ISSN 1798-4769
Journal of Language Teaching and Research, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 540-546, March 2024
DOI: https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1502.22

# Request Strategies in Saudi ESL Learners' Email Communication: A Pragmatic Analysis

Nuha K. Alsalem
English Language Department, College of Science and Humanities, Shaqra University, Saudi Arabia

***Abstract*—Growing research on intercultural communication has highlighted the importance of both linguistic and pragmatic competence among learners of English as a second language (ESL). Emails serve as a preferred means of communication between university students and professors. This study investigates Saudi ESL learners' pragmatic competence in creating email requests to their professors, addressing questions about greetings, directness, request strategies, and information sequencing. The goal is to show the need for explicit pragmatics instruction. The naturalistic data comprised 50 emails written by Arabic-speaking ESL graduate students in academic contexts, covering requests regarding deadline extensions, retaking exams, lecture absences for various reasons, and letters of recommendation. The analysis was guided by the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). The findings suggested that explicit pedagogical guidance in speech act performance could benefit non-native English speakers. This study contributes to the growing body of research on institutional email practices, politeness conventions, and interlanguage pragmatics.**

***Index Terms*—request, speech act, politeness, pragmatic competence, intercultural communication**

## I. Introduction

Speech acts involve not only words but also behaviors (Austin, 1962). These acts reflect diverse norms for expressing such concepts as requests, gratitude, apologies, compliments, and refusals. While speech acts are universal, the specific forms they take vary across cultures (Gass & Selinker, 2008). A growing emphasis on intercultural communication has highlighted the significance of pragmatic competence alongside linguistic skills. Students often grapple with email etiquette due to limited language skills, despite its increasing use in university communication (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007). This is particularly noticeable in hierarchical relationships, like those between students and faculty, where conveying intended meaning in a text-only medium is a struggle.

Email is the preferred mode of communication between students and professors. This type of interaction has introduced both challenges and opportunities for educators and learners alike (Bloch, 2002). It transcends linguistic communities, reshaping social relationships within academia and society. For some students, traditional classrooms can be intimidating, making virtual platforms more comfortable and conducive to interaction.

The present study contributes to the growing body of research on email use in institutional settings, exploring politeness conventions, interlanguage pragmatics, and the need for pedagogical support in e-politeness. To examine Saudi English as a second language (ESL) learners' ability to use politeness strategies in email requests to their professors, the study was designed to answer the following questions:

**1)** How do Saudi ESL learners structure their forms of address, including email openings and closings, when making requests to professors?
**2)** What are the levels of directness and request strategies employed by these learners in email requests to professors?
**3)** How do these learners typically structure email requests?

## II. Literature Review

### *A. Politeness and Communicative Competence*

Brown and Levinson (1987) introduced universality to cross-cultural speech act research, with Kadar and Haugh (2013) supporting politeness theory as a universal basis for pragmatics. Lakoff (1973, 1977) proposed universal politeness rules (e.g., "don't impose," "give options," and "make someone feel good"). Leech (1983) defined politeness as minimizing the cost and increasing the benefits for the hearer while raising the speaker's cost, focusing on conflict avoidance. Hymes' (1972) concept of communicative competence emphasizes the connection between language and culture and the need to use language contextually and culturally for successful communication, echoed by Morkus (2009). Pragmatic awareness, as important as grammatical knowledge, enables appropriate interaction in foreign speech communities while respecting social and cultural norms. Pragmatic failure, as explained by Thomas (1974), emerges from misunderstandings rooted in cultural or personal differences. It is often observed in second language learners who may not be fully aware of the socio-cultural norms of the target language.

### *B. Politeness Strategies in Language Learning*

Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) shed light on interlanguage pragmatics in email requests made by native and non-native English-speaking graduate students to faculty at an American university. The study employed Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) speech act analysis framework to distinguish levels of directness, lexical politeness devices, and request perspectives. The study revealed that requests were often realized using direct strategies and hints, rather than conventional indirect strategies. Native speakers showed greater proficiency than non-native speakers in the conventions of polite email writing. The results implied that explicit pedagogical instruction on appropriate speech act performance could benefit non-native English speakers. In an academic setting, Bloch (2002) showed the importance of email communication between students and faculty. The study explored the social dynamics of Internet discourse, emphasizing how email could provide a comfortable platform for students who might find traditional classroom settings intimidating. Bloch agreed with Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) regarding the importance of email etiquette in academia.

