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Exploring the Role of Culture and Gender in the Use of Rational Appeals: A Genre Study of Saudi and Australian Students' Emails

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Abstract

Genre studies have been primarily concerned with identifying professional writing within various contexts, including legal discourse, business settings, and particularly relevant to this study, academic research writing. Research findings thus far have indicated that native Anglo-Saxon English speakers tend to employ more rational appeals than non-native speakers. However, the full range of underlying strategies and factors have not yet been thoroughly explored due to a lack of comparable tasks. This study explores the approaches taken by potential PhD Saudi students (100 participants) and Australian students (20 participants) when emailing their prospective PhD supervisors, specifically with regards to their use of rational appeals in discussing their future PhD research. The results of this study reveal significant differences in gender and culture. In terms of cultural differences, the two groups differed in their use of four particular moves, namely how they discussed their PhD plans, interests, justification and experience. The writing styles that differentiated both groups in their use of rational appeals, as well as broader pedagogical implications, are also discussed.

Keywords: Rational Appeals, Cultural & Gender Differences, Email Communications, Persuasion, Pragmatics & Politeness, Pedagogical Implication.

1. Literature Review

In the study of persuasive communication, rational appeals have been extensively studied as a fundamental component in influencing an individual's attitudes or behaviors. However, understanding rational appeals in isolation is insufficient to determine the effectiveness of persuasive communication. Instead, it is necessary to examine the specific genre in which the communication is embedded. Genre analysis can provide valuable insights into the particular

language features, structures, and social contexts that are characteristic of different communication genres. Nevertheless, as genre analysis is subject to cultural specificities, different cultural values and practices can influence the use of specific moves within genres. Therefore, in order to link these elements and specify which moves make messages more rational than others, both rational appeals and genre analysis must be included and analyzed in direct relation to one another. This literature review will explore the intersection of rational appeals and genre analysis in persuasive communication, with a particular focus on how they inform one another and enable a more nuanced understanding of the nuances and complexities of persuasive discourse in different contexts and cultural settings.

There is research evidence that genre analysis is subject to cultural specificities. For example, many of the genre analysis studies described below that applied Bhatia's (2014) proposed moves found different tendencies for specific moves, even creating new moves that did not exist in his original work. As such, the close analysis of student emails in the current study may reveal the underlying cultural values and practices that are embedded within them. An Arabic study using Bhatia's model was conducted on job application letters written by 90 Arabic applicants, discovering the prevalence of the institution-glorification move; promoting candidature was the most dominant move in this sample (Al-Ali 2006). Connor et al. (1995) explored cross-cultural differences and similarities between Flemish and US letters for job

applications, concluding that the latter applicants had more 'enriched content', which the authors defined as exhibiting a larger degree of information and functional transparency.

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

A few studies combining genre analysis and politeness suggest that the ambiguity of moves can be further clarified by the interpretation of their politeness dimensions (Flowerdew & Dudley- Evans, 2002; Wang, 2005). There are three studies that combine genre analysis, politeness, and persuasive appeals in their methodology.

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

Al Abbad et al. (2019), following the design of James et al. (1992), conducted their study on 76 first-year Saudi female students to explore persuasive strategies used in academia. Students were asked to engage in a role-play letter writing for a fictitious scholarship application in an authentic academic environment. The letters were

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

Although these studies provided great insights into both genre politeness and persuasion, the literature that combines the three dimensions of genre, politeness, and persuasion is still limited. There are two major areas to consider: 1) the relationship between modern (im) politeness and persuasive tactics and 2) the distribution of moves under each persuasive appeal that participants from specific

cultural groups utilise to meet expectations in an intercultural setting. When students seek academic approval from a potential supervisor, they not only "produce arguments to support their case but also undergo a process of identity construction to present themselves as morally positive, virtuous, and trustworthy members of a community" (Al Abbad et al., 2019, p. 40). Persuasive appeals filter the moves in a way that clarifies their function and reveals the relationship between certain moves and the overarching persuasive unit. This helps to both provide bottom-up and top-down investigation and explore meaningful patterns across gender and culture. These patterns unpack some aspects of gender identity construction, "increas[ing] our understanding of how politeness and impoliteness impact the creation of identity and the management of rapport" (Graham, 2007, p. 743) within Saudi culture. It is important to stress that politeness and impoliteness here do not only refer to polite discursive behaviour, but "the process of defining relationships in interaction" (Locher, 2008, p. 510); in other words, how each gender adjusts their language to different speech act events to meet their prospective supervisor's expectations. Part of the purpose of such a process is to reveal how each gender perceives power imbalance and reacts to it. This also provides insight into other underlying dimensions about historical traditions that have contributed to such linguistic behaviour. To sum up, it is important to investigate how impoliteness and face are negotiated in online interaction, which is still under- researched (Locher, 2010a).

