

A Pragmatic Study of Congratulation Strategies of Pakistani ESL Learners and British English Speakers

Nazir Ahmed Malik

University of Lahore - Raiwind Road Campus: The University of Lahore

Tahir Saleem (✉ tahir.saleem@ucp.edu.pk)

University of Central Punjab <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7952-0572>

Asif Aziz

University of Lahore - Raiwind Road Campus: The University of Lahore

Original article

Keywords: British English speaker, congratulation strategies, cultural values, Pakistani ESL learners, pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects

Posted Date: July 14th, 2021

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-708164/v1>

License:   This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

[Read Full License](#)

Abstract

People usually express their feelings and emotions positively to others when they have happy occasions. However, the ways of expressing congratulation may vary because the expressive speech act “congratulations” is not the only way to express happiness and share others their happy news. The present study investigates the congratulation strategies of Pakistani ESL learners and British English speakers under the influence of social distance variable. For this purpose, 120 participants were recruited, and who were further divided into four different groups: 30 British English speakers, 30 Pakistani ESL learners in the elite class, 30 Pakistani ESL learners of the middle class, and 30 Pakistani ESL learners in the lower class. For data collection, a Discourse completion test (DCT) was used as a tool. The findings reveal that the most frequently used types of congratulation strategy are IFID followed by overlapped strategies (a combination of two), an offer of a good wish, expression of happiness, request for information, encouragement, expression of surprise, and suggestion of celebration, while other types of strategies are not used by the participants. The study reveals the existence of positive and negative pragmatic transfer in the use of congratulations by Pakistani ESL learners. The findings further show how the middle and lower class of Pakistani ESL learners use a more elaborated form of CRs as compared to Pakistani ESL learners of elite and British English speakers. The findings may help in understanding the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects of Pakistani ESL learners as compared to British English speakers.

1. Introduction

Learning English as a lingua franca (LF) has become an important aspect of one's life to keep pace with the world in this era of globalization. Learning of the target culture language (Taguchi, 2008, 2011, 2015a, 2015b, 2019; Taguchi & Roever, 2017) does not mean to equip oneself with the grammar of the second language (competence) but it also demands performance (the use of the knowledge of the second language). Due to the recent shift from grammatical competence to communicative competence, the interest of researchers has increased in the area of pragmatics research, especially focusing on speech acts (Youn et al., 2019). It has been observed that Pakistani ESL learners lack pragmatic competence, though they have achieved grammatical (mpetence (Lodhi & Akash, 2019) of L2 at an advanced level they are still unable to avoid transferring their L1 knowledge to L2 production. A number of Pakistani scholars (Azam & Saleem, 2018a, 2018 b; Saleem et al., 2018) have pointed out that the English language within the Pakistani educational context is regarded as a subject in spite of a particular language; due to which, no specific importance is given to this particular issue and not accounted so far.

Further, it is observed that Pakistani ESL learners urgently need to develop both pragmaligistic and sociopragmatic resources (Saleem et al., 2021) because the new concept of the world has been constructed that is based on the developed resources such as modern technology and mobilization. Given that in this era of technology and social media, non-native speakers of English need to achieve the mastery of grammatical competence as well as communicative competence to make one capable of producing an act in different cultures in an appropriate way (Lee, 2020; Mohd et al., 2020; Vassilaki &

Selimis, 2020). Previous studies (Chen, 2020; Malmir & Derakhshan, 2020) have indicated that communicative competence is considered as the central concept in the achievement of information and perception of cultural norms of a particular community which in turn bequeath the cultural apprehension that can be achieved with the investigation of communication activities within a peculiar setting. It has been pointed out by scholars that when speakers communicate in a second/foreign language, they may apply the rules and certain norms of their own respective language's sociocultural behaviors which are considered as a pragmatic transfer so that they can achieve the same purposes (Eshghinejad & Moini, 2016; Majoko, 2019; Meihami & Khanlarzadeh, 2015; Taguchi & Roever, 2017; Walkinshaw & Oanh, 2014).

According to Allami and Naeimi (2011), studies related to the investigation of different speech acts have pointed out that the realization of speech acts varies from language to language and culture to culture regarding their semantic and contextual perspectives. Moreover, Taguchi (2017) pointed out that speech acts are regarded as one of the most researchable areas of pragmatics due to the ambiguous relationship that is formed between reference and inference. Therefore, the realization of communicative acts is said to be successful because it consists of the sociolinguistic and sociocultural capabilities of the speakers.

While studying speech acts, the concept of pragmatic transfer (PT) within the field of Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) has gained the interest of researchers (Han, 2020). The concept is based on two assumptions due to which it has gained so much popularity in the study of speech acts. The First fundamental assumption of PT states that the use of a second language by an ESL learner is greatly influenced by the learners' native language. While the second assumption states that the occurrence of pragmatic transfer is based on the return of ESL/EFL learners towards their native language (Dawson, 2020; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Tsuchiya, 2020).

There are a number of studies that are carried out related to speech acts within the ILP research context (Martín-Laguna, 2020; Pearson & Hasler-Barker, 2020; Tereszkievicz, 2020; Zhang, 2020). These studies investigated the speech acts of refusal, greeting, thanking, apologies, congratulations, and through their findings, the researchers claim that the major problem faced by ESL speakers during acquiring pragmatic competence is that the speech acts are extremely complicated, and vary in nature and function (Bartłomiejczyk, 2020; Esaua, 2020; Hsu et al., 2020; Kambash, 2020; Kretzenbacher et al., 2020).

Therefore, keeping in mind the present situation of teaching and learning English as an ESL/EFL within the Pakistani context; the present study focuses to investigate the pragmatic transfer in the realization of speech acts of "Congratulations". Although there are many studies that were conducted related to the speech acts of congratulation (Al-Saedi & Jabber, 2020; Lect & Abdulkhaleq, 2020; Tsoumou, 2020; Wardat & Alkhateeb, 2020), there is still a gap of research related to investigating the impact of social distance variables on the realization of Pakistani ESL learners pragmatic transfer compared to British English (BritE) speakers congratulation strategies. To achieve the aims of the study, the following research questions were addressed to answer:

Research Question 1

What are the basic categories of congratulation strategies employed by Pakistani ESL learners and British English speakers?

Research Question 2

How do social distance variables effect the use of congratulation strategies of British English speakers, Pakistani ESL/Elite, PESL/Middle and PESL/Lower class learners?

2. Literature Review

The studies conducted in the area of speech acts fall within binary mainstreams: (a) the studies in which the researchers tried to analyze the communicative act in a particular social setting (e.g., Alkhatib, 1997, congratulatory behavior of a speaker in respect of decoded information in the newspaper) while on the other hand, are those which particularly take into account the notion of similarities and differences in the comprehension and production of congratulation speech act with respect to particular ethnology (e.g., the study related to Greek civilization conducted by Tsilipakou; Wierzbicka, the study on Australian arts and sciences). A small number of these studies focused on congratulations solely (Marki-Tsilipakou, 2001), while others focused on comparing it with other linguistic acts (e.g., Congratulation and bravo). In addition to these studies, there were conducted some studies which dealt with the analysis of congratulation, nevertheless, these studies provided less detail (e.g., Haddad, 2005).

Given that one of the earlier studies (Al-Khatib, 1997) related to the concept of sociopragmatic extension of congratulator behavior was investigated on the occasion of holidays in Iran and particular on happy events, in which an individual performs the act of congratulations. According to this research, people have some holidays such as Ramadan, in which people visit their relatives and offer congratulation to each other by using different congratulation expressions such as "congratulate someone on the eve of a particular festive, "I hope you may live long". They also long for health, prosperity and good fortune for one another (Allami & Nekouzadeh, 2011).

Eventually, a number of studies have been carried out on the speech act of congratulation in various contexts. Yet congratulations are a relatively understudied speech act (Wardat & Alkhateeb, 2020). In what follows, those studies are taken up. Al-Zubaidi (2017) studied the genre of Iraqi wedding invitation cards, their textual and visual components, and the effect of sociocultural norms and assumptions on the production of those components. Analyzing 250 wedding invitation cards, the researchers found that Iraqi cards vary in their nonlinguistic features like printed form, colors, and calligraphy and that the organizational structure of these cards was greatly affected by Islamic religious beliefs and Iraqi sociocultural norms and values.

In another study, Joseph and Alexander (2018) carried out a study to cross-linguistically investigate wedding practices and bridal motivations in the Southern culture of America and the Keralite culture of India. They look upon the cross-cultural divergences and/or commonalities between the American and Indian cultures. Findings indicate trends of personalization within weddings, appropriation of

responsibility of the bride and the groom, existence of consistent stress exchanged for ultimate relief and comfort, and familial involvement.

Recently, Wardat and Alkhateeb (2020) studied the congratulation strategies in Syrians' wedding parties in Jordan. A discourse completion test is used for data collection. The results show that Syrians use exaggeration in their strategy of congratulations, and they like to express their happiness to the two brides. Results also show that Syrians avoid asking about private issues and avoid joking at their wedding parties. Furthermore, the results show no difference between males and females in using politeness strategies in Syrians' wedding parties. In another recent study, Avazpour (2020) focuses on the cross-cultural analysis of congratulations in American English, Indian English, and Peninsular Spanish. The current study also utilizes a discourse completion test (DCT) for data collection. The results indicate that different strategies are applied by the groups depending on the situation and/or variables. For instance, North Americans and Spaniards are more likely to express happiness and Indians are more likely to offer good wishes. Similarly, Lect and Abdulkhaleq (2020) studied the congratulation responses in Iraqi Arabic. For data collection, a DCT is used. Major findings indicate that there are different response strategies used in the Iraqi Arabic congratulation responses, there are positive politeness strategies more frequently used than others, and finally, males and females employ similar congratulation response strategies but with varying frequencies and realizations.

Since, the literature review shows that there are many scholars who studied congratulations in many societies (e.g., Al-khatib, 1997; Allami & Nekouzadeh, 2011; Al-Zubaidi, 2017; Avazpour, 2020; Haddad, 2005; Joseph & Alexander, 2018; Lect & Abdulkhaleq, 2020; Marki-Tsilipakou, 2001; Wardat & Alkhateeb, 2020), but there has been no study carried out regarding interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) to investigate the impact of social distance on the realization of Pakistani ESL Learners pragmatic transfer compared to British English speakers congratulation strategies. In the present study, the social distance variable is divided into three categories or levels (close/familiar, neutral/intimate, and distant/stranger). The first category involves those who have close social distance and the second category involving those who have neutral social distance, while the third category involves those who have a distant social relation (Wolfson, 1986). Such a study will fill a gap in related literature.

3. Research Methodology

The current study focused on the investigation of pragmatic transfer in the congratulation strategies of Pakistani ESL learners. The study followed a quantitative research design in accordance with the disposition of facts and figures, data collection, and data analysis procedures. For data collection, a discourse completion test (DCT) was used as a research tool for data collection. The collected data was accustomed to the numerical investigation. The participants of this study were Pakistani ESL learners and British English speakers.

3.1. Participants

The participants of the current study were 120 participants, divided into four different groups; 30 participants in each group: (a) 30 British English speakers (NES), (b) 30 Pakistani ESL learners in Elite class (PESL/EC), (c) 30 Pakistani ESL learners from the middle class (PESL/MC) and (d) 30 Pakistani ESL learners in the lower class (PESL/LC). The British English speakers were selected from University of Leeds, and the University of Manchester, UK. Pakistani ESL learners in the elite class were selected from the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), Pakistan. Furthermore, a sample of Pakistani ESL learners from the middle class was recruited from Government College University (GCU) Lahore, Pakistan, and 30 participants of Pakistani ESL learners in the lower class were recruited from the Punjab University (PU), Pakistan. The participants of the current study were selected through *nonrandom purposive convenience sampling procedures*. There were both male and female respondents included in the current study. The only criteria for selecting the Pakistani ESL learners from different institutions was that the respondents should be educated (at least up to the bachelor's level and have studied English as a compulsory subject) and were postgraduate students studying in their final years of the course of study. The Pakistani ESL learners and British English speakers, who took part in the study came from diverse majors, including the Master in Management Sciences, Master in Language and Linguistics, and Master in Computer Sciences. Moreover, the participants of the current study were recruited on the basis of socioeconomic status variables. They were divided into three social classes; elite, middle class, and lower class. The elite class participants were recruited from Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), middle level respondents were recruited from Government College University Lahore, and lower level participants were recruited from Punjab University Lahore. The sample of the present study was relatively heterogeneous because they were in contrast to each other in terms of their cultural, academic experiences, and linguistic behavior (British English speakers and Pakistani ESL learners).

3.2. Research Tools

The current study employed a discourse completion test (DCT) as a research tool (See Appendix A). The DCT contained 06 real-life scenarios which were designed on the basis of social distance contextual variables.

Table.1

Situations based on the contextual Variable (Social Distance)

Sr. No.	Situations	Social Distance Variable
1	Got Job	+D (Close social distance)
2	Winning Election	+D (Close social distance)
3	Permanent Job	-D (Distant social distance)
4	Got Married	-D (Distant social distance)
5	Selection as Sports team member	=D (Neutral social distance)
6	Being a Chief Guest in an Annual Prize Distribution Ceremony	=D (Neutral social distance)

This questionnaire was comprised 6 real-life situations along with their description that demonstrates a particular social context in which the speaker has to imagine himself/herself and had to fill in the responses as they were in real-life settings. After each situation in DCT, a blank space was given in which the participants had to write their responses because it is a type of written questionnaire.

3.2.1. Reliability of the Instrument

The DCT situations were confirmed by three professors from Leeds University, UK, five professors from Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), 5 PESL/E, and 5 PESL/M, and 5 PESL/L class speakers (the inter-rater reliability = .89) as valid and very close to authentic settings. Regarding the time required to fill the DCT, I found that the participants could complete the questionnaire in no more than 15 minutes.

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

For data collection from British English speakers, a colleague who was studying in the UK, was asked to administer the data collection instrument. Through telephonic conversation and e-mail, he was instructed by the researchers how to administer the research tools and what was the purpose behind the collection of such type of data. Furthermore, the research tools were e-mailed to the faculty members of University of Leeds, and the University of Manchester, UK, and their email addresses were researched from the university website. On the other hand, within the Pakistani context, the researchers themselves accessed the participants at the proposed institutions to collect data from Elite, Middle, and Lower class respondents. For requesting the participants to take part in the study, a formal consent was sought from all the participants. The participants who consented to participate in the study were asked to complete a DCT and further, they were asked to consider all instructions mentioned for the completion of a DCT to give their responses as they would respond in a real-life societal context and try to give responses as natural as possible.

3.4. Data Analysis Procedure

The data obtained through DCT was scrutinized statistically through the help of SPSS software descriptive statistics were run. In the data analysis procedure, at first-hand data obtained from DCT in respect of congratulation expression was coded in the light of a taxonomy of congratulation schemes put forward by Elwood (2004) and modified according to the needs of the study.

Table 2

Classification of Congratulation Strategies (Elwood, 2004)

Sr No	Congratulation Strategies	Expected Congratulation Strategy Expressions
1	Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID)	Congratulation/Congratulations.
2	Request for Information (RFI)	How do you come to know about this?
3	The offer of good wish (OoGW)	Wish you the best of luck/God bless you.
4	Expression of happiness (EoH)	I am very happy for you.
5	Expression of surprise (EoS)	Ooh! Really!
6	Expression of Validation (EoV)	I know because you deserve it.
7	The Suggestion of Celebration (SoC)	It's party time.
8	Expression of Envy (EoE)	I must say you are very lucky.
9	Utterance of Encouragement (UoE)	Good effort...Keep it up.
10	Overlapped	Congratulations....Wish you the best of luck—I'm so happy for you!

After the coding of the data, descriptive statistics were run to get the frequency and percentage of the congratulation strategies to examine the differences and similarities among British English speakers and ESL learners.

3.4.1. Coding Reliability

A second rater (content specialist) coded 20% of the written discourse completion test (WDCT) data from each group to ensure the consistency of the implementation of the coding scheme. A Pakistani English speaker who is a professor and our colleague in University of Central Punjab, Lahore (PhD in Linguistics), University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, USA, and MSc Applied Linguistics, University of Edinburgh, UK with 44 years of ESL experience (served as English language instructor in Finland, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, and Pakistan) coded the two sets of English data, the Pakistani ESL learners and British English speakers data. A training session with the rater and researchers of the current study was conducted prior to starting the coding to familiarise them with the coding scheme and allow them to practise coding

some data to ensure their understanding of the task. A discussion session was held after they had coded the data to analyse findings. The reliability of the interrater was high; most of the interrater inconsistencies were resolved through analysis and discussion of the coding manual definitions.

4. Finding And Discussion

In this section, the frequency of using the verbal types of responses, which are called congratulations strategies, are presented in the order of the proposed research questions. The first research question of this study was asked:

1. What are the basic categories of congratulation strategies employed by Pakistani ESL learners and British English speakers?

Table 3 shows the frequency and percentages of the 10 types of verbal responses found in the congratulations of the four groups. It is obvious that the "IFID" (congratulations) was the most frequent strategy used by PESL/M and PESL/L groups (28% and 29%) followed by the strategy of "overlapped strategies" (22% and 22%). In contrast, BritE speakers and PESL/E groups employed "the offer of good wish" strategies more often (25% and 25%), and PESL/M and PESL/L class speakers used these strategies with a percentage of (9% each). Likewise, PESL/M and PESL/L speakers, BritE also used "Overlapped" congratulations strategies quite frequently (19%).

Table 3

Frequency and Percentage of Congratulation strategies of BritE, PESL/E, PESL/M and PESL/L

Sr No.	CRs	BritE		PESL/E		PESL/M		PESL/L	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1	IFID	30	17%	28	16%	50	28%	52	29%
2	RFI	25	14%	16	9%	3	2%	11	6%
3	OoGW	45	25%	45	25%	16	9%	12	9%
4	EOH	20	11%	17	9%	17	9%	17	9%
5	EOS	6	3%	6	3%	7	4%	8	4%
6	EOV	10	5%	10	5%	10	5%	5	3%
7	EOE	6	3%	9	5%	9	5%	5	3%
8	SOC	9	5%	9	5%	9	5%	9	5%
9	UoE	12	6%	20	11%	19	11%	17	9%
10	Overlapped	17	19%	20	11%	40	22%	40	22%
Total		180	100%	180	100%	180	100%	180	100%

Note: %= percentage value of the responses, RFI = Request for information, IFID = Illocutionary force indicating a device, OOGW = Offer of a good wish, EOH = Expression of happiness, EOV = Expression of validation, EOS = Expression of surprise, EOE = Expression of envy, SOC = Suggestion of celebration.

In contrast, PESL/E speakers used less “Overlapped” congratulations strategies (11%). Moreover, table 3 indicates that BritE speakers used more strategies of “Expression of Happiness” (11%) than PESL/E, PESL/M and PESL/L participants (9% each). As regards other congratulation strategies, as can be seen in table 3, “Expression of Surprise”, “Expression of Validation”, “the Suggestion of Celebration”, “Expression of Envy”, “Utterance of Encouragement”, all groups were found using these strategies quite rarely with pretty low percentage.

Although the first (IFID) type was the most frequent strategy used by the four groups, the difference between them was statistically significant. In contrast, the last two strategies showed no significant statistical difference. It was expected to find “congratulations” used more frequently than the other strategies because the events were happy occasions or news. Also, it is usually the first expression to utter when hearing something good to express happiness and share the occasion with others. This result is supported by almost all the studies on congratulation in different languages and cultures that found “congratulations” is the most frequent expression. However, this differs from Makri-Tsilipakou’s results (2001) in Greek and Hernández’s (2008) in Peninsular Spanish. Makri-Tsilipakou explained that the use of the expression “congratulations” refers to formality or distance in the relationship between the speaker and addressee. Therefore, the use of “well wishes” is more than “congratulations” in Greek. Hernández (2008) found that “congratulations,” which was used only by women, was less common than expressing approval, happiness, and making celebration plans.

In the current study, “congratulations” was used most frequently in the event of “a candidate is newly selected as chief minister” (62 times) and the event of “being a chief guest, speaker congratulates the position holders” (58 times). Although there is more than one form for mubarkan “congratulations” in Urdu, mubarkan is the most frequently used one. The other form for mubarkan is Mubarak, and it was not used frequently because it is from Standard Urdu. Therefore, the simplest form was found frequently. Mubarkan was intensified in more than one way, often by using various numbers, such as a thousand, million, billion, and so forth, to intensify its meaning. In addition, it was intensified by repetition, such as by repeating its vowel (a), the expression “mubakaan” itself, the number itself, or by adding other bigger numbers in the form. These various ways of intensifying “mubarakank” can be a result of the absence of prosodic strategies. Additionally, they emphasize Leech’s (2007) point of view that intrinsically courteous speech acts, such as congratulations, need intensification or gradable expressions. Face enhancing acts such as congratulation also need to be hardened and maximized (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1997). Although congratulation strategies lack the physical dimension, the social dimension exists by interacting with friends on activities (Derks et al., 2008). Therefore, offering congratulations on emphasizes the fact that the goal of congratulation is not only to express a psychological state but also it has a social goal that is aimed at strengthening social relationship and intimacy (Makri-Tsilipakou, 2001) among individuals or just to satisfy the social expectation (Bach & Harnish, 1979). Results indicated that PESL groups congratulation strategies were influenced by their L1 culture-specific and language-specific semantic formulaic expressions. They were found using the English equivalent of congratulations (Mubakaan) in Urdu language, except PESL/E group participants who showed a progress towards developing pragmatic competence of the target language.

However, in this current study, the results showed that although “congratulations” was the most frequently used, it was not usually used alone. It was used as a single strategy only (160 times) and mostly in the event of “a candidate is newly selected as chief minister” and the event of “being a chief guest, speaker congratulates the position holders”. The comparison of “Overlapped” strategies among the events was conducted based on the top four compound strategies in each event. Therefore, “congratulations” is mostly used with “offer of good wishes”, which was statistically significant. This result refers to the importance of taking into consideration the patterns of polite compound strategies, and focus not only on the polite expressions alone based on their frequency. The compound strategy of “congratulations” with “offer of good wishes” was used mostly in the event of “ a secretary introduces the newly elected sports secretary to the participants”, and “a Chief Guest at the Annual Prize Distribution ceremony”. This compound strategy was followed by the use of “congratulations” with “offer of good wishes” and “Overlapped” congratulations strategies. This pattern of compound strategy was also used primarily in the event of “a family doctor got married who met five months ago”, “a friend got a job”, and “a friend got appointed as a surgeon in a government hospital”.

“Offer of good wishes,” as the second most frequently used strategy used by the BritE and PESL/E groups was among the other types of responses, is supported by research by Allami and Nekouzadeh (2011) in Persian; Kočovska (2013) in Latin; and Dastjerdi and Nasri, (2013) in Persian, American English, and Syrian Arabic. Some studies in Persian, such as Ghaemi and Ebrahimi (2014) found that “offer of good

wishes” is the third most frequently used strategy, while other studies, such as García (2010) in Spanish, found it to be a common strategy in general. However, the different results that indicate a preference and frequency are usually affected by many factors, such as the background of participants, relationship, situation, the tool for collecting data, and so forth.

Most of the expressions used in the current study in “offer of good wishes” are religious expressions, which are prayers/blessings rather than nonreligious wishing expressions. “Offer of good wishes” was also used primarily in the event of “a secretary introduces the newly elected sports secretary to the participants”, and “a Chief Guest at the Annual Prize Distribution ceremony”. However, the way of congratulating others in the event of “the birth of a baby,” for example, can vary or differ based on the medium of communication. For instance, Willer (2001) found that different words are used to describe emotions and physical characteristics of the newborn boy or girl in congratulation greeting cards. Unlike BritE speakers, PESL speakers were found using socio-religious expressions in their congratulation strategies indicating the operation of pragmatic transfer in their congratulation strategies, and an inclination towards adhering to their L1 cultural norms. This way of congratulating is affected by the different genre in the way of expressing congratulation. It was also observed that PESL users tend to employ more than one prayer/blessing or wishing expression in a comment. The use of prayers/blessings as well-wishing is a result of Islamic principles in Pakistani society. Blessings are used by people who believe in the power of words (Wierzbicka, 1987); however, this power is believed to come from Allah, not from the words by themselves. The use of prayers in the situations of congratulation also were found by Emery (2000) and Bataineh (2013) in Arabic, and by Ghaemi and Ebrahimi (2014) in Persian because they are influenced by the same religion, Islam. This influence was also observed in the other studies of speech acts by Saudis, such as greetings and leave takings (Hassanain, 1994; Turjoman 2005), compliment (AlAmro, 2013), thanking (Altalhi, 2014), refusal (Al-Shalawi, 1997), and invitation (Alfalig, 2016). However, the use of religious expression is also used in “Overlapped congratulations” in the current study. Although various expressions were used in overlapped congratulations, the religious expression such as mashaallah/Jazakaallah “as Allah wills/ as Allah wills, Allah blesses” was used more frequently than the other praising expressions. It was also used more frequently in the event of “a family doctor got married who met five months ago”, “a friend got a job”. It is usually used by Muslims to express praise or happiness when someone hears good news or sees something he/she likes. It is believed that Allah protects the good news/object of jealousy and the evil eye (AlAmro, 2013).

In the current study, some strategies were used infrequently, and most of those were supported by Elwood (2004) and Allami and Nekouzadeh (2011) who found the strategies used with a low frequency. For instance, “expression of validation” was used only on a few occasions by the four groups, mostly in the event of “getting a new position” and “winning an election.”

“A suggestion to celebrate” was used in the current study only on a very limited occasions by the four groups and mostly in the event of “getting a permanent job” In contrast, Al-Hour (2019) found that it is common in *Palestinian society*. However, it was interesting to find that some of the respondents

employed some emojis (though it was not included in the scope of the study), such as party popper, confetti ball, red balloon, and so forth to celebrate the occasion.

The strategy of “expression of envy” was used only at certain occasions by the four groups, especially in one of the events, that of “getting a new position” (i.e., The position of “university professor”), However, the use of this strategy was not expected because people usually express their feelings positively and use courtesy in happy events and avoid negative comments. Therefore, it was not used frequently in the data because of the nature of responsibilities in the position of “professor” in university.

“Expressing of surprise” was used at some occasions such as in the event of “family doctor got married” and “getting a new position” to express surprise, and/or that the occasion was not expected. It was used on a few occasions by both male and a female respondents from the four groups. However, Unceta Gómez (2016) found that expressing surprise as a strategy of congratulation was not used by women in Latin.

“Requesting information” was used by both BritE and PESL/E speakers more often than the PESL/M and PESL/L class groups and mostly in the event of “family doctor got married” However, this result was not supported by a number of studies in which it was found that it is one of the most frequently used strategies (Elwood, 2004; Al-Hour, 2019; Dastjerdi & Nasri, 2013; Nasri, Dastjerdy, & Ghadiri, 2013; Mahzari, 2017). Nevertheless, people feel more comfortable asking questions about the personal news of occasions in face-to-face communication.

The second research question of this study asked:

2. How do social distance variable effect the use of congratulation strategies of British English speakers, Pakistani ESL/Elite, PESL/Middle, and PESL/Lower class learners?

Results regarding social distance variables show that the respondents of BritE, PESL/E, PESL/M and PESL/L groups used more strategies of IFID (9.4%, 8.3%, 16% and 17%) when interacting with distant level interlocutors. It can be noticed that both PESL/M and PESL/L class participants used comparatively more *IFID* strategies than the other two groups while interacting with *distant* level interlocutors.

Table 4

Congratulation Strategies Distribution interacting with Social Distance

Sr No.	BritE			PESL/E			PESL/M			PESL/L			
	N	CL	NL	DT	CL	NL	DT	CL	NL	DT	CL	NL	DT
IFID	N	5	8	17	6	7	15	6	6	28	6	6	30
	%	3	4.4	9.4	3.3	4	8.3	3.3	3.3	16	3.3	3.3	17
RFI	N	17	5	3	10	4	2	3	-	-	7	2	2
	%	9.4	3	2	6	2.2	1.1	2	-	-	4	1.1	1.1
OoGW	N	28	9	8	31	8	6	2	4	10	2	3	7
	%	16	5	4.4	17.2	4.4	3.3	1.1	2.2	6	1.1	2	4
EOH	N	12	6	2	9	6	2	11	3	3	9	5	3
	%	7	3	1.1	5	3.3	1.1	6.1	2	2	5	3	2
EOS	N	4	1	1	3	2	1	5	1	1	6	1	1
	%	2.2	.5	.5	2	1.1	.5	3	.5	.5	3	.5	.5
EOV	N	6	2	2	5	3	2	9	1	-	4	1	-
	%	3	1.1	1.1	3	2	1.1	5	.5	-	2.2	.5	-
EOE	N	4	1	1	5	2	2	7	2	-	5	-	-
	%	2.2	.5	.5	3	1.1	1.1	4	1.1	-	3	-	-
SOC	N	6	2	1	5	3	1	5	4	-	4	5	-
	%	3	1.1	1.1	3	2	.5	3	2.2	-	2.2	3	-
UoE	N	11	1	-	9	8	3	3	5	11	3	5	9
	%	6.1	.5	-	5	4.4	2	2	3	6.1	2	3	5
Overlapped	N	14	2	1	12	7	1	25	8	7	23	9	8
	N	7.7	1.1	.5	6.6	4	.5	14	4.4	4	13	5	4.4

Similarly, as can be noticed in the table 4, the four groups used less congratulations strategies while interacting with *close* and Neutral level interlocutors. The *Request for Information (RFI)* strategy was not favoured much by PESL/M class speakers at all. The other three groups (9.4%, 6%, and 4%) were found using some *RFI strategies* while interacting with *close level* interlocutors. As regards *Offer of Good Wish (OoGW)* congratulation strategy is concerned, table 4 shows that BritE (16%) and PESL/E (17.2%) groups used more strategies of OoGw when they were interacting with interlocutors of *close social distance*. In contrast, both PESL/M and PESL/L class participants did not use these strategies more often as can be seen in the table 4 and Fig. 2. Regarding *Expression of Happiness (EOH)* congratulations strategies, table

4 shows that BritE (7%), PESL/E (5%), PESL/M (6.1%) and PESL/L (5%) groups used more strategies of *EOH* for close social distance interlocutors as compared to other two variables (neutral and distant).

Another difference among the four groups can be observed in the use of *the Utterance of Encouragement* strategies. Both BritE (6.1%) and PESL/E groups used more strategies for *close level* interlocutors. In contrast, both PESL/M (6.1) and PESL/L (5%) groups were found using *UoE* strategies more often for *distant level* interlocutors. Regarding *Overlapped Congratulations strategies*, the four groups used this strategy with a percentage of (BritE 7.7%), (PESL/E 7%), (PESL/M 14%) and (PESL/L 13%) when interacting with *close level* interlocutors. Nevertheless, the four groups did not favour the use of *EoS*, *EoV*, and *SoC* congratulation strategies more often, as can be noticed in table 4 and Fig. 2.

Noticeably, social distance is found to have great effect on congratulations strategies behaviors in all four groups. In general, as scholars argue (Avazpour, 2020; Lect & Abdulkhaleq, 2020; Wardat & Alkhateeb, 2020), the greater the social distance between the speaker and the hearer, the more frequently *IFID* expressions (direct and/or indirect) are employed. More specifically, people almost always utter *IFID* (directly and/or indirectly) when they are using congratulation strategies for strangers as in the following situation “a passenger is sitting beside you became very excited and happy for being appointed as a surgeon in a government hospital”, and very often, they use “*Congratulation/Heartiest congratulations*” (BritE) “*Bundle of Congratulations*” (PESL/E), “*Congrats*” (PESL/M), and “*Congratulations*” (PESL/L) in their expressions. With friends, as Avazpour (2020) states that *IFID* (directly and/or indirectly) is also very frequent but less than with strangers; “*Request for Information, and The Offer of Good Wish*” expressions are used in some scenarios as in “a friend gets a permanent government job” but these appear to be situation-specific. With intimates, “*Expression of Happiness*” terms are found in all “intimate interlocutor” situations investigated, and the number of responses with these *Expression of Surprise* strategies is nearly equal to that of the responses with *the Suggestion of Celebration* strategies in the events like “a family doctor gets married”. The findings are acknowledged by Wardat and Alkhateeb (2020) who argue that when there is interaction with the distant level interlocutors in congratulation scenarios, more politeness is displayed and there are more chances of using *IFID*, and *the Offer of Good Wish* strategies than any other strategies. The findings are also consistent with Lect and Abdulkhaleq (2020) who state that social distance determines the choices of congratulations in different social scenarios. The four groups’ participants, especially PESL/M and PESL/L tend to use more *Overlapped Congratulations* strategies with the respondents of close level interlocutors and prefer to use less *Overlapped Congratulations* strategies with neutral and stranger level respondents. In contrast, BritE and PESL/E speakers tend to use less *Overlapped Congratulations* strategies and prefer to use more *Request for Information* and *Utterance of Encouragement* strategies. These findings illustrate that speaker in these situations tend to be quite interactive and prefer to keep harmonious relation with each other by using “Request for information” and “Encouragement” strategies. Saleem et al. (in press) argue that speakers using these strategies show that they wish to be pretty cordial and amiable with their interlocutors (acquittance and stranger level social distance). Here, the evidence of pragmatic transfer is quite clear, as PESL/M respondents and PESL/L class respondents almost tend to use the similar type of congratulations strategies. They are found exactly translating the Urdu expressions into the target culture.

Though this transfer is not negative in nature, PESL/M and PESL/L groups lacked pragmatic competence of the target culture, and could not comprehend the situation as the British English and PESL/E speakers did, and they adhered to their native cultural norms. Further, a positive development can be observed as regards PESL/E learners were concerned, unlike PESL/M and PESL/L groups, PESL/E group used almost the similar congratulation strategies as BritE speakers were found using. Nevertheless, the results are in line with (Al-Shboul & Huwari, 2016; Avazpour, 2020; Elwood, 2004; Al-Hour, 2019; Nasri et al., 2013; Tsoumou, 2020) previous studies who argue that ESL learners are found quite competent in grammatical competence and are less aware of pragmatic competence. At most of the occasion, especially while interacting with the social distance phenomenon, ESL learners prefer to utilize their cultural-specific responses which are inappropriate and can lead to miscommunication or breakdown with the target culture speakers. Nevertheless, the speakers of this study tend to use more *IFID* strategies with the strangers in events like “a passenger sitting beside you became very excited and happy for being appointed as a surgeon in a government hospital” than the close friends or colleagues and intimate relations. This might be because speakers often tend to look more caring and cordial with the distant interlocutor and use more positive politeness strategies. Furthermore, it is supported by past studies (Al-Qudah, 2001; Bataineh, 2013; Can, 2011; Dastjerdi, 2013), who found the use of more detailed strategies with interlocutors of distant level and less with close friends and intimates.

Notwithstanding, the findings acknowledged the past studies (Chen, 2020; Dawson, 2020; Ezzaoua, 2020) who argue that the negative pragmatic transfer occurred in the production and comprehension of politeness strategies of advanced ESL learners because it is sometimes challenging to perceive and understand social distance scenarios in the target culture. The findings also illustrate the PESL/E participants’ progress towards approximation and development of the target culture’s sociopragmatic knowledge, recognizing the judgments of earlier studies in which Saleem et al. (2021) and Dawson (2020) claim that ESL assessed the social distance of their interlocutors in the same way as the American native speakers and British English speakers, showing ESL learners’ development towards the target language sociopragmatic knowledge. Although there is found the negative transfer of sociopragmatic knowledge to the target language in a situation “a friend got a job”, yet we can find some development as well. Hence, it may be concluded that unlike PESL/M and PESL/L groups. PESL/E group to some extent approximated the target culture’s sociopragmatic knowledge in their production and perception of social distance variable.

Conclusion

Considering the results, it can be said that the speech act of congratulation is one of the important and frequently used speech acts in everyday communication as suggested by the contexts where the speech act is realized and the strategies. Especially in the case of Pakistani ESL learners, it is found that congratulations are not only frequently used to acknowledge one’s success, but they are also exchanged among interlocutors on special days and emotionally loaded occasions such as religious and national days/festivals, birthdays, anniversary and wedding days. Furthermore, this study has revealed that the native speaker conceptualization of the English and Pakistani ESL (except elite class speakers) learners’

speech act of congratulation is different considering the contexts of use and the strategies/components. Based on the findings, it is possible to state that English congratulation is more task-oriented, whereas Pakistani congratulation is more social relational (Can, 2011). Specifically, in terms of achievement, English and PESL/E seem to follow an individually oriented achievement motive, while Pakistani (ESL/M and ESL/L) appear to have a socially oriented achievement motive (Ezzaoua, 2020) as the use of particular strategies in the contexts of achievement has indicated. In this respect, in Hofstede's terms (2011), the collectivist and feminine aspect of Pakistani culture and the individualistic masculine aspect of British culture seem to be reselected in the realization of the speech act of congratulation as far as the data and the findings of this study are concerned.

This study can be considered to have some contributions in the areas of cross-cultural and intercultural communication by focusing on the sociopragmatic aspects of the speech act of congratulation in British English and Pakistani and presenting the cultural knowledge and awareness through congratulation contexts and strategies which will help interlocutors to cope with real life situations. In this way, intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 2012) can be ensured enabling non-native speakers to "survive" in new contexts and interpersonal relations by successfully responding to unfamiliar linguistic, cultural and social factors (Olshtain & Celce-Murcia, 2016).

The current study also has some implications in foreign language education, specifically in the area of pragmatic competence and the development of speech acts by providing metapragmatic information about the speech act of congratulation, which lacks evidence in the literature and in teaching materials (Taguchi, 2019). Such information or input based on linguistic evidence could be useful for learners of English as a second/foreign language, who can have the chance to develop cultural awareness and communicative competence. Not only non-native speakers but also native speakers will gain awareness with regard to what is appropriate in the realization of the speech act of congratulation in their own speech communities since for non-native speakers such knowledge is often unavailable at a conscious level (Wardat & Alkhateeb, 2020). In addition, material developers or program coordinators can use the input in developing materials for learners of English as a foreign/second language and thus, incorporate it into textbooks or other supplementary classroom materials. The incorporation of cultural and pragmatic information regarding the speech act of congratulation is expected to increase the number of "small C" elements present in textbooks in comparison with the fact-oriented "big C" elements which have been dominating the textbooks and which have been criticized for their inadequacy in developing cultural competence (Taguchi & Roever, 2017). Other than foreign language learners and material developers, teachers can also benefit from the results of this study, especially in terms of explicit metapragmatic instruction and teachers' pedagogical development as well as pragmatic competence.

Abbreviations

ESL - English as a second language

DCT – A Discourse Completion Test

LF - Lingua Franca

L1 – First Language

L2 – Second language

PESL – Pakistani English as a second language

BritE – British English Speakers

Declarations

- Availability of data and material

Relevant data are available for the researcher on request.

- Funding

There was no funding available for this research.

- Competing interests

There are no competing interests relevant to this research.

- Authors' contributions

Dr Nazir Malik provided critical insights and valuable comments for the improvement of the manuscript.

Dr Tahir Saleem conceived the study, and executed it by following some rigorous procedures.

Mr Asif Aziz collected and analysed the data, including the composing the manuscript.

- Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the contribution of Pakistani ESL and British English speakers who help to collect the data for the current study. We also acknowledged the contribution of experts who commented on the reliability of the instruments, and helped in coding the data.

References

1. Al-Hour, I. I. (2019). *The Speech Act of Congratulation in Palestinian Society: Positive Politeness and Gender Differences* (Unpublished MA dissertation). Hebron University, Palestine.
<http://dspace.hebron.edu/jspui/handle/123456789/699>
2. Al-Khatib, M. A. (1997). Congratulation and thank you announcements in Jordanian newspapers: Cultural and communicative functions. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 10(2), 156–170.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/07908319709525248>

3. AlAmro, M. A. (2013). *The sociolinguistics of compliment behavior in Najdi Saudi Arabic* (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). Ball State University, Muncie, IN, USA.
<https://cardinalsolar.bsu.edu/handle/123456789/197773>
4. Allami, H., & Naeimi, A. (2011). A cross-linguistic study of refusals: An analysis of pragmatic competence development in Iranian ESL learners. *Journal of pragmatics*, 43(1), 385–406.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2010.07.010>
5. Alfalig, H. (2016). *Invitation in Saudi Arabic: A socio-pragmatic analysis* (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). Ball state University, Muncie, IN, USA.
<https://cardinalsolar.bsu.edu/handle/123456789/200278>
6. Allami, H., & Nekouzadeh, M. (2011). Congratulation and Positive Politeness Strategies in Iranian Context. *Theory & Practice in Language Studies*, 1(11), 1607–1613. doi:10.4304/tpls.1.11.1607-1613
7. Al-Qudah, M. (2001). *Congratulation patterns on happy occasions in Jordan* (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). Yarmouk University, Irbid, Jordan. <http://repository.yu.edu.jo/handle/123456789/5496>
8. Al-Saedi, H. T. J., & Jabber, K. W. (2020). A pragmatic study of newspaper headlines in media discourse: Iraq as a case study. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 3(3), 48–59
<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/288305926.pdf>
9. Al-Shalawi, H. G. (1997). *Refusal strategies in Saudi and American cultures*(Unpublished M.A. thesis). Michigan State University, Lansing, MI, USA. <https://libguides.lib.msu.edu/c.php?g=96933&p=627185>
10. Al-Shboul, Y., & Huwari, I. F. (2016). Congratulation strategies of Jordanian ESL postgraduate students. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 6(1), 79–87.
<https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v6i1.2664>
11. Altalhi, H. (2014). *Speech acts of thanking and thanking responses by Hijazi females*(Unpublished M.A. thesis). Ball State University, Muncie, IN, USA.
<https://cardinalsolar.bsu.edu/handle/123456789/198558>
12. Al-Zubaidi, N. A. (2017). Wedding Invitation Genre: Communicating Sociocultural Identities of Iraqi Society. *Lublin Studies in Modern Languages and Literature*, 41(1), 129–155
<https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=542103>
13. Avazpour, K. (2020). *Cross-cultural Analysis of Congratulations in American English, Indian English and Peninsular Spanish*(Unpublished Master thesis, Dalarna University, Sweden). Dalarna University, Sweden. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1505524/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
14. Azam, S., & Saleem, T. (2018a). Congratulations across Cultures: Punjabi and British Speakers. *Erevna Journal of Linguistics and Literature*, 2(1), 47–64.
<http://111.68.96.103:40003/ojserevna/index.php/erevna/article/view/48>
15. Azam, S., & Saleem, T. (2018b). Teaching Pragmatic Competence in Pakistani Context: A Case of Pakistani ESL Learners Compliment Responses. *Erevna Journal of Linguistics and Literature*, 2(2), 27–49. <http://111.68.96.103:40003/ojserevna/index.php/erevna/article/view/53>

16. Aziz, A., Maqsood, B., Saleem, T., & Azam, S. (2018). The investigation of pragmatic transfer in the speech act of congratulations by Punjabi ESL learners. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 8(6), 71. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v8n6p240>
17. Bach, K., & Harnish, R. M. (1979). *Linguistic communication and speech acts*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2184680>
18. Bataineh, R. F. (2013). On congratulating, thanking, and apologizing in Jordanian Arabic and American English. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 32, 1404–1634. <http://www.immigrantinstitutet.se/immi.se/intercultural/nr32/bataineh.html>
19. Bartłomiejczyk, M. (2020). Parliamentary impoliteness and the interpreter's gender. *Pragmatics*, 30(4), 459–484. <https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.18064.bar>
20. Byram, M. (2012). Intercultural competence. *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*, 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal0554.pub2>
21. Can, H. (2011). *A cross-cultural study of the speech act of congratulation in British English and Turkish using a corpus approach* (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey. <https://open.metu.edu.tr/handle/11511/20746>
22. Chen, Y. (2020). Saying “No” in a foreign language: ESL learners' elicited refusals. *Taiwan Journal of Linguistics*, 18(1), 31–67. [https://doi.org/doi:10.6519/TJL.202001_18\(1\).0002](https://doi.org/doi:10.6519/TJL.202001_18(1).0002)
23. Dawson, C. (2020). Pragmatic transfer and development: Evidence from ESL learners in China. *Contrastive Pragmatics*, 1(2), 275–278. <https://doi.org/10.1163/26660393-BJA10012>
24. Derks, D., Fischer, A. H., & Bos, A. E. R. (2008). The role of emotion in computer-mediated communication: A review. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 24(3), 766–785. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1016/j.chb.2007.04.004>
25. Elwood, K. (2004). Congratulations!: A cross-cultural analysis of responses to another's happy news. æ—© ç`²ç”°å•†å!åÆæ”»æœf, (Waseda Commercial Society Meeting) 25, 355386. https://waseda.repo.nii.ac.jp/?action=pages_view_main&active_action=repository_view_main_item_detail&item_id = 11664&item_no = 1&page_id = 13&block_id = 21
26. Eshghinejad, S., & Moini, M. R. (2016). Politeness strategies used in text messaging: Pragmatic competence in an asymmetrical power relation of teacher–student. *SAGE Open*, 6(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244016632288>
27. Ezzaoua, O. (2020). Apologies in ESL: An Interlanguage Pragmatic Study on Moroccan Learners of English. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 20(2), 1–8. <http://52.196.142.242/index.php/sll/article/view/11640>
28. Emery, P. G. (2000). Greeting, congratulating and commiserating in Omani Arabic. *Language Culture and Curriculum*, 13(2), 196–216. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07908310008666599>
29. García, C. (2010). '¿ Qué:¿ cómo que te vas A casar?' (Congratulation and rapport management: A case study of Peruvian Spanish speakers. *Pragmatics*, 2(19), 197–222. <https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.19.2.03gar>

30. Ghaemi, F., & Ebrahimi, F. (2014). Speech act of congratulation among Persian speakers. *ELT Voices-International Journal for Teachers of English*, 4(6), 98–112http://eltvoices.in/Volume4/Issue_6/EVI_46_9.pdf
31. Haddad, S. (2005). Congratulation or Announcement? Different Cultures... Different Norms. *Damascus University Journal*, 21(3), 57–80<http://178.253.95.9/mag/human/images/stories/0033500.pdf>
32. Han, W. (2020). Cross-Linguistic Transfer and Second Language Learnability. In *Universal Grammar and the Initial State of Second Language Learning* (pp. 17–25). Singapore: Springer. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-981-15-2452-3>
33. Hassanain, K. S. A. (1994). Saudi mode of greeting rituals: Their implications for teaching and learning English. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 32(1), 68–77. <https://search.proquest.com/openview/61fb40b5542f3870f696c1c87267906d/1?cbl=1816531&pq-origsite=gscholar>
34. Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalizing cultures: The Hofstede model in context. *Online readings in psychology and culture*, 2(1), 2307–0919http://mchmielecki.pbworks.com/w/file/fetch/64591689/hofstede_dobre.pdf
35. Hsu, C. C., Davis, R. H., & Wang, Y. C. (2020). Chinese learners' use of concessive connectors in English argumentative writing. *Concentric*, 46(1), 95–123. <https://doi.org/10.1075/consl.00014.hsu>
36. Joseph, J., & Alexander, K. (2018). *Personalizing the Wedding: A Cross-Cultural Study of Wedding Motivations in the Keralite Indian and Southern American Communities*(Unpublished BS thesis). University of South Carolina, USA.
37. Kambash, R. H. (2020). The Pragmatics of Email Request between Iraqi Students and English Native Speakers. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Culture*, 7(1), 1–12<http://ijllc.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/7-1-1.pdf>
38. Kasper, G., & Rose, K. R. (2002). Pragmatic Development in a Second Language. *Language Learning: A Journal of Research in Language Studies*, 52, 1[https://www.wiley.com/en-us/Pragmatic + Development + in + a + Second + Language-p-9780631234302](https://www.wiley.com/en-us/Pragmatic+Development+in+a+Second+Language-p-9780631234302)
39. Kerbrat-Orecchioni, C. (1997). A multilevel approach in the study of talk-in-interaction. *Pragmatics*, 7, 1–20<http://journals.linguisticsociety.org/ellanguage/pragmatics/article/download/237/237-524-1-PB.pdf>
40. Kočovska, S. (2013). Expressing congratulations in Latin: The case of Cicero's correspondence. *Literatūra*, 55 (3), 27–37. <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12188/1216>
41. Kretzenbacher, H. L., Hajek, J., Norrby, C., & Schüpbach, D. (Eds.). (2020). Social deixis at international conferences: Austrian German speakers' introduction and address behaviour in German and English. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 169, 100–119. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2020.08.007>
42. Lect, A., & Abdulkhaleq, A. L. L. (2020). A Pragmatic Study of Congratulation Responses in Iraqi Arabic. *College Of Basic Education Researches Journal*, 16(4), 1121–1138<https://doi.org/10.33899/berj.2020.167270>

43. Lee, C. (Ed.). (2020). *Second Language Pragmatics and English Language Education in East Asia*. Routledge <https://www.routledge.com/Second-Language-Pragmatics-and-English-Language-Education-in-East-Asia/Lee/p/book/9780367443115>\$4
44. Leech, G. (2007). Politeness: is there an East-West divide? *Journal of Politeness research*, 3(2), 167–206. <https://doi.org/10.1515/PR.2007.009>
45. Lodhi, M. A., & Akash, A. (2019). Identifying language learning gaps of ESL students at intermediate level in Pakistani colleges. *Bellaterra Journal of Teaching & Learning Language & Literature*, 12(1), 44–64. <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/jtl3.783>
46. Mahzari, M. (2017). *A Sociopragmatic Study of the Congratulation Strategies of Saudi Facebook Users*. (Doctoral dissertation, Arizona State University).
47. Majoko, T. (2019). Teacher key competencies for inclusive education: Tapping pragmatic realities of Zimbabwean special needs education teachers. *Sage Open*, 9(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244018823455>
48. Makri-Tsilipakou, M. (2001). Congratulations and bravo! In A. Bayraktaroğlu & M. Sifianou (Eds.), *Linguistic Politeness Across Boundaries: The case of Greek and Turkish (Pragmatics and Beyond New Series.*, pp. 137–176). John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.88.07mak>
49. Malmir, A., & Derakhshan, A. (2020). The Socio-Pragmatic, Lexico-Grammatical, and Cognitive Strategies in L2 Pragmatic Comprehension: The Case of Iranian Male vs. Female ESL Learners. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research*, 8(1), 1–23 <https://doi.org/10.30466/IJLTR.2020.120805>
50. Martín-Laguna, S. (2020). *Tasks, Pragmatics and Multilingualism in the Classroom*. Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781788923651>
- Meihami, H., & Khanlarzadeh, M. (2015). Pragmatic content in global and local ELT textbooks: A micro analysis study. *SAGE Open*, 5(4), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244015615168>
51. Mohd, J., Aziz, J., & Musaev, T. (2020). The Interlanguage Pragmatics of Japanese Daily Greetings by Malaysian Learners. *GEMA Online® Journal of Language Studies*, 20(4), 113–129 <https://ejournal.ukm.my/gema/article/view/43126>
52. Nasri, N., Dastjerdy, H. V., & Ghadiri, M. (Eds.). (2013). Congratulations across cultures: English versus Armenian and Persian speakers. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 70, 67–73. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.01.039>
53. Olshtain, E., & Celce-Murcia, M. (2016). Teaching Language Skills from a Discourse Perspective. In Hinkel (Eds.), *Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning*, (1st ed., pp. 67–98). Routledge., 144. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315716893.ch11>
54. Pearson, L., & Hasler-Barker, M. (2020). Second language acquisition of Spanish pragmatics. In Koike, D. A., & Felix-Brasdefer, J. C. (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Spanish Pragmatics* (1st eds., pp. 423–439). Routledge
55. Saleem, T., Anjum, U., & Tahir, S. (2021). The Sociopragmatic and Pragmalinguistic Strategies in L2 Pragmatic Competence: A Case of Pakistani ESL Learners. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*

- Research*, 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17475759.2021.1877176>
56. Saleem, T., Anjum, U., & Ahmed, M. (in press). Social Distance and Speech behavior: A Case of Pakistani English Speakers Apology Responses. *Cogent Arts and Humanities*. <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/oaah20/current>
 57. Taguchi, N. (2008). Cognition, language contact, and the development of pragmatic comprehension in a study-abroad context. *Language learning*, 58(1), 33–71 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9922.2007.00434.x>
 58. Taguchi, N. (2011). Teaching pragmatics: Trends and issues. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 31(1), 289–310. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190511000018>
 59. Taguchi, N. (2015a). “Contextually” speaking: A survey of pragmatic learning abroad, in class, and online. *System*, 48, 3–20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2014.09.001>
 60. Taguchi, N. (2015b). Instructed pragmatics at a glance: Where instructional studies were, are, and should be going. *Language Teaching*, 48(1), 1–50. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444814000263>
 61. Taguchi, N. (Ed.). (2019). *The Routledge handbook of second language acquisition and pragmatics*. Acquisition-and-Pragmatics/Taguchi/p/book/9780815349761\$4: Routledge <https://www.routledge.com/The-Routledge-Handbook-of-Second-Language->
 62. Taguchi, N., & Roever, C. (2017). *Second language pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press <https://www.oxfordjournals.org/wordpres/issues/volume22/ej85/ej85r2/>
 63. Tereszkievicz, A. (2020). Complaint management on Twitter—evolution of interactional patterns on Polish corporate profiles. *Pragmatics*, 30(3), 405–430
 64. Tsoumou, J. M. (2020). Analysing speech acts in politically related Facebook communication. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 167, 80–97. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2020.06.004>
 65. Tsuchiya, K. (2020). 1 Discourses of pragmatics studies. In Lee, C. (Ed.), *Second Language Pragmatics and English Language Education in East Asia* (1st ed., pp. 1–17). Routledge
 66. Turjoman, M. O. (2005). *Saudi gender differences in greetings and leave-takings*. (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). Ball State University, Muncie, IN, USA.
 67. Unceta Gómez, L. (2016). Congratulations in Latin comedy: Types and functions. *Journal of Politeness Research*, 12(2), 267–290 <https://doi.org/10.1515/pr-2016-0005>
 68. Vassilaki, E., & Selimis, S. (2020). Children's requestive behavior in L2 Greek: The core request. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 170, 271–283. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2020.09.019>
 69. Walkinshaw, I., & Oanh, D. H. (2014). Native and non-native English language teachers: Student perceptions in Vietnam and Japan. *Sage Open*, 4(2), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014534451>
 70. Wannaruk, A. (2008). Pragmatic transfer in Thai ESL refusals. *RELC journal*, 39(3), 318–337. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688208096844>
 71. Wardat, M., & Alkhateeb, O. M. (2020). Congratulation Strategies in Syrians' Wedding Parties in Jordan. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research*, 7(2), 87–

109<http://jallr.ir/index.php/JALLR/article/view/1103/1265>

72. Wierzbicka, A. (1987). *English speech act verbs: A semantic dictionary*. Orlando, FL: Academic Press
73. Willer, L. (2001). Warning: Welcome to your world baby, gender message enclosed. an analysis of gender messages in birth congratulation cards. *Women and Language*, 24(1), 16–23. 34/1? cbl=31040&p q-origsite =
gscholar<https://search.proquest.com/openview/b5802b5b3bc017fb6a360079ee90df>
74. Wolfson, N. (1986). Research methodology and the question of validity. *TESOL quarterly*, 20(4), 689-699. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3586519> Youn, S. J., Bogorevich, V., & Taguchi, N. (2019). Assessment in L2 pragmatics. *The Routledge Handbook of Second Language Acquisition and Pragmatics*, 308-321.. /doi/10.4324/9781351164085\$4
75. Yuan, Y. (2001). An inquiry into empirical pragmatics data-gathering methods: Written DCTs, oral DCTs, field notes, and natural conversations. *Journal of pragmatics*, 33(2), 271–292. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166\(00\)00031-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(00)00031-X) Zhang, L. (2020). The influence of first language at the semantics–pragmatic interface: Evidence from definite and demonstrative determiners in L2 English. *Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism*, 9(2), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1075/lab.18096.zha>

Appendix

Discourse Completion Task

Dear Respondents,

Please read the instruction and the given situations carefully and write your answers in English in the space provided under each situation. It is important that you understand the requirements completely, so before you start, you are encouraged to ask questions if you find something you do not understand.

Thank you for your assistance.

Situation. 1: You are traveling and one of the passengers sitting beside you received a phone call and he became very excited and happy. You asked him, what's up? He informed you that he is appointed as a surgeon in a government hospital. What you will say to him?

You:

Situation. 2: You an anchorperson of the national news channel. An election held two days ago and newly elected Prime Minister comes in your studio for his first address to the nation. How you will respond to him on his success.

You:

Situation. 3: One of your friends meets you after two months. You asked him, where he had been for the last two months. Your friend tells you that he has big news for you, that he got a permanent job at the

university. What you will say to him?

You:

Situation 4: You went to visit a place with your father. There your father sees his family doctor, whom he hasn't seen for a long period of time. Your father inquired from him about his absence. He informed me that he got married five months ago. What you will say to him?

You:

Situation 5: You are a regional sports director and you are visiting a sports complex with your secretary. There he introduces you to a newly selected member of your regional sports team. What you will say to him on his selection?

You:

Situation 6: You are working as a dean at a university. You are called as a Chief Guest at the Annual Prize Distribution ceremony at another campus of the university in order to distribute awards among the top of the university. How you will respond to him/her on his/her great achievement?

You:

Figures

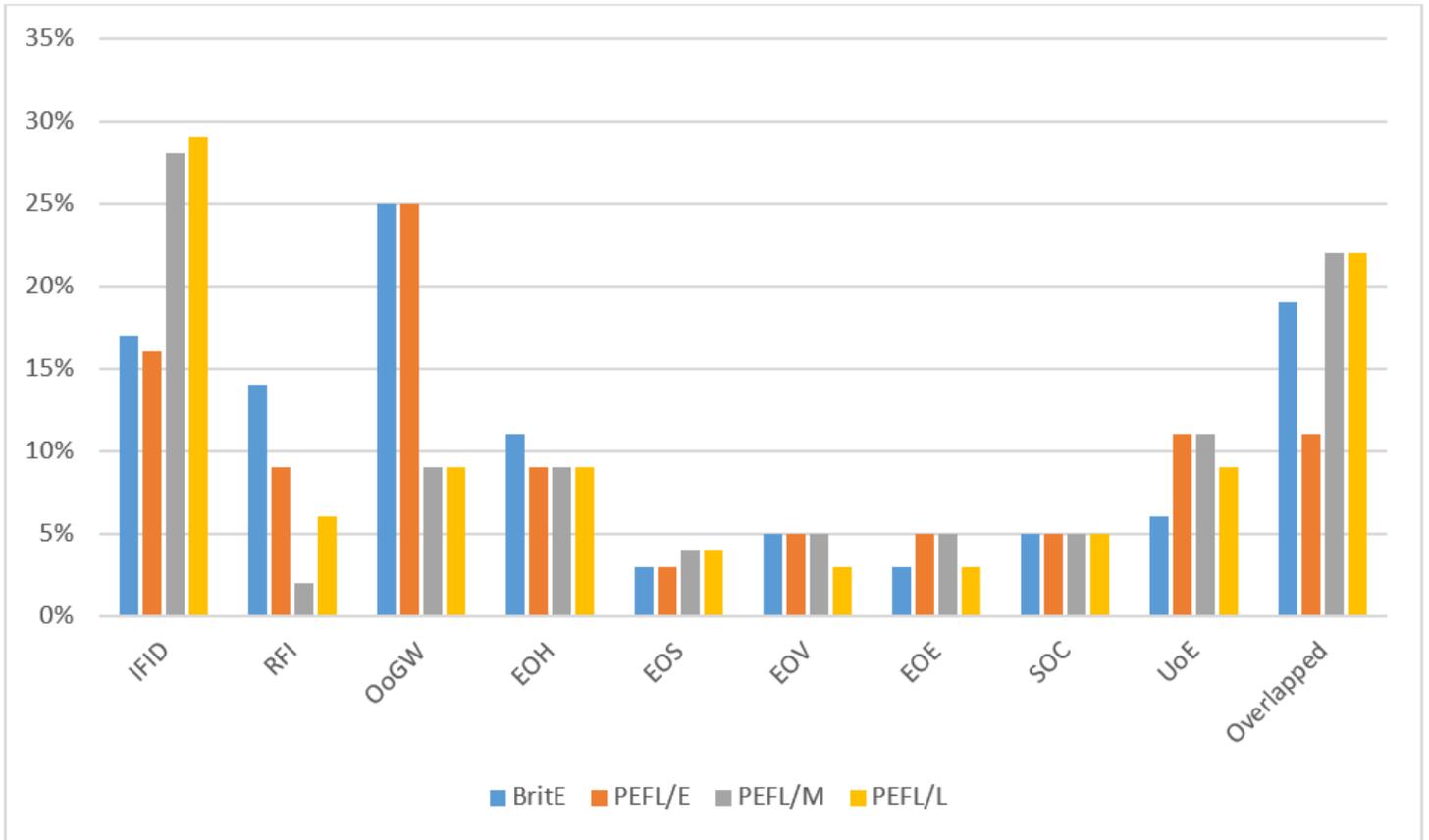


Figure 1

Overall Congratulation Strategies of BritE, PESL/E, PESL/M and PESL/L Groups

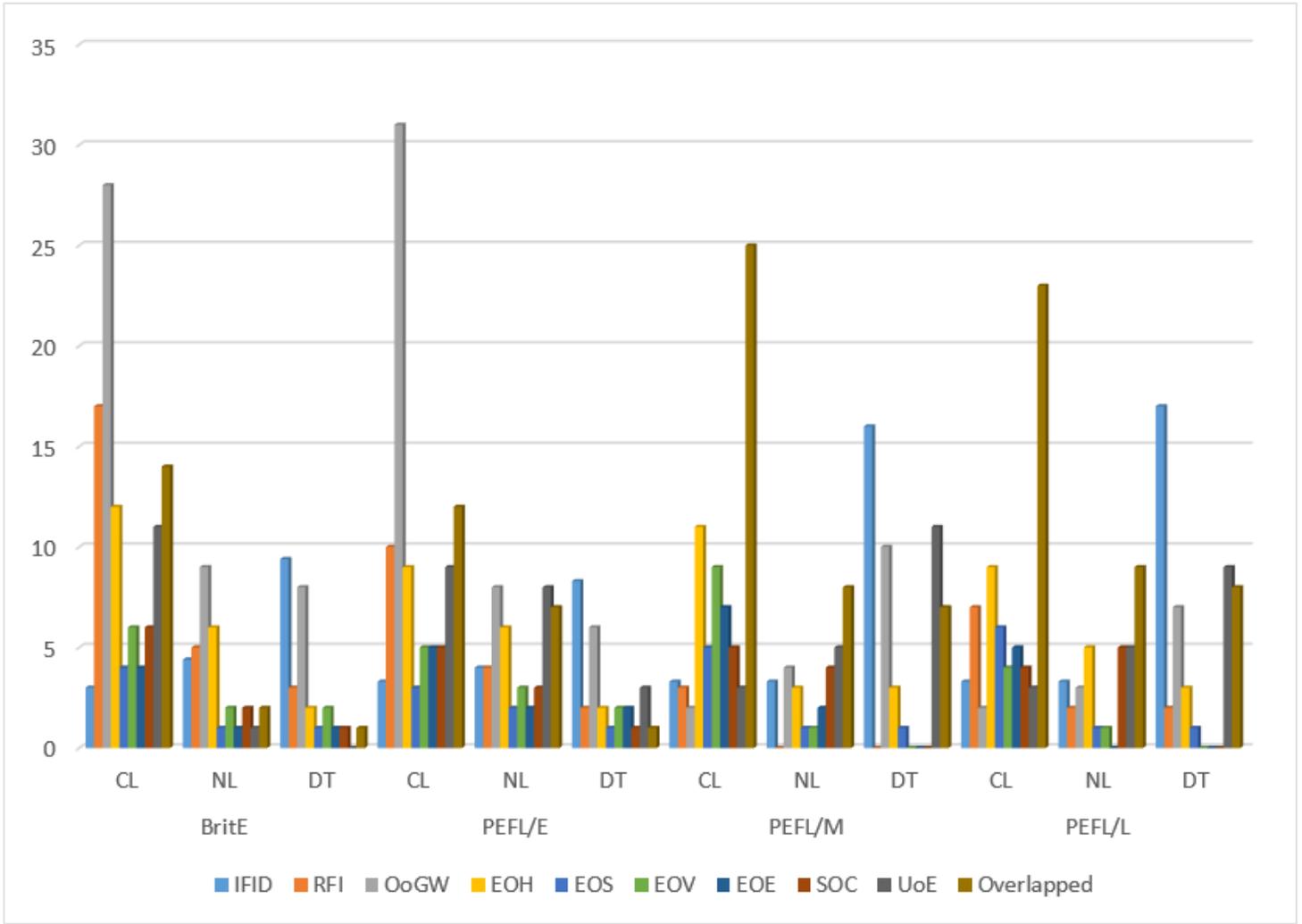


Figure 2

Congratulation Strategies Distribution interacting with Social Distance