### *C. Cross-Cultural Studies of Politeness Strategies*

In a cross-cultural study, Alakrash and Bustan (2020) compared the politeness strategies employed by Arab and Malaysian students in making requests, applying Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) theoretical framework. In Alakrash and Bustan (2020), Malay respondents preferred indirect strategies, including hints, query preparatory questions, and hedged performatives. In contrast, Arab respondents often opted for explicit and direct request strategies, such as want statements and hints. These cultural variations have a profound impact on politeness strategies, demonstrating the interplay of culture and politeness.

Hendriks (2010) investigated learners' ability to understand and employ indirect and polite language in speech acts. While previous research has extensively explored this topic, Hendriks focused on the effect of non-native modification of speech acts in English email requests written by Dutch learners of English. The results demonstrated that underusing request modification in emails negatively affected the evaluation of the sender's personality.

In a study on pragmatic competence, Tseng (2015) explored Taiwanese English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' production of email requests to their university professors. By applying Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) framework, Tseng examined the use of politeness strategies, encompassing requestive head acts, internal and external modifications, and the sequencing of information in email messages. Through questionnaires and interviews, the study revealed that students from different language proficiency levels preferred direct strategies as the primary requestive head acts. However, high-intermediate students demonstrated a more extensive range of internal and external modifiers, reflecting their inter-pragmatic development stage.

Set in a retail context, Alshakhi (2019) investigated Saudi students in the United States and did not find a substantial correlation between language proficiency and politeness in requests. However, it identified specific factors contributing to politeness, such as intonations and politeness markers, demonstrating that linguistic proficiency is not the sole determinant of politeness in speech acts.

### *D. Explicit Instruction in Language Learning*

Qari (2021) explored the effect of explicit instruction on the linguistic and pragmatic competence of Saudi EFL learners. The study built on previous research that revealed a lack of awareness among second language learners about specific request strategies employed by native speakers. Through a pre-test, instruction, and post-test approach, Qari found a significant improvement in students' understanding of request forms in their second language. This demonstrated the value of explicit instruction in addressing gaps in pragmatic competence.

Burgucu-Tazegül et al. (2016) studied politeness in the email communication practices of Turkish EFL university students when corresponding with non-native professors. The study revealed a preference for direct strategies, such as direct questions and want statements. Despite some underuse of query preparatory questions and mitigation, the study showed the need for integrating EFL instruction on email etiquette into textbooks and curricula, with a focus on recipient-oriented communication to improve overall effectiveness.

Elmianvar and Kheirabadi (2013) summarized previous studies, emphasizing the significance of teaching speech acts to ESL or EFL learners. They argued that such learners may produce accurate grammatical forms and lexical items but still struggle to convey their intended messages due to a lack of pragmatic or functional knowledge.

The above studies collectively emphasize the importance of politeness strategies in language learning and intercultural communication. While linguistic proficiency is important, cultural context, explicit instruction, and the medium of communication (e.g., email) significantly impact the strategies used. Politeness is therefore a multifaceted aspect of language learning that extends beyond mere linguistic proficiency. As the body of research in this area continues to expand, there is a need for a more comprehensive understanding of politeness in language education and intercultural communication.

## III. Methodology

### A. Data Collection

This study included a set of 50 real-world emails written by university students encompassing various types of requests directed at faculty members. A crucial consideration in these emails was that the power dynamic remained consistent throughout the messages, with professors (the recipients of the emails) holding a position of authority over students (the senders) due to their institutional roles. Another consideration was that the social distance between the two parties remained relatively low, given the frequent and regular interactions between students and professors in the institutional setting. What varied in the study was the nature and extent of the requests students made.

The analysis revealed eight types of requests in the data: requests for documents, exam postponements, course additions, feedback on work in progress, course materials, face-to-face appointments, course changes, and extensions for assignment submission deadlines.

### B. Participants

The participants consisted of 19 female non-native English speakers studying at a Midwestern U.S. university as graduate students. All participants originated from Saudi Arabia and spoke Arabic as a native language. Their academic majors covered a range of fields, including biology, chemistry, computer science, fashion design, special education, and statistics. Most of these students had not received English instruction in Saudi Arabia. They had, however, taken ESL courses prior to enrolling in their graduate programs. As a prerequisite for admission to these programs, they were considered advanced English learners. All participants were familiar with email technology, although their previous experience may not have been predominantly in an academic context in English. The professors, both male and female, had communicated to the students that email was an acceptable mode of communication by providing their email addresses on the course syllabi at the beginning of the semester.

### C. Analysis Procedures

The analysis of email requests was carried out using the original Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) framework, established by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). The CCSARP framework has been used to investigate requests and apologies in eight languages, employing a uniform coding scheme to examine differences in speech acts across cultures and contexts. The main goal of this project was to investigate discrepancies within the same language, discrepancies linked to situations, and differences across languages in the use of requests and apologies.

The initial phase of analysis involved identifying the primary request, known as the request head act, within each email message. This required pinpointing the exact sentence in each message that contained one of eight types of requests. Subsequently, the author examined and categorized these identified requests. This categorization encompassed assessing aspects such as the form of address (including the greetings and closings used), determining the level of directness (whether requests were direct, conventionally indirect, or non-conventionally indirect), evaluating the strategies employed in making requests, and analyzing the sequencing of information.

As noted by Biesenbach-Lucas (2007), the degree of directness corresponds to the level of clarity with which requests are communicated. The present study employed the framework proposed by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) to analyze levels of directness and request categories. Additionally, the author recorded the frequency of each request type and converted these frequencies into percentages for a comparative analysis of strategies.

## IV. Findings and Discussion

The first research question explored the forms of address students used in opening and closing their emails. The analysis revealed a range of forms. Greetings such as “hi” and “hello” were used 56% of the time, while “dear” was employed 26% of the time. The most common greetings used by the students were “hi” or “hello” followed by an academic title and the professor’s last name (28%) and “dear” followed by an academic title and the professor’s last name (18%).

Notably, 14% of students addressed their professor by an academic title followed by their first name. This choice reflected a cultural norm, particularly among Arab students, who commonly address their professors by their first name preceded by their academic title. Some of these address forms may not necessarily lead to pragmatic issues but are less formal and might be considered inappropriate in an academic context in the U.S.

Additionally, some forms of address were acceptable but overly direct and possibly abrupt, often due to the omission of the deference form “dear” or the use of an incorrect academic title, such as “Mrs.” instead of “Dr.” or “Prof.” Furthermore, some emails included a combination of “dear” and “hello” or used only the academic title of the faculty member. To gain a better understanding of the preferred address constructions among Saudi ESL students, the forms of address are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1
FORMS OF ADDRESS

| Form of address | Frequency |
|---|---|
| **Use of "dear"** | **Total:** (26%) |
| Dear + Title | 1/50 (2%) |
| Dear + Title + First Name | 1/50 (2%) |
| Dear + Title + First Name + Last Name | 1/50 (2%) |
| Dear + Title + Last Name | 9/50 (18%) |
| Dear + H + First Name | 1/50 (2%) |
| **Use of greetings (e.g., hi, hello)** | **Total:** (56%) |
| Hi/hello | 3/50 (6%) |
| Hi/hello + Title | 1/50 (2%) |
| Hi/hello + First Name | 2/50 (4%) |
| Hi/hello + Title + First Name | 4/50 (8%) |
| Hi/hello + Title + Last Name | 14/50 (28%) |
| Hi/hello + Honorific + First Name | 3/50 (6%) |
| Hi/hello + Honorific + Last Name | 4/50 (2%) |
| **No form of address** | **Total:** (2%) |
| **Other** | **Total:** (16%) |

A statistically significant portion of students (54%) omitted the traditional email opening and instead immediately addressed the professor and delved into the main purpose of their email. Additionally, 22% opted to introduce themselves at the outset of their emails, providing their first and last names, major, and the course information. This finding underscores the potential influence of students' native language and cultural background on their email writing conventions. In Saudi Arabia, where college classes often comprise a large number of students, instructors frequently emphasize the importance of self-introduction in emails to expedite communication. Furthermore, 10% of the students demonstrated a courteous approach by inquiring about their professor's well-being and expressing their hope for a good day. Table 2 provides a summary of the opening approaches observed in the emails along with their corresponding frequencies.

TABLE 2
EMAIL OPENINGS

| Type of opening | Frequency |
|---|---|
| "I hope you have had a good day" | 3/50 (6%) |
| "How are you today?" | 2/50 (4%) |
| Introducing themselves/their majors | 11/50 (22%) |
| Combination | 7/50 (14%) |
| No opening | 27/50 (54%) |

Omitting traditional email openings and emphasizing a self-introduction could be related to the concept of communicative competence proposed by Hymes (1972). The influence of native language and cultural practices on communication strategies was evident in the findings, suggesting that understanding language in a context-sensitive and culturally appropriate way is vital for successful communication.

For email closings, 86% of students effectively concluded their emails using a range of closing expressions, varying in degree of formality. A statistically significant number of emails were concluded with expressions of gratitude such as "thank you" or "thanks". This outcome was anticipated, as the emails contained requests made to professors. Table 3 provides a summary of the various email closings and their respective frequencies.

TABLE 3
EMAIL CLOSINGS

| Type of closing | Frequency |
|---|---|
| "Thank you/thanks" | 24/50 (48%) |
| "Respectfully yours" | 1/50 (2%) |
| "Best regards/best" | 6/50 (12%) |
| "With respect" | 1/50 (2%) |
| "Best wishes" | 3/50 (6%) |
| "Sincerely" | 3/50 (6%) |
| "Have fun" | 1/50 (2%) |
| "Have a nice day" | 2/50 (4%) |
| Combination | 2/50 (4%) |
| No closing | 7/50 (14%) |

The second research question explored the directness and request strategies apparent in the emails, adopting the classification system established by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). Three directness levels were identified: direct (34%), conventionally indirect (58%) and non-conventionally indirect, characterized as hints (8%). The request strategies associated with a direct request were direct questions, want statements, need statements, and expectation statements. Want statements emerged as the most common request strategy within the direct level, accounting for 20% of cases. Notably, no imperatives were found within the direct level.

Among the conventionally indirect requests, query preparatory modals indicating ability, willingness, or permission, such as "may," "can," "could," and "would," were the most common request strategies. This aligned with studies such as Hendriks (2010) and Alshakhi (2019), which explored learner ability to employ indirect and polite language in speech acts. The findings corroborate the importance of such competence in language learning and its application in email communication. Conversely, the non-conventionally indirect level was the least common, accounting for only 8% of cases. Table 4 provides a summary of the directness levels and request strategies, along within their frequencies and examples from the data.

TABLE 4
LEVEL OF DIRECTNESS

| Directness level | Request strategy | Example | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Direct** | Direct questions | • "Do you have any pervious samples of reflections?"<br>• "Where can I find the article? | 3/50 (6%) |
| | Want statements | • "I **would like** you to change what I wrote"<br>• "I **would like** to have a letter for SACM"<br>• "I **want** a letter for SACM like the letter in the attachment" | 10/50 (20%) |
| | Need statements | • "I **need** your answer about a question that is…."<br>• "I **need** your permission first to register"<br>• "I **need** to get your approval" | 3/50 (6%) |
| | Expectation statements | • "I wish you accept my excuse and I will bring paper from the hospital" | 1/50 (2%) |
| **Conventionally indirect** | Query preparatory (ability, willingness, permission) | • "**Can** you tell me when you are available tomorrow?"<br>• "**May** I have an appointment to see you tomorrow?"<br>• "**Could** you please write a recommendation for me?"<br>• "Is it possible to help me out on this?"<br>• "I **was wondering** if there was anyway I could take the exam on Monday instead" | 29/50 (58%) |
| **Non-conventionally indirect (hints)** | Strong hints/mild hints | • "I have an idea if you want to help us to increase our grade"<br>• "I don't know when I send [the link] to make it public"<br>• "I do my best in the last question for assignment 1. I attached it in this email" | 4/50 (8%) |

The third research question examined the sequencing of information in students' email request messages. Two predominant patterns emerged: (a) head request followed by clarification (22%) and (b) head request preceded by clarification (28%). To illustrate these patterns, examples are given below, with the head requests in italics.

**Example 1**

Dear Dr. First Name,
I would like to make an appointment with you. Could you tell me when you are available tomorrow because i have some questions about academic classes and how i register for spring classes.
Have a nice day
Student's First Name

**Example 2**

Hi Dr. First Name Last Name,
I am XX, can i sand my homework about summary of chapter 4, and take an appointment on Monday to discuss it, because today my younger son has fever and the day care didn't accept him. Or can give me an appointment today to discuss it after 3 p.m because I need to go to the hospital.
Have a good day
Student's First Name Last Name

**Example 3**

Hello Dr. First Name,
I'm still not feeling good, and still trying to finish studying the exam's materials.
I'm not sure if I will be able to take the exam tomorrow. I'm very scared to fail.
*I'm wondering if you will allow me to take it another time*?
Best regards,
Student's First Name

**Example 4**

Hi Dr. Last Name,
Since I had with you SPCE 558 in fall and I love Your way of teaching and dealing with students I'm interested in taking SPCE 556 in the spring when I saw your name as A lecture for it; however, I found that it's full and I want to take it with you so *could you please give me a permission?*
Sincerely
Student's First Name

Examples 1 and 2 follow the pattern of beginning with the head request and subsequently providing an explanation or clarification, while Examples 3 and 4 adhere to the second pattern of offering clarification first, followed by introducing

the request. These variations may be attributed to students' individual preferences or educational backgrounds. These findings support previous research, such as Elmianvari and Kheirabadi (2013), emphasizing the importance of teaching pragmatic or functional knowledge to ESL and EFL learners. While this study did not directly explore teaching methods, the results underscore the need for instruction that considers the influence of culture and native language on email etiquette. In summary, the findings align with previous studies in the field of politeness, communicative competence, and language learning.

## V. Conclusion

This study examined Saudi ESL university students' requests to professors in emails, including forms of address in email openings and closings, the level of directness and request strategies employed, and the information sequencing within emails. The use of naturalistic data added authenticity to the findings, enhancing their credibility.

In general, the results revealed a considerable variation in student preferences in selecting strategies and structuring emails. It became evident that students could benefit from explicit instruction in pragmatics and speech acts. Despite being considered advanced English learners, their proficiency levels did not consistently translate into effective email composition. This aligned with previous studies that emphasized the necessity of explicit instruction in this context (e.g., Bloch, 2002; Chen, 2015; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Zhu, 2012; Qari, 2021).

In spite of certain limitations, this study sheds light on the expanding body of knowledge concerning institutional email practices, politeness conventions, interlanguage pragmatics, and the need for pedagogical interventions related to speech acts and email etiquette. Moving forward, there are several avenues for future research.

To more precisely compare and understand social norms and cultural preferences, a control group of native English speakers would be beneficial. Additionally, this study was limited to female Saudi students studying in the United States. Further research should seek to control for gender, as this variable often plays a pivotal role in speech act research. Furthermore, providing more information about the professors, including their gender and relationship to the students, would offer a more comprehensive perspective.

Future studies could explore how students from diverse cultural backgrounds utilize request strategies in email communication within an academic context. Additionally, the factor of age could be explored since it is a significant social variable (Alshakhi, 2019). Finally, applying this study with a different participant group, such as EFL Saudi students in the same academic context, could reveal the influence of their duration of stay in the United States on politeness strategies.

## References

[1] Alakrash, H. M., & Bustan, E. S. (2020). Politeness strategies employed by Arab EFL and Malaysian ESL students in making request. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, *10*(6), 10–20.
[2] Alshakhi, A. (2019). The relationship between English language proficiency and politeness in making requests: A case study of ESL Saudi students. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, *9*(2), 89–98.
[3] Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Oxford, UK: Calderon Press.
[4] Blum-Kulka, S. (1987). Indirectness and politeness in requests: Same or different? *Journal of Pragmatics*, *11*, 131–146.
[5] Blum-Kulka, S., & Olshtain, E. (1984). Requests and apologies: A cross-cultural study of speech act realization patterns (CCSARP). *Applied Linguistics*, *5*(3), 196–213.
[6] Blum-Kulka, S., House, J., & Kasper, G. (1989). *Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation
[7] Biesenbach-Lucas, S. (2007). Students writing emails to faculty: An examination of e-politeness among native and non-native speakers of English. *Language Learning & Technology*, *11*(2), 59–81.
[8] Bloch, J. (2002). Student/teacher interaction via email: The social context of internet discourse. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *11*(2), 117–134.
[9] Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge University Press.
[10] Burgucu-Tazegül, T., Han, Z., & Engin, A. (2016). Pragmatic failure of Turkish EFL learners in request emails to their professors. *International Education Studies*, *9*(10), 105–115.
[11] Chen, Y. (2015). Developing Chinese EFL learners' email literacy through requests to faculty. *Journal of Pragmatics, 75*, 131–149.
[12] Economidou-Kogetsidis, M. (2011). "Please answer me as soon as possible": Pragmatic failure in non-native speakers' e-mail requests to faculty. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *43*, 3193–3215. Retrieved February 28, 2022, from https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2011.06.006
[13] Elmianvari, A., & Kheirabadi, R. (2013). The study of EFL students' requests based on politeness theory. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, *4*(2), 375–385.
[14] Gass, S., & Selinker, L. (2008). *Second language acquisition: An introductory course* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
[15] Hendriks, B. (2010). An experimental study of native speaker perceptions of non-native request modification in e-mails in English. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, *7*(2), 221–255. Retrieved March 15, 2023, from https://doi.org/10.1515/iprg.2010.011
[16] Hymes, D.H. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. B. Pride & J. Holmes (eds.), *Sociolinguistics: Selected readings* (pp. 269–293). Harmondsworth: Penguin.
[17] Kadar, D., & Haugh, M. (2013). *Understanding politeness*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
[18] Kasper, G., & Kenneth, R. R. (2001). *Pragmatics in language teaching.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

[19] Lakoff, R. (1977). What you can do with words: Politeness, pragmatics and performatives. In A. Rogers, B. Wall, & J. P. Murphy (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Texas Conference on Performatives, Presuppositions, and Implicatures* (pp. 79–105). Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.
[20] Leech, G. N. (1983). *Principles of Pragmatics*. London: Longman.
[21] Morkus, N. (2009). *The realization of the speech act of refusal in Egyptian Arabic by American learners of Arabic as a foreign language* [Doctoral dissertation, University of South Florida]. Retrieved January 29, 2023, from http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3113&context=etd
[22] Qari, I. A. (2021). The effect of explicit instruction of requests on Saudi EFL learners using a pre-test, post-test approach. *Arab World English Journal*, *12*(1), 113–127. Retrieved February 29, 2023, from https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no1.8
[23] Stephens, K. K., Houser, M. L., & Cowan, R. L. (2009). R U able to meat me: The impact of students' overly casual email messages to instructors. *Communication Education*, *58*(3), 303-326. Retrieved October 11, 2023, from http://search.proquest.com/docview/85698096?accountid=8483
[24] Thomas, J. (1974). *Cross-cultural pragmatic failure*. University of Lancaster.
[25] Tseng, C. (2015). "You must let me pass, please!": An investigation of email request strategies by Taiwanese EFL learners. *Journal of ELT and Applied Linguistics*, *3*(1), 11–28.
[26] Zhu, W. (2012). Polite requestive strategies in emails: An investigation of pragmatic competence of Chinese EFL learners. *RELC Journal*, *43*(2), 217–238.

**Nuha K. Alsalem** earned her doctorate in Applied Linguistics from Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana, in 2019 and her master's in applied Linguistics from Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois, in 2015.

She worked as a teaching assistant at Ball State University's Intensive English Institute from 2016 to 2017. She currently serves as an Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics in the English Language Department in the College of Science and Humanities at Shaqra University, Saudi Arabia. Her research interests include pragmatics, discourse analysis, and intercultural communication.

Dr. Alsalem received an Academic Excellence Award for Faculty Members from Shaqra University in 2023. She also serves as the vice dean of the deanship of admissions and registration and actively participates in various academic committees.