2. Methodology

2.1Recruitment:

A total of one hundred emails were collected from one hundred Saudi participants, comprising 50 males and 50 females, to investigate potential cultural differences in the use of email communication for contacting prospective PhD supervisors. Additionally, 20 emails were obtained from 20 Anglo-Australian students,

consisting of 5 males and 15 females, to facilitate a comparative analysis. Notably, many of the Anglo-Australian students preferred direct communication methods such as face-to-face or telephone conversations over email communication. As the participation in the background information questionnaire was voluntary, the study received a response rate of 40% and 85% from the Saudi and Australian students, respectively. The age range of the participants was between 33 and 42 years old. All the Australian students identified themselves as Anglo-Saxon Australians with Australian or New Zealand backgrounds. Further statistical analyses were performed to explore the findings in detail.

2.2Email Analysis:

The negotiation moves (see Table 1) and politeness strategies of each cultural group were identified and analysed. Some dominant linguistic features are discussed below. The moves in this study were informed by genre analysis literature and the guidelines of some universities, as previously stated. Twenty-seven moves were identified in total, but not necessarily all were used in every email. The dominant moves include *opening, self-introduction, research interest, proposal, research justification, CV information, change/choose topic, request for acceptance, promote further contact* and *closing*. The frequency of each move in both groups was calculated and analysed quantitatively. For the qualitative analysis, politeness strategies were examined under each of these moves, adopting Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness model and the new wave of discursive politeness. The moves were, in most cases, independent clauses—clauses that stand by themselves as simple sentences—in line with Swales' (1990) description of moves. Below is an example of how emails were classified under specific moves with independent clauses:

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

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

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

Therefore, a workable definition is required to justify these instances of combined moves. A move in this study is defined as a discoursal text performing a certain communicative function within a complete phrase or as part of the phrase in the email message. The data analysis was limited to the 27 moves each were defined accurately according to the topics the participants discussed in their emails. These are; opening , self-introduction, research interest, Phd topic, major, greetings, proposal, GPA, Timeframe, CV info, attachments, Research plan, Research experience, Change/choose topic, context, Self-promotion, Research justification, Program/Uni interest, Fund, Focus-on-supervisor, Request for acceptance, Gratitude, Options, Promoting further contact, Closing, Sign-off , Business-card signature. Each move was given a proper definition as follows.

Table (1): Rational appeals and their definition

Move label	Definition
Self-introduction	When students introduce themselves by their names Alternatively, in a few examples, students did not mention their name but instead said things like: 'I want to tell you just a bit about myself' 'I am a student from...' 'Let me introduce myself'
Interests	**When students specify the area they are interested in researching in their thesis**
Options	Providing the title of their projects (either Masters or PhD).

Justify	Providing reasons why they chose their research topic; these can be personal, institutional (needs), or a research gap. It sometimesconflicts with CV info, due to contextual reasons (e.g. 'I workedin XXXX University labs and I became interested to do my PhDin **** University'). The researcher made a decision whether some of the moves were best fitting under-research-justification or CV info according to the context.
Major	When students first mention their educational major/background,which may not necessarily reflect what they want to do in their thesis. This is often accompanied by the name of their former university.
Request	When the students ask whether the supervisors are going to be available to supervise their topic. It sometimes conflicts with the'proposal move' (e.g. 'I am writing this email because I am looking for a supervisor for my PhD'). If the student asked twice whether the supervisor is available, the first move will be coded as a proposal and the second as a requestfor acceptance.
Proposal	When the students first state the purpose of their email, such as 'I am writing to you as I have recently applied for a PhD program
Focus on supervisor	By mentioning anything relating to the supervisor's area of research, publication, knowledge, or by other complimentingreasons directed to the supervisor.
Promoting further contact (PFC)	Either explicitly indicating they look forward to hearing from the addressee soon or implicitly showing willingness to answer any questions, asking for a meeting/further documents, or asking for afast reply to their request. Typical examples from the current data: 'I look forward tohearing from you soon.
Plans	Providing information about what exactly they want to do in their future PhD project

Topic	Providing the title of their projects (either Masters or PhD).
Time	When the students indicate when exactly they plan to start their PhD, either directly such as next semester, or indirectly, when they say 'I will finish my Master this semester; I hope I can continue my PhD afterwards'
Experience	Indicating their experience in the proposed research topic by conducting similar research, observing some phenomena in the workplace that they believe to be relevant to their research, or by providing some information about publication and research experience. (Misleading research experience includes stressing an academic job title as evidence of research experience)

After explaining the rational moves there are some workable definition of what we mean by rational appeals under which rational moves above are identified as belonging to each of these categories.

2.3Identification of Rational Appeals:

Table (2): Workable definition of rational appeals

Category	Definition	Example
Rational appeal **Generic moves of this appeal:** - **Obligatory Proposal/major/timeframe/research topic/research interest/option/self-introduction** - **Optional** - **Self-introduction/PFC/request/ focus on supervisor.**	Focusing on the PhD project as the main subject matter and explain why it is worthwhile, with some compelling and valid reasons that directly link the evidence to the claim. Ineffective use of rational appeals entails inappropriate or irrelevant evidence for the claim.	I am interested in the area of video games and their role in English language acquisition and learning I am hoping you can supervise my proposal for my research.

For the purpose of this study, some workable definitions had to be developed to help classify each email in terms of its persuasive appeals. All email data was coded according to the body of the email without including opening moves such as 'Dear Dr. First name' or closing moves, which include Best wishes. These are discussed in separate research paper.

There was a sharp focus on how the body of emails, being the main discussion body, were evaluated in terms of persuasion; this revealed the kind of generic options or moves appearing under each rational appeal. These were then compared between Saudi gender groups and, to a limited extent, cultural groups (Saudis and Australians). Table 2 has elaborated how the current researcher identified each persuasive appleal along with the moves which have been classified as belonging to it. This was also supported with an example from the data.

3. Results

Table (3): Total number of appeals by Saudi gender

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

The next sections of this chapter are each dedicated to exploring the three persuasive

appeals— affective, rational, and credibility—introduced in Section 6.1. There is no specific percentage recommended for each appeal in an academic email proposal. As shown in Table 3, there are two main differences between Saudi males and females concerning the use of credible and affective appeals. In total, women made slightly more appeals. The central difference is in the affective appeal; while women used 88 affective moves, men used 131 (Table 3). Quantitative analysis cannot tell the full story without the help of qualitative analysis, which will be detailed further in each section devoted to these appeals.

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

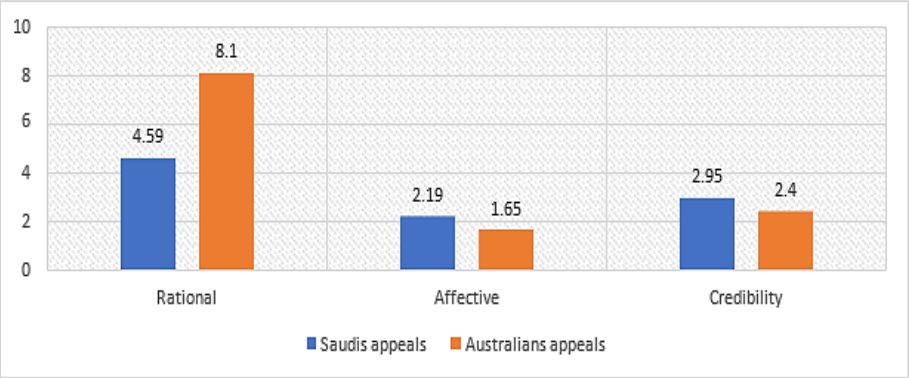

Figure (1): The average number of appeals by culture

The way moves are made under appeals has not been researched to date; as such, this was a focus for this thesis. Table 4 illustrates the exact number of moves used by each cultural group under these appeals. Each group seemed to know the appeals needed to persuade; however, the way this was implemented differed. The strategic

moves used under each persuasive appeal were also different. For example, the fund move is used as a credibility appeal in Saudi data to show that the student had been awarded a scholarship; for Australian students, this was a rational appeal, indicating their desire to apply for a scholarship at the university of the prospective supervisor.

Table (4): Total number of persuasive appeals by culture

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

As noted previously, rational appeals address both the logical and sensible side of the intended audience's mind (Connor & Upton, 2004). Brown and Levinson (1987) recognised rationality as a key to politeness. They argued that competent adults have face (public self-image) and rationality, or "the application of a specific mode of reasoning" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 64). For someone to be rational, they need to choose a rational reasoning that most satisfies their desired goals. A notable gap in the modern discursive approach to (im) politeness is that it does not consider rationality as a dimension of politeness due to the excessive focus on contextual variables impacting the judgement of any politic behaviour. Locher (2010a, p. 3) also argues that when investigating CMC, one needs to understand "what constitutes im/politeness in a particular practice and what factors might play a role in assessing it".

Rational appeals in the current data were generally about logical statements (see Section 3.4.1); some core rational appeals were targeted towards subject matter, which centred around the PhD topic. Unlike other persuasive appeals, rational appeals seemed to be key in academic settings (Hyland, 2018), complemented by credible and affective appeals. This is evident in Australian culture, where credibility appeals or praising one's self and/or achievements should not be the focus (cf. the tall poppy syndrome discussion in Section 2.2.5). However, in other cultures or in

certain contexts, credibility appeals might be the central strategy and rational or affective appeals would be considered supplementary. It is more relevant in this specific context for Australian participants to focus on rational appeals and highlight their capability of comprehensive research, rather than focusing on the self or the prospective supervisor's achievements.

Table (5): Chi-Square results of rational appeals

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

As demonstrated by Table 5, 13 types of negotiation moves were employed under the rational category by Saudi students. The women made a total of 243 moves, while the men made a total of 216 moves under the rational appeal. Therefore, there is little difference between Saudi males and females in the number of rational appeals employed. The dominant types of moves in the female data were 'request' (44 moves), 'self-introduction' (33 moves), 'major' (33 moves), and 'research interest' (28 moves). One of the main differences found in both gender groups was in requests (women made 44 moves compared to men, who made 23 moves) and research interests (men made 44 moves compared to the 28 made by women). It is surprising that only 20 out of 100 Saudis seemed to mention their PhD topic inside their emails; the others expressed a general area of research that they would be interested in, but

had no concrete vision for their project. This could be due to the fact that the majority of the participants (74 out of 100; see Table 5) relied heavily on attachments, which mostly included the proposed topic, without discussing it explicitly in their emails.

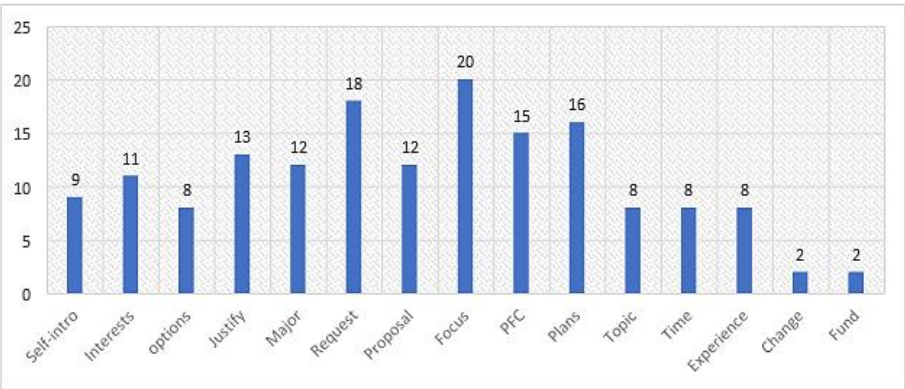

Figure (2): Rational appeals by Australians (20 students)

Australian students utilised more negotiation moves (15) under the general category of rational appeal (Figure.2), compared to Saudis, who made 13 negotiation moves (Table 5). Despite the small Australian sample size, the description of the data provides more insight into how both cultural groups compared or differed. For example, although both groups used the option move by suggesting a different supervisory arrangement, Australians would mention names of any *additional* supervisors they wanted to approach (or already had) to join the supervisory team; Saudis would only ask for the supervisor's assistance to find an *alternative* supervisor if they were unable to supervise them. It could be that some Australian students wanted to know both supervisors in advance as part of their personal decision. Saudi female students made more rational requests than males, forming their requests with an appropriate tone devoid of emotions or pleading. Out of the 20 Australian participants, 18 rational requests were made out of a total of 22 (Table 6). The focus on supervisor move seemed to be essential in both groups; although dominant in the Australian group, only 16 Saudi participants used this move (see Appendix D). This

is because most Saudi participants complimented the supervisor's knowledge or scholarship vaguely without presenting evidence of familiarity with their work; as a result, the move did not qualify as rational in the Saudi data. Australian students often implemented this move by mentioning specific papers or aspects of the supervisor's work. Although both cultural groups used similar moves, the way these were put into practice differed. Some core rational appeals made by both cultural groups differed significantly, as will be discussed next.

Table (6): Core rational appeals

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

One of the most distinctive characteristics of an academic email proposal is the sender's concern with presenting a favourable and relevant description of how one can conduct a substantial piece of research. Therefore, the discussion of a student's PhD research — topics, research plans, justifications, and research experience — comes across as the main source of persuasion, or the core rational appeal. The core rational appeal moves, illustrated in[1], substantiated the applicant's capacity for conducting PhD research as they each revolved around the PhD topic. First, prospective students presented their exact PhD project title (1- Topic). Secondly, they detailed their plans in terms of how to approach their research goal (2- Plans). Next, some students provided justifications about why their research was worthwhile (3- Justification). Lastly, four Saudi females and eight Australian females linked their previous academic experience with their research topic in terms of relevance; in other words, how such experiences had either led them to choose their research topic or made them more knowledgeable in terms of the subject matter (4- Experience). These four moves were the dominant rational appeals that not only demonstrated the candidate's capability of conducting PhD research, but also how both cultural groups differ significantly.

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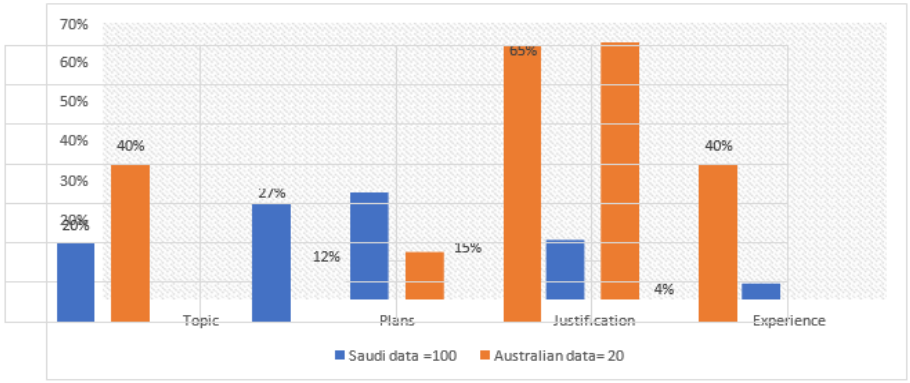

Figure (3): Core rational appeals

Figure 3 shows the percentages of both the Saudi and Australian groups in terms of implementing these core rational appeals. The major difference was in the research justification move; while 65% of Australians provided a good justification for choosing their topic, only 15% of Saudi data focused on that move. Another prominent difference was the plans move; 60% of Australian participants focused on detailing their PhD project plans and their feasibility, in comparison to 27% of Saudis. As shown in Figure 3, an important difference was whether the student knew exactly what they intended to research and demonstrated this by outlining the topic of their project (40% Australians vs. 20% Saudi). Interestingly, the research experience move was only employed by women from both cultural groups and was never used by the male subjects in this study.

Overall, as Table 6 suggests, both cultural groups differed significantly in terms of utilising rational appeals more than other types of persuasive appeal. Australian participants relied on rational appeals 73% more than Saudis. Further, Table 6 highlights that the prominent difference between Saudis and Australians was the way both groups focused on rational appeals by depending on certain negotiation moves. Although both cultures relied heavily on rational appeals, Australian emails focused more on core rational issues with more 'enriched content', a term coined by Connor

et al. (1995) that refers to the provision of core informative content with more elaboration and clarity in the message. This brings us back to the first argument in this thesis regarding pragmatic versus strategic (content-oriented) competence. Table 6 highlights the significant differences that divide the cultural groups.

Table (7): Chi-Square results of rational appeals between Saudis and Australians

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

Since the current investigation is based largely on a pragmatic framework, examining the link between language and persuasive appeals as utilised by the groups could shed light on how different kinds of competences work in tandem within the negotiation process. To have an intercultural negotiation competence in today's globalised world, one should be judged both on their pragmatic success (or failure) and their ability to adapt to content-specific strategies familiar to the recipient. Considering that all the moves in Table 7 are adequately defined in methodology section as part of rational appeals, which only focus on mentioning facts, the description of each is not significant here. However, the self-introduction move was found to have some potential gender differences, one of the important

variables in this thesis. This is explored further below.

3.1 Self-introduction:

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

	Saudi female data (Gender identity in self-introduction)
1	*This is **Mrs**. First Last from Saudi Arabia*
2	*I am a Saudi **woman**…*
3	*My name is First Last… I am **female** from Saudi Arabia*
4	*My name is First Last, a **female** lecturer from Saudi Arabia*
5	*I am First Last, a Saudi **woman** from Saudi Arabia*

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

Saudi male data (Self-introduction)	
1	*I am First Last from Saudi Arabia*
2	*My name is First from Saudi Arabia*
3	*This is First Last, I am from Saudi Arabia*
4	*I am First Last from Saudi Arabia*

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

3.2 Further Findings: Modes of Persuasive Genre:

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

Table (8): Modes of persuasive genre

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

The above table was created by independently counting the total number of emails from both groups that included either expository style or narrative style. As shