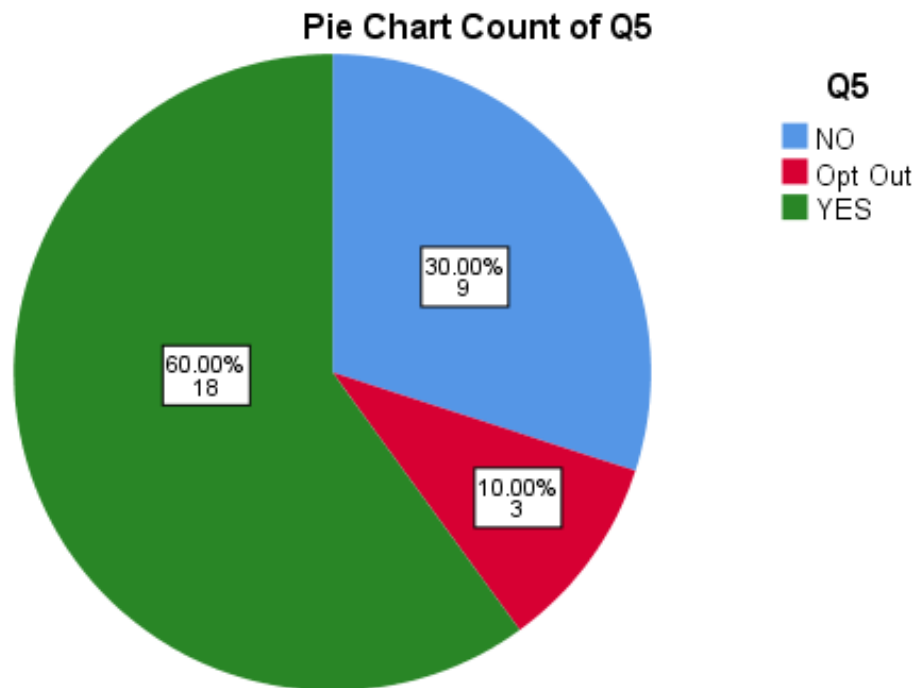


Graph 18 – Students' use of mitigators in DCT question four

Question four saw the most varied responses in terms of the use of mitigators among all of the DCT questions. This time, only 20% of the students chose to use mitigators, while 40% of the students chose not to use any mitigators, and another 40% of students decided to opt out of realizing the speech act. The students who used mitigators did not wish to harm their relationship with their friend, but they still wanted to solve the complainable issue. Conversely, the students who did not use any mitigators felt betrayed because of their friend's refusal to share the course materials, and saw it unnecessary to use any kind of mitigators or softeners. Finally, the students who opted out decided to skip addressing the issue in favour of

avoiding any harm to the relationship, ignoring the issue in the process. With all of those responses put into consideration, it can be said that each approach to responding to this situation is reasonable.

2.2.2.5 Students' use of mitigators in DCT question five



Graph 19 – Students' use of mitigators in DCT question five

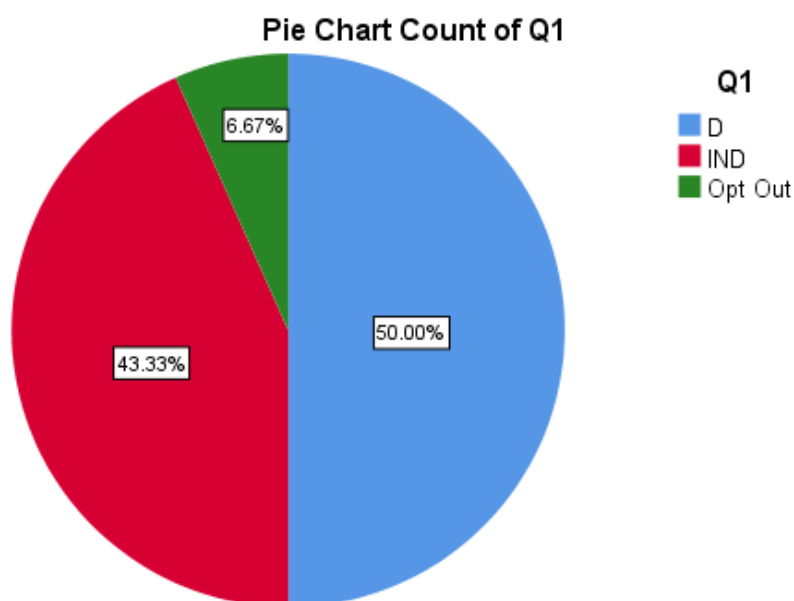
Despite the small amount of variance in DCT situation five, the majority of students still opted to use mitigators. However, a third of the students decided not to use any mitigators. The students who did use mitigators felt that it was necessary to soften the implication that their professor had partaken in unethical grading practices in order not to offend the professor, and in order not to harm their chances of solving the complainable problem. However, the students who chose not to use mitigators decided to press the issue and express their

frustration over the grading practice they perceived to be unfair. Each of the two approaches to handling the realization of the complaint is logical.

2.2.3 Students' Choice of Directness

Directness in complaining is the explicit mention of the complainable offense, and it may be used prior to a request for repair or a threat. The speaker may choose to address the offense directly, or he/she may opt for a more indirect approach to complaining about it. Each of the two options can have an effect on the conversation, and the students' choices will differ depending on whether they view it as necessary to be direct.

2.2.3.1 Students' choice of directness in DCT question one

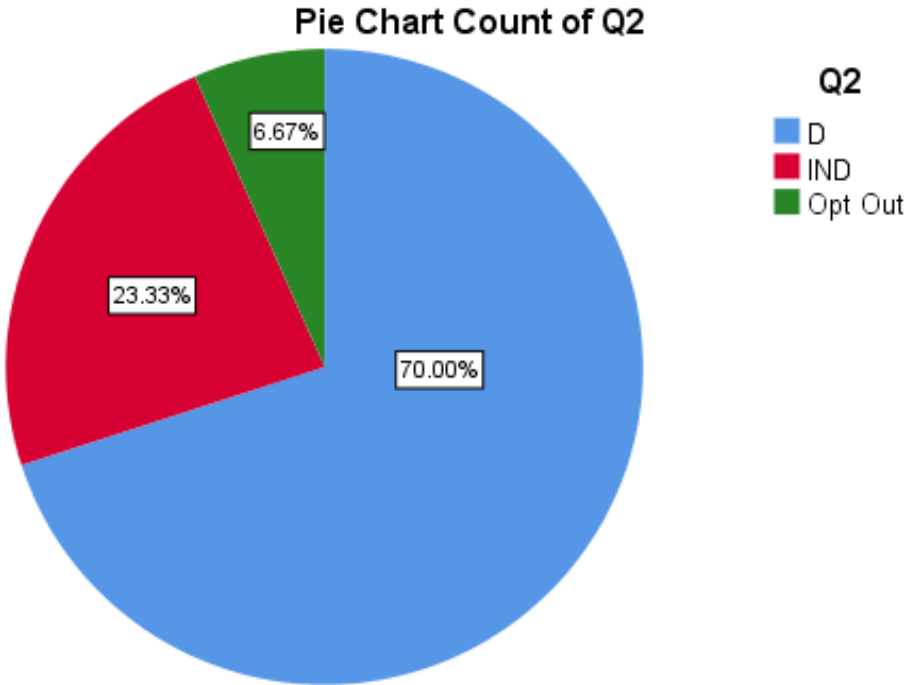


Graph 20 – Students' choice of directness in DCT question one

In the first DCT question, the split between the direct and indirect approaches was almost half-and-half. For the half of the students which opted for the direct approach, it seems as though they decided that the value of solving the complainable issue does not allow for ambiguity in

the complaint, and so they used that high R value to justify a direct approach. On the other hand, the students who chose to complain indirectly evaluated the R value as being too high to take a direct approach to the complaint in relation to the professor's higher P value, and as such, they opted for the safer indirect approach. Each of the two approaches is a normal way to handle complaining in this situation.

2.2.3.2 Student's choice of directness in DCT question two

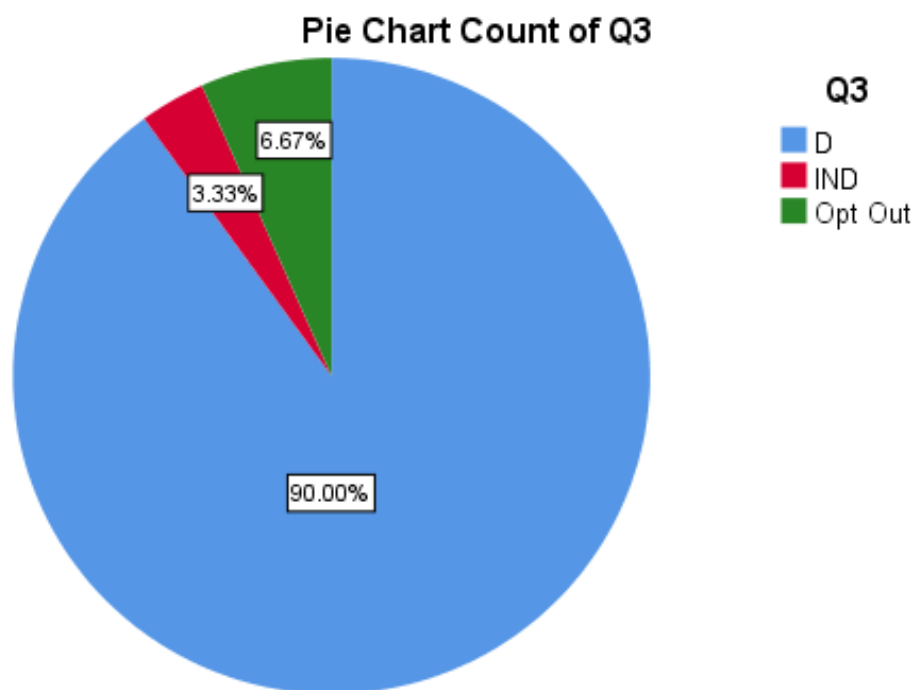


Graph 21 – Students' choice of directness in DCT question two

The second DCT question saw less variance than the first in the choice of directness. The majority of students (70%) decided to employ a direct strategy, while 23.33% chose an indirect approach to complaining. Considering the fact that the photocopy shop clerk has less of a P value than the professor in the first situation does, and considering that the D value is higher as well, it can be said that the choice of most students be direct with their complaints is

logical. Likewise, it is also reasonable for the smaller percentage of students to have decided to be indirect to avoid any sort of conflict or any misunderstandings in order to preserve their own face and the listener's face, even if the P value is low and the D value is high. The students' choice of directness was reasonable in this case.

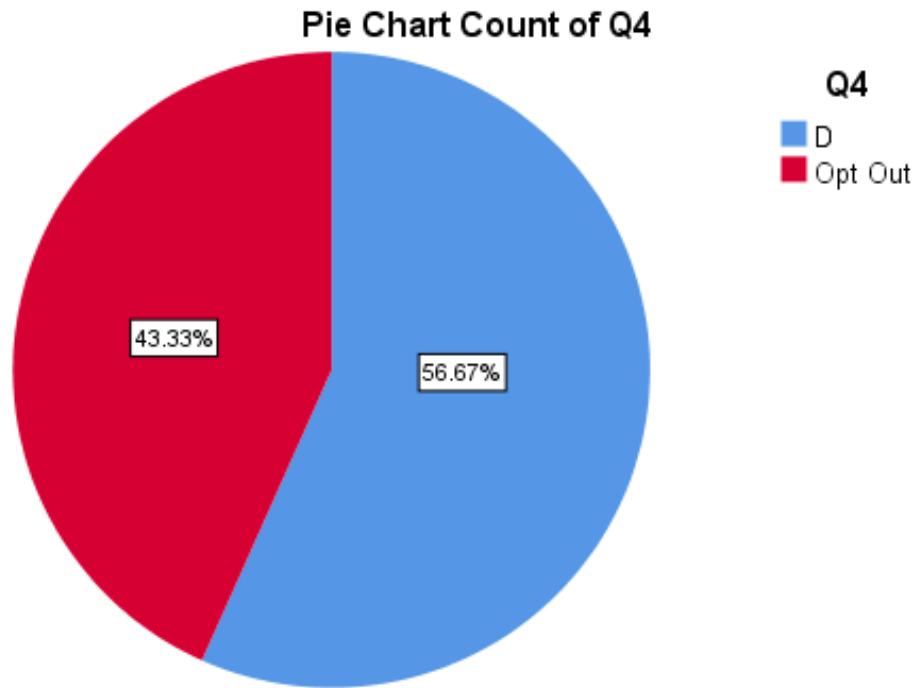
2.2.3.3 Students' choice of directness in DCT question three



Graph 22 – Student's choice of directness in DCT question three

Question three saw the highest preference for the direct approach by far, as 90% of students chose it as their preferred strategy. From these results, it can be deduced that the students felt no need to redress their complaint with indirectness, as the R value of their imposition, coupled with the high D value, makes it desirable to address the core issue of the complaint without fear of any negative effects to either of the speaker and listener's faces. This is a forward and effective way to complain in a situation like this.

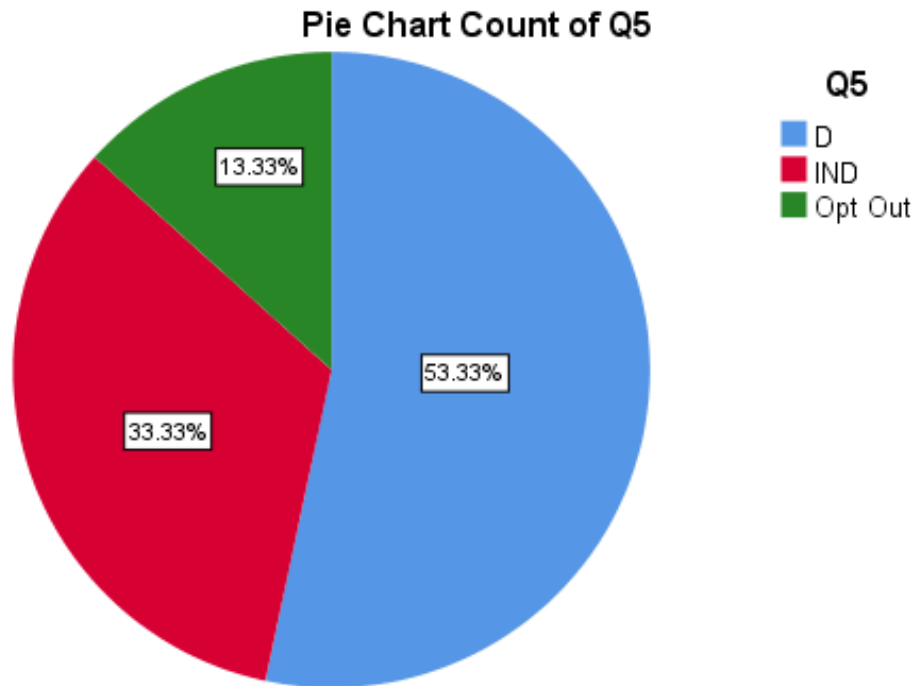
2.2.3.4 Students' choice of directness in DCT question four



Graph 23 – Students' choice of directness in DCT question four

Similarly to question one, the split between the students who chose one of two options is almost half-and-half. However, this time, half of the students chose to opt out instead of complaining. This is consistent with the previous results, and as previously elicited, the students opted out in order to avoid any conflict or to avoid deteriorating their relationship with the friend in question. As for the students who chose the direct approach, it seems that they saw the friend's refusal to share course materials as particularly offensive, and thus decided that the R value outweighed the D value, justifying the direct approach. With those factors put into consideration, it can be said that the way the students handled directness in question four was appropriate.

2.2.3.5 Students' choice of directness in DCT question five



Graph 24 – Students' choice of directness in DCT question five

From the pie chart, it can be observed that there is some variance in the student's responses. Around half of the students opted for a direct approach, which means that they had felt it necessary to address the possibility of unfairness from the teacher; however, this does not mean that they have all forgone the calculation of the FTA's weightiness, as every answer is different. Another 33.33% of the students decided to use an indirect complaint instead, which is reasonable, as the P value of the professor and the R value of the imposition are rather high. In the end, the students were able to employ directness and indirectness well in their complaints.

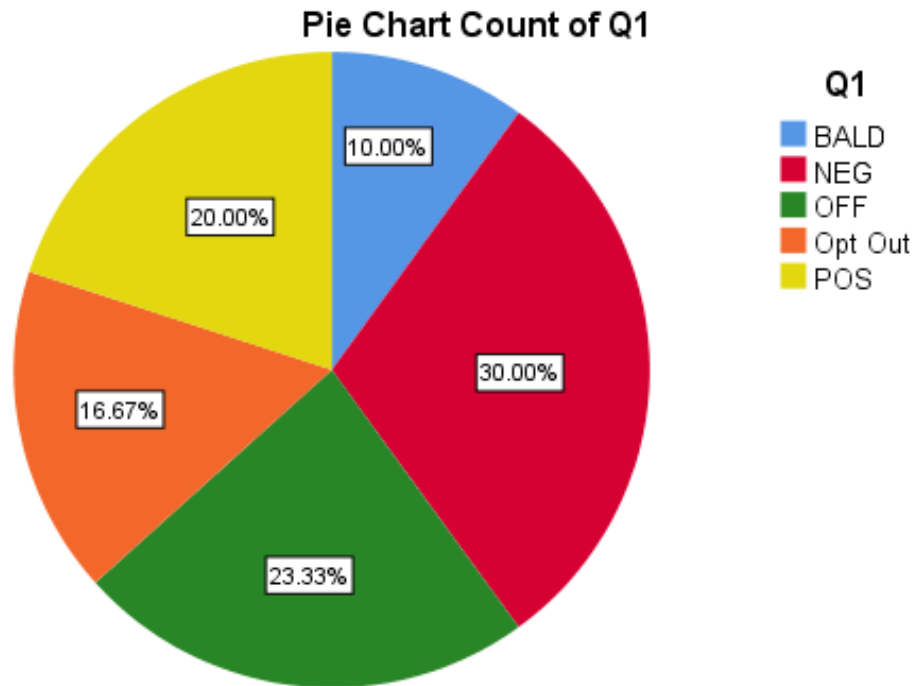
2.4.3 Students' choice of politeness strategies

The students' choice of politeness strategies in the DCT answers were examined. This analysis was undertaken as per Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness principle, which sets forth a number of politeness strategies which speakers can use when realizing speech acts, particularly face-threatening acts:

- Bald On-Record: a strategy in which the speaker aims to perform the FTA with maximum efficiency, rather than to satisfy the listener's face wants, in a direct and explicit manner.
- Off-record: a strategy in which the speaker employs tactics such as implicature and metaphors with the goal of performing the FTA in an indirect manner while absolving oneself of any accountability for the FTA.
- Positive politeness: a strategy in which the speaker redresses the FTA in such a way that meets or exceeds the listener's positive face wants in an attempt to establish a common ground and claim a similarity of face wants between the speaker and the listener.
- Negative politeness: unlike positive politeness, negative politeness is redress directed towards the listener's negative face wants in the hopes of minimizing the imposition which the FTA directly affects. Brown & Levinson (1987)

Moreover, there is a percentage of students in each set of responses who either chose to opt out of complaining or whose responses employed none of the aforementioned strategies. For the purposes of the study, both of these cases were grouped under the "Opt Out" category.

2.4.3.1 Students' choice of politeness strategies in DCT question one

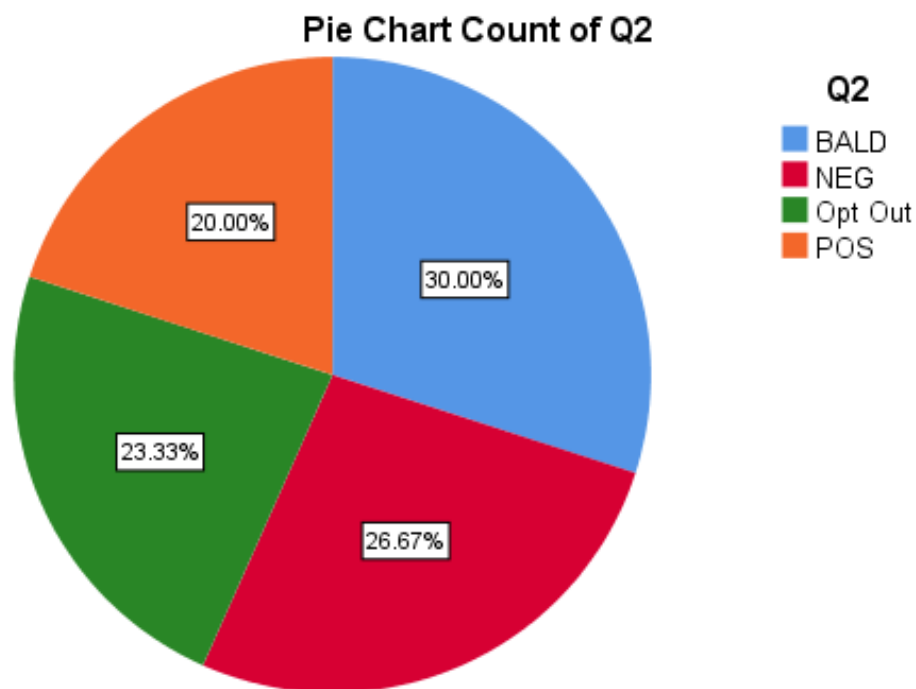


Graph 25– Students' choice of politeness strategies in DCT question one

The way in which the students opted to express their complaints in the first question varied significantly, as is immediately apparent. 30% of the students' responses show preference for using negative politeness while complaining, which is a polite and indirect strategy. Negative politeness is a strategy in which the listener's face wants are catered to, and because this is one of the professor situations, the professor's higher P value and the high rank of imposition R made it desirable for them to opt for negative politeness. Another 23.33% of the responses preferred the off record strategy, which is the least direct and most polite. By using the off record strategy, the students allow themselves to complain to their professor while still having an "out" (freedom from being accused of making any specific intention in speech), and as such, it is very logical to opt for this approach in this situation. Accordingly, it

seems that most of the students evaluated the P value of the professor highly, and thus decided to opt for indirect complaint strategies that have little or no risk of offending the listener. Still, 20% of the students decided to opt for positive politeness, which is more direct and less polite. It seems that these students perceived the weightiness of the FTA to be lower than their desire to express their frustration, and so, they decided to communicate it to the professor in a way that makes their own face wants seem similar to the professor's face wants. With all of these factors put into consideration, it can be said that the students managed to complain in a reasonable manner.

2.4.3.2 Students' choice of politeness strategies in DCT question two



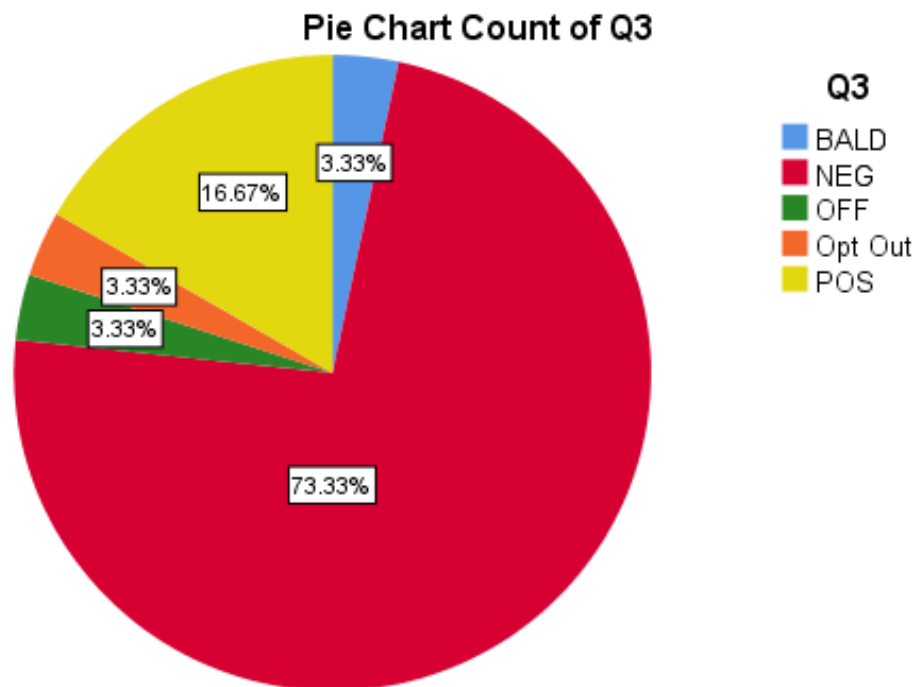
Graph 26 – Students' choice of politeness strategies in DCT question two

From the graph, it is clear that the students' choice of politeness strategies has spread across four options in an approximately equal distribution in the photocopy shop situation.

About one third of the students decided to use a bald on-record approach, meaning that they prioritized performing the FTA (complaint) as efficiently as possible over catering to the listener's face wants. Considering the fact that the relationship shop clerk and the speaker is rather impermanent (high D value), it is reasonable to opt for such an option in favour of solving the complainable issue. On the other hand, another 26% of students decided to use the negative politeness strategy instead. These students decided not to coerce the listener into performing any acts they might not want to do, which also happens to minimize the threat within the FTA, which is a considerate and reasonable way to handle the complaint. A final 20% of the students opted for positive politeness, which may seem counter-intuitive as the photocopy shop does not have a higher P value than the speaker, but this is in fact an expression of the speaker's desire to cooperate with the listener, to seek agreement and to avoid disagreement between them. In the end, this usage of strategies served a variety of purposes well.

2.4.3.3 Students' choice of politeness strategies in DCT question three

In the neighbour situation, it can be observed from graph 27 that most of the students (73.33 %) opted for the negative politeness strategy, which is held to be "the heart of respect behaviour," and it is "more specific and focused" (Brown & Levinson, 1987). It seems that they chose it to minimize the imposition of the FTA, and to communicate their face wants while avoiding to impinge on the listener. Considering what has been previously discussed about the Islamic view on how to treat neighbours, this is a perfectly fine approach to the complaint.



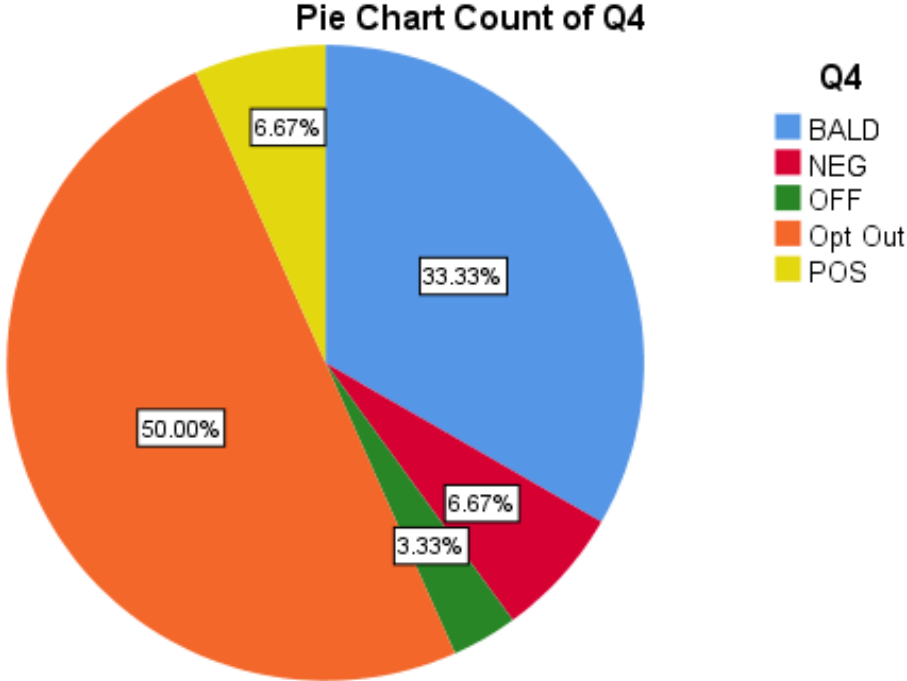
Graph 27– Students’ choice of politeness strategies in DCT question three

A smaller percentage of students (16.67%) decided to use positive politeness instead, which is effectively an effort to establish a common ground between the speaker and the listener (acknowledging the listener’s wants) while simultaneously avoiding disagreement during the performance of the FTA. Each of these approaches serves as an appropriate means of handling the situation in this context.

2.4.3.4 Students’ choice of politeness strategies in DCT question four

In the situation where a refusal to share course materials occurs, the students displayed a preference for opting out, followed by the bald on-record approach, as per Graph 28. In terms of the half of the students who chose to opt out of complaining, a case similar to what has been previously discussed arises: the students did not wish to harm their relationship with

their friend, and they decided not to perform the FTA in order to circumvent that at the cost of suppressing their frustration.



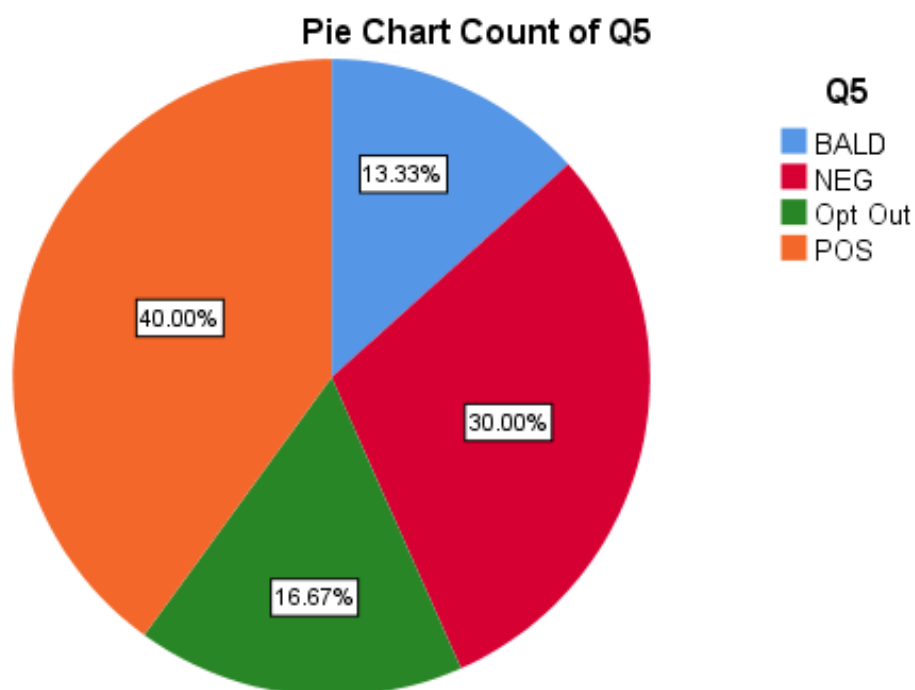
Graph 28 – Students’ choice of politeness strategies in DCT question four

In addition, a third of the students employed the bald on-record strategy instead, which is understandable when considering that the complainable issue is particularly frustrating. The students who opted for this approach saw performing the FTA in the most direct manner possible as justifiable in light of the circumstance of the friend’s refusal, maximizing the efficiency of the FTA in the process. Each of these options can be considered perfectly appropriate in this situation.

2.4.3.5 Students’ choice of politeness strategies in DCT question five

In the fifth and final DCT question, students preferred to opt for positive politeness, followed by negative politeness, then bald on-record. The 40% of students who decided to use

positive politeness did so to establish a common ground and attempt to seek agreement in the interest of solving the complainable issue, while avoiding to offend the professor with an accusation of unfair correction standards. The students likely chose this option due to their high estimation of the P and R values in order not to risk their chances of solving the complainable issue.



Graph 29 – Students’ choice of politeness strategies in DCT question five

The next 30% opted for negative politeness, however, which serves the purpose of complaining in a direct manner while still redressing the FTA and minimizing the imposition. It seems that these students prioritized solving the issue over having a smooth and trouble-free interaction with the professor, but did not completely devalue the listener’s face wants. Unlike these students, a remaining 13.33% of students decided to use a bald on-record strategy, achieving maximum efficiency of the FTA at the cost of risking to offend the listener. This last portion of students opted for accusing the professor as their main communicative device in

the interest of expressing frustration and solving the complainable issue. In summary, it is within reason for all of the students to have complained in each of these ways according to their respective calculations of FTA weightiness and desired outcome of the complaint.

2.5 Students' choice of complaint strategies

The sample's choice of complaint strategies in their responses to the DCT items was recorded and analysed. The recording and analysis was based on Demir's (2021) categorization of complaint strategies; in particular, two 'super-categories' were chosen: past/present-oriented complaint strategies and future-oriented complaint strategies. These strategies are denominated and explained in brief in accordance with Demir (2021), and the students' answers are analysed with the help of some examples:

Category I: Past/Present-oriented strategies (PPS)

Strategy 1: Narrative (NAR): The techniques in this category lay the groundwork for the speech act of complaining by illuminating the circumstances around the complaint subject(s) and by establishing a complainant's identification. Thus, they could serve as a tool to boost the complainers' trustworthiness and credibility. There are three ways in which this strategy may manifest:

Strategy 1.1.: Background information (BI): This strategy serves as a base and foundation for other strategies by providing details on context of the complainable. It places the issue within context. In the students' responses, it was common for this strategy to appear at the beginning of the complaint, either as part of the initiator or after it. Some examples of this can be seen here:

Example 1: “I have asked you for a favour a month ago, to write a letter of recommendation I need for a job application. They informed me that they have not received the letter yet.”

(Female respondent, DCT Situation 1)

Example 2: “Hello sir, I hope you are doing fine. I just wanted to ask you directly since I was passing by your office about the recommendation letter for my application.” (Male respondent,

DCT Situation 1)

When performing a speech act of complaint, it is important to consider the speaker’s own face wants, as well as the listener’s, before proceeding with the complaint. Providing background information can serve as a good means to establish a middle ground for what the speaker’s face wants are and what they desire from the listener. The students who realized their complaints in this manner utilized background information to the same effect, which means that they were able to conceptualize the importance of establishing a common ground.

Strategy 1.2.: Identity of the complainer (IC): This strategy may contain details about the complainants' gender, age, marital status, self-description, and realistic complainer image.

Example: “Hey, I am a student and I am trying to study for my final exam.” (Female, DCT Situation 3)

Similarly to background information, the expression of the identity of the complainer is also often used as an attempt to get the listener to notice and attend to the speaker’s face wants, on the basis that their identity is important to the complainable. Partly due to the nature of the situations that were chosen for the DCTs, the students were not presented with contexts in which their identity was crucial to the solution of the complainable. However, the few students who did employ this strategy used it in the photocopy situation and in the neighbour situation to

either encourage the listener to cater to their face wants, or to exaggerate sympathy in order to solve the complainable, respectively.

Strategy 1.3.: Reference to remedial action (RRA): It is feasible for complainers to describe a request or complaint they made in the past to the teacher in order to have the complaint(s) removed; or an action performed by complainers or a settlement provided by complainees to lessen the unfavourable circumstance causing inconvenience.

Example 1: “is there any chance that you can print at least a couple within an hour?” (Female, Situation 2)

Example 2: “Hey, can you stop the music please I have an exam tomorrow” (Male, Situation 3)

This strategy occurred frequently in the students’ responses across all of the five situations. It is reasonable for this strategy to be one of the most commonly used, as it is natural during requests for repair to mention the ways in which the complainable issue may be solved. Moreover, the students’ answers displayed a variety in which the reference was made directly or indirectly.

Strategy 2: Expression of the complainable (EC): These techniques are used to express specifically the complainable, how the complainers feel about them as a result of the complainable, how they view them, and additional detrimental effects that have resulted from the complainable. However, it should be noted here that the complainers do not make any specific mention of the complainees. This strategy can be employed in four ways:

Strategy 2.1.: Complainable statement (CS): This tactic merely states what is complainable.

Example 1: “I have been waiting for a response as to whether I'm accepted or not, but they answered me that they did not receive any letter under my name.” (Female, Situation One)

Example 2: “I am sure that I placed an order here for 10 bound copies of my thesis. They are supposed to be ready today.” (Male, Situation Two)

In addition to RRA, the students preferred using this strategy often in their complaints. It is the most basic and most direct way to complain. In addition, some of the students' answers opted for using this strategy immediately after performing an initiator, which resulted in a direct approach to the complaint. In the professor situations where the R value is high, some of the students decided to imply their complainable indirectly instead so as not to be held accountable for the potential impingement towards the professor's face wants.

Strategy 2.2.: Negative personal state of mind (NSPM): The complainant expresses their unfavourable emotions or attitudes as a result of the complaint(s) that occurred.

Example 1: “I have an exam and I am really scared and confused about it.” (Male, Situation Three)

Example 2: “I am in a state of anger now. May I know what is the problem sir?” (Female, Situation One)

This strategy occurred infrequently in the students' responses. Whether this is due to a preference to maximize the efficiency of the FTA or as a desire to meet the listener's face wants is dependent on the context of the relevant situation. However, for the students who did opt for this strategy, it was utilized as a way to express frustration with the goal of increasing the threat to the listener's face rather than to solve the complainable issue.

Strategy 2.3.: Negative judgement (NJ): The complainant expresses their dissatisfaction with the complaint(s) they are holding the complainees responsible for. Using this technique, units are more likely to have at least one adjective or evaluative term in each.

Example 1: “Why skimp on giving information?” (Female, DCT Situation Four)

Example 2: “I want to tell you that the way you handled my grade is unprofessional and biased, and it shows a lot about you as a person.” (Male, DCT Situation Five)

It was rare to find this strategy in the students’ responses. The students who used this strategy most notably used it in the fourth and fifth situations, where there is a high perceived likelihood that malicious intent was present in the friend’s refusal to share courses and the professor’s unfair evaluation practices, respectively. Effectively, these students seemed to focus on relieving their frustration over the complainable issue rather than to try solving it, whether due to a belief that the other party has no interest in solving it, or due to the students losing the desire to solve the complainable issue after it has happened.

Strategy 2.4.: Ill consequences (ICON): This tactic highlights the detrimental impacts of the complainable.

Example 1: “[...] because I’m in a hairy situation with the interview committee”
(Female, Situation Two)

Example 2: “I could not revise with the loud music” (Female, Situation Three)

Interestingly, this strategy was only found in female answers, and no instances of its occurrence in the male answers was recorded. The purpose for which this strategy was used varied depending on the situation; in the photocopy shop situation, it was used to

communicate that the student was entitled to compensation from the shop in the form of repair or otherwise, while in the neighbour situation, it was used to simultaneously for the purpose of avoidance and imparting accountability onto the listener for the complainable.

Strategy 3: Accusation (ACC): While the tactics falling under the "expression of complainable" category focus on the complainable(s) and problems associated with it, "accusation" directs attention to the complainees' agentive engagement (Trosborg 1995). The complainant may use this strategy in three ways:

Strategy 3.1.: Non-specific accusation (NSACC): When employing this tactic, some complainers prefer a less direct approach and refrain from using names in favour of maintaining the agentive engagement of the complainees by utilizing the third person singular/plural or second person singular/plural.

Example 1: "Oh, please check again, I'm sure I've placed an order yesterday." (Female, Situation Two)

Example 2: "Really? There must be a mistake... I have ordered them not that long ago." (Male, Situation Two)

This strategy occurred most notably in indirect and off-record complaints. In the fifth situation, some students opted to imply that the professor had been biased while correcting their paper in this manner, as the P value is high in that case. Moreover, students who suspected that the photocopy shop had done something with their order opted for this strategy in the second situation as well. In each of the cases, this was done to shift the accountability for the complainable towards the listener while insinuating that the complainable issue was a deliberate action. Nevertheless, the

students who opted for this strategy typically did not neglect FTA weightiness calculations, which is why they decided to accuse indirectly.

Strategy 3.2.: Specific accusation (SACC): Some complainers prefer to use names, and hold them directly responsible for complainee(s).

Example 1: “I am sorry but I think that you are just ignoring my efforts.” (Female, Situation Five)

Example 2: “I want to tell you that the way you handled my grade is unprofessional and biased.” (Male, Situation Five)

This is the direct variant of the previous strategy, in which expressing frustration is prioritized over the efficiency of the complaint. Students who opted for the bald on-record strategy also preferred specific accusation with the goal of maximizing the efficiency of the complaint. The students opted for this strategy the most in the fifth situation, which is reasonable, as the complainable is particularly frustrating and the student has a reason to believe that the teacher had acted in such a way.

Strategy 4: Condemnation/Reprimand (CR): The complainer publicly embarrasses or condemns the complainee, on the basis of the complainable they are held accountable for.

Example 1: “You disappointed me and you will take responsibility because I paid for it and I will never come back here.” (Female, Situation Two)

Example 2: “It is not like a professor to ruin students’ hard work due to emotions and hard feelings” (Male, Situation Five)

This form of negative evaluation emphasizes the effect that the FTA has on the complaine. Students who opted for this option avoided minimization and showed no intent to seek reciprocity when complaining. In the two professor situations, it is reasonable to do so under the assumption that the professor has neglected his/her responsibilities. Because this strategy sees no value in redressing the complaint, the students who employed the bald on-record strategy condemned/reprimanded the complainees.

Strategy 5: Insult (IN): A comment intended to insult the complaine. The insulting strategy can be used with overtly rude language or with more creative expression.

Example: “[...] since even if you share your material with someone else your level is related to your own interpretation.” (Female, Situation Four)

This was the rarest category in all of the answers obtained from the sample. In fact, this example was the only response that used an insult. It is not unreasonable for a speaker to use an insult when complaining about a particularly frustrating and harmful complainable. In the case of the fourth situation, it is natural for the assumed refusal of a friend to share course materials during exam times to warrant that the speaker direct rude comments towards them. Nevertheless, the absence of insults from the students’ responses is likely to be a result of cultural and religious norms, as Islam frowns upon rudely insulting others (Bensaid & Machouche, 2019).

Category 2: Future-oriented strategies (FS): Speech acts, including complaints, are frequently accompanied by additional speech acts like recommendations, advice, requests, warnings, and threats generating a bigger speech act set (Olshtain & Weinbach, 1987). Moreover, Searle (1976) asserts that illocutionary components of suggestion, advice, request,

and warning are intended to persuade the listener to behave in accordance with the speaker's instructions, ideally in the near future. The speech act of threat directs the speaker's course of action. Therefore, these verbal acts already have a purpose for the future.

Strategy 1: Recommendations: One of the most typical speech acts that co-occurs with complaints is the speech act of recommendation.

Example 1: “Please would you check again?” (Female, Situation Two)

Example 2: “I will be pleased to offer any possible cooperative feedback to help reassess the situation and further learn what might be the reason for that outcome.” (Male, Situation Five)

Recommendations were a common occurrence in the students' responses, namely in the photocopy shop situation. The students often recommended that the clerk check again for the missing order. The degree of politeness here varied, as some students chose to express this recommendation in a neutral way, while others decided to press the issue or employ negative politeness. In the case of the second example, the student decided to recommend indirectly that the professor re-evaluate the paper, which is a good way to attempt solving the complainable while avoiding any altercations.

Strategy 2: Request for repair (RR): For the complainable that they are held accountable for, complainers seek compensation from complaine(s) or a remedy in the near future.

Example 1: “I would be grateful if you reconsider it, thank you!” (Female, Situation Five)

Example 2: “Would you check again please, it might be somewhere here!” (Male, Situation Two)

As evident by the graphs in the earlier section about complaint structure, requests for repair were rather common in the students' responses. In some cases, some of the students decided to swap the complaint itself for a request for repair in an attempt to further soften the imposition of the FTA. This falls in line with previous research that has found that some EFL speakers preferred to substitute complaints for other speech acts (Deveci 2015; Murphy and Neu (1996).

Strategy 3: Advice/Warnings for the complaine (AWC): In order to get rid of the complainable and make other actions more in line with what is intended and expected, complainers may offer the complaine advice or warn them to act right away.

Example 1: "But you will stand in this situation one day and no help will be directed to you." (Female, Situation Four)

Example 2: "Sorry for disturbing you but I think that you should be more careful." (Female, Situation Five)

The examples above were the only two instances of advice/warnings in all of the responses. The first example attempts to lure the listener into reciprocating and sharing the course materials through the means of warning them of what may happen if the friend continues to act in this manner. In the second example, the student seems to be more concerned about future infringements than about resolving the complainable at hand. Redress was also employed in order to soften the imposition of the FTA.

Strategy 4: Threats for the complaine (TH): When using this tactic, the complainant directly assaults the complaine in their face and issues a threat or ultimatum.

Example 1: "Or I am going to call your professor, and you will lose your job consequently, I promise." (Female, Situation Two)

Example 2: "So you refuse to help me? It's okay, we will see" (Male, Situation Four)

It is common to find threats embedded within complaints, as they are rather face-threatening speech acts. The students opted for this option mostly within the second and the fourth situations, as they are the situations where they hold the higher P value instead of the listener. In the interest of solving the complainable issue, it is reasonable to employ a threat in order to ensure maximum efficiency of the FTA, and it is because of that reason that threats are incompatible with indirect complaints, though the threat itself may be indirect as in the case of the second example.

2.6 Discussion of the Findings

The main purpose of this study was to measure EFL students' pragmatic competence when complaining, as well as the strategies they use and their speech act structures. The handling of the students' complaints, which was undertaken with the help of the data collection and data analysis tools, has led to the following findings:

- The students' evaluation of the appropriateness of complaint realizations was good on average, according to the data from the DET analysis.

- The students' realizations of complaints were found to be at a good level. Their responses to the DCT questions varied in terms of the usage of strategies, but they were consistently reasonable and often employed the calculation of FTA weightiness and the P, D and R values.

- There was a considerable degree of variety in the strategies that the students chose when realizing their complaints, as well as in the structures of their complaints, which has served as an insight into how the students approach complaining in different contexts. The usage of specific strategies and approaches to complaining differed

depending on the situation and each of the students' own perceptions of the situations. However, the I+C+R structure recurred substantially and frequently during each of the DCT situations. Moreover, the students used mitigators repeatedly in their complaints, and many students displayed good proficiency in knowing when to use each of the different politeness strategies, and for what purpose to use them. Finally, the students seemed to prefer to employ a direct approach when complaining more often than an indirect approach across the five situations.

- There was no statistically significant difference between male students and female students' speech act performance when complaining, as per the T-test that was conducted on the students' scores in the DET and the DCT. These findings are in line with the findings found in El-Dakhs & Ahmed (2021), as no gender differences were found in Arab speakers' complaints.

This study has set out to answer a number of research questions as denoted in the general introduction, and in accordance with the results of the analysis, the study has succeeded in answering each of those research questions and in achieving the research objectives. In addition, the results of this study were not dissimilar to other studies that were previously conducted in the speech act of complaint, as detailed in the results section. Some of those similarities include the students' substitution of the complaint for a request for repair as in Rinnert & Nogami (2006) and the students' usage of the mother tongue's complaint structures/strategies as in Murphy & Neu (1997).

There have been other miscellaneous observations during data analysis that were not pivotal to the goals of the study, but deserve consideration nonetheless. Primarily, it is possible that the

students' complaint structures and the strategies they used were influenced by those used in their mother tongue (as in students' responses to the neighbour situation).

In addition, the results of the study have shed light on the hypothesis that was made before conducting the research. The null hypothesis H₀ for the final research question was confirmed after conducting the T test and finding that there was no statistically significant difference between the two genders' complaint performance at the level of significance $\alpha=0.05$.

Furthermore, other observations were made after the research was conducted. Namely, the EFL students' level of pragmatic competence when realizing the speech act of complaint were good, as the test scores suggest. In addition, the students did not experience many difficulties when answering most of the DET and DCT questions, yet they did face some difficulty in a few of them. Nevertheless, the difficulties did not affect the overall average in a significant manner. Finally, the results of the data analysis show us that that the students adapted and changed their preferred approach to complaining depending on the context of the discourse.

2.7 Pedagogical Implications, Recommendations and Limitations

2.7.1 Pedagogical Implications

The results of the study at hand can serve as a valuable catalyst for improving EFL pedagogy. Primarily, it is reasonable to speculate that the inclusion of pragmatic instruction with authentic materials inside of the EFL classroom can help polish the speech act realization skills of EFL learners. It was often the case in the students' answers that L1 sociocultural norms were used as stepping stones for speech act realization (e.g. the neighbour situation), and it is within reason to theorize that familiarizing the EFL learners with the target language's sociocultural norms may improve their pragmatic language usage skills. It may also be possible to do so through the language and culture course by positing how culture and tradition can impact the ways in which we communicate.

In addition, it may be worth integrating roleplaying between the students into the pragmatics module in order to prompt EFL learners to call upon their obtained pragmatic knowledge during the course, and to present them with a chance to put their pragmatic competence into practice. Wolfe (2006) suggests that it is possible to improve students' decision-making skills, boosting the learners' curiosity and adaptability. As such, integrating roleplays may be beneficial to pragmatic instruction, as it increases the efficiency of the learning process by transforming it into a more active endeavour.

2.7.2 Recommendations for Future Research

Although the current study emanated from the set of research goals that were previously presented, it is very possible to conduct similar research in pragmatics from a

multitude of different angles. To that end, the researchers suggest that some attention should be given to the differences between the complaint structures of Algerian EFL learners' L1 and those of the native speakers of the target language. This may uncover new findings about correlations between the two languages and cultures, as well as any difficulties that EFL learners may face concerning any overlap that may exist.

In addition, future studies should consider shedding light on EFL learners' realization of other speech acts as well. Some other notable speech acts may include apologies, promises, threats, refusals, and requests. Exploring these speech acts can provide us with new patterns related to speech act realization, which in turn will further our understanding of EFL learners' pragmatic usage of language.

Finally, it is worth revisiting this study and replicating or improving it in order to expand its findings. This can be done by increasing the size of the sample, examining and analysing new variables, developing more appropriate data collection and analysis tools and/or considering a change in the research method from the descriptive method to the experimental method. For example, it is possible to conduct a study in which the pragmatic competence of EFL students is tested, before providing them with a two-week period of training in speech act realization, after which their pragmatic competence is re-tested.

2.7.3 Limitations of the Study

As is the case with the process of conducting any kind of study, it is inevitable to face barriers and to be met with limitations in the various stages of research. One of the main difficulties that arose was the lack of time with which to develop the vision of the study to its fullest potential. If more time was available, it would have been possible to polish more

aspects of the study and to broaden the scope further. In addition, some issues were encountered during sampling, as there was not a substantial amount of male students in comparison to the abundant percentage of female students at the English department in the University of Mohamed Boudiaf. Because one of the goals of the study was to examine gender differences, it was necessary to resolve the sampling issue by re-envisioning the study to include third year students as well as master students. Moreover, a sample of 30 students is rather small, yet it was not possible to procure a larger sample size due to an incompatibility the aforementioned gender disparity and the desire to use random sampling to avoid any biases that may arise from the usage of other sampling methods.

General Conclusion

As evident by the literature review, as well as the nature of this study's framework, research in language usage is not exclusive to basic forms of communication, but it also encompasses advanced ways in which meaning can be entailed, encoded and decoded. In particular, gaps in research concerning speech act realization have continued to be addressed and researched in recent years, both in the EFL context and in the mother tongue context. The speech act of complaint is among the lesser researched types of speech acts, but that does not mean that it is of less value in comparison to the remaining speech acts. As such, this study aims to fill that gap in the context of M'sila University EFL learners.

In order to achieve the objectives of the research, a set of data collection tools were employed to collect quantitative and qualitative data for analysis purposes. The tools in question were the Discourse Evaluation Task (DET) and the Discourse Completion Task (DCT). They were distributed to the sample of M'sila University EFL learners, and their responses were collected promptly. The collected data from these responses were then scored and analysed statistically, and the DCT was further analysed qualitatively. The results of the study have showcased that EFL students at the University of M'sila displayed an acceptable level of pragmatic competence when performing the speech act of complaint. It also ascertained the variety of ways in which they chose to realize their complaints, as well as the ways in which it could affect the discursal situation. Finally, an independent samples T test was conducted to conclude that there is no statistically significant difference between female students' and male students' levels of complaint realization at the level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$.

In conclusion, the results of the study suggest that EFL learners and EFL teachers stand to benefit from making the necessary improvements to their pragmatic competence and their

speech act realization, as well as their approach to teaching pragmatics, respectively. In the future, it is suggested that research in EFL speech act realization should focus on other varieties of speech acts, and that it should choose non-academic contexts as its scope in order to explore possibilities that were not explored in this study. It would also be appropriate to approach research in pragmatics from a different angle by using an experimental approach, for example, in order to attempt answering questions such as whether it is possible to train EFL speakers to perform pragmatic utterances in an identical manner to native speakers.

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Appendices

Appendix A: The Discourse Evaluation Task

Everyone chooses to express him/herself in different ways in every day of our lives, including the way in which we express our desires. We may express our desire for the listener to perform a certain action by using speech acts, whether directly or indirectly. However, it is not as easy to do so in a foreign language as it is in our mother tongue, even if our linguistic command of that language is of a high level.

Because of that, the researches have decided to conduct this study to find the difficulties faced by EFL learners when performing speech acts in the target language. Your answers to this questionnaire are integral to the realization of the study's goals, as they hold utmost importance to the collection and analysis of relevant data. As such, we kindly request that you take the time to answer the questions below, and we thank you for your cooperation.

Section One: Personal Information

1. Age:
2. Gender:

Male

Female

Section Two: Discourse Evaluation Task

Read the situation below. 10 possible responses to complete the rest of the dialog between the professor and the student have been listed. Using the scale given after each question, evaluate each response with regard to the extent you think it would be socially acceptable/appropriate for the student to say. In reading these responses, please assume that no irony or sarcasm is expressed in them and that they are uttered with basically "neutral" intonation.

The Situation:

The speaker (the same gender as yours), a university student, received his/her final grade for a course. The student was shocked that Professor Evans (50 years old) gave him/her a 10/20. The class was one of the student's favourites, and he/she had studied very hard. The student got an 18/20 on his/her final exam/project, so he/she does not understand why the final grade was so low. The student knocks on the door of the professor's office:

Prof. Evans: Come in.

The Student: Good afternoon, Professor Evans. I would like to talk about my final grade....

		Very Rude	Rude	Not Decided	Appropriate	Perfectly Appropriate
1	I was hoping you could explain why I got 10/20.					

2	Would you consider the possibility that there might have been a mistake?					
3	Please explain why I got 10/20.					
4	Could I perhaps find out how the grades were figured?					
5	Can you explain why my final grade was so low?					
6	Can I see my final exam paper please?					
7	Could you explain what has gone wrong in my studies?					
8	I was not expecting a grade that low. Could you please recalculate?					
9	Could you spare five minutes to show me my overall grade?					
10	Can I find out why I got a C?					

Appendix B: The Discourse Completion Task

Please write your response in the blank area. Do not spend a lot of time thinking about what answer you think you should provide; instead, please respond as naturally as possible and try to write your response as you feel you would say it in the situation. Potential follow-up responses by the other person in each scenario have been left out intentionally. The responses do not necessarily have to be as long as the designated areas allow for them to be, so feel free to answer as you see fit.

1. You are applying for a position with a multinational company. The interview committee has requested that you have your professors send letters of recommendation

directly to the company. When you call the interview committee to check the status of your application, you are told that one of the recommendation letters has not arrived. You are concerned because you asked your professor for the letter over a month ago. You stop by your professor's office to find out what has happened.

Professor: Hi, [your name].

You: _____

2. Yesterday you placed an order at the photocopy shop for 10 bound copies of your thesis. Today you must deliver all 10 copies to your evaluation committee by 12:00 noon. When you go to the photocopy shop at 11:00am to pick up your booklets, the clerk, whom you recognize from one of your classes, seems confused and unaware of your request.

You: Hi, I'm [your name]. Do you have my thesis booklets ready?

Clerk: Hmm. Uh, I don't see anything here under your name.

You: _____

3. You are living in a dormitory. It is 11:30 p.m. and you are still studying for the final exam that will take place tomorrow morning. You hear the neighbour next door playing rock music. The music is getting louder and louder, disrupting your concentration. You go to your neighbour next door to complain about it.

You: _____

4. A friend who takes the same course as you at the university declines to share some important material for the next test, which s/he has managed to get hold of. In the past, you helped him/her many times.

You see him/her on campus and say:

5. You are handed back a paper by your professor. However, you are startled by your grade and feel that you have been marked down for disagreeing with the professor's point of view rather than on any flaws in your content and analysis. You are particularly upset since you have spent weeks researching this paper and feel the professor has ignored your effort through simple bias. You decide you must speak to him/her about this. So, after class, you go to the professor during office hours.

You say:

ملخص

حظيت مختلف الأبحاث البراغمية في تحقيق أفعال الكلام بالمزيد من الإهتمام مؤخراً، ولا سيما تلك التي تتوسط أحداث الكلام في الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. اتسم هذا البحث الوصفي التصميم المختلط بغرض اتمام أهداف البحث عبر استعمال كل من الأدوات الكمية و النوعية. تم استعمال أداتين اثنتين خلال البحث، و المتمثلتين في فرض تقييم الخطاب و فرض ملء الخطاب، وقد تم توزيع هاتين الأداتين لعينة من ثلاثين (30) طلبة للغة الإنجليزية في جامعة محمد بوظيف بالمسيلة، والذين تتراوح مستوياتهم بين السنة الثالثة من طور الليسانس و السنة الثانية من طور الماستر. و منه فقد حددت أهداف هذا البحث لكي تقيس الكفائات البراغمية لدى هاته العينة عند تحقيق فعل كلام الشكوى، كما أن البحث استهدف تحديد المناطق التي تواجه فيها العينة الصعوبات في تحقيق فعل كلام الشكوى واستكشاف مختلف استراتيجيات الشكوى المستعملة من طرف العينة، و فحص ما إذا أنتج الفرق في الجنس فرقا في مستويات تحقيق فعل كلام الشكوى. توصلت نتائج هذا البحث الى أن الطلبة تمتعوا بمستوى جيد عند تحقيق فعل كلام الشكوى، و الى أن الطلبة اختاروا استراتيجياتاً منطقياً و تمتعوا بالمرونة لتغيير الاستراتيجية عند تغير سياق الكلام، إضافة الى أن البحث لم يجد أية فروقات ذات دلالة احصائية بين أداء الذكور و الإناث في فحص الشكاوي عند المستوى $\alpha=0.05$ ، وبذلك فقد تم استكشاف تحقيق الطلبة لفعل كلام الشكوى من العديد من الزوايا، و يمكن القول من خلال هاته النتائج أنه يمكن الإستفادة من إضافة التدريب في الكفائات البراغمية إلى المنهاج الإنجليزي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الكفاءة البراغمية، فعل كلام الشكوى، تحقيق افعال الكلام في الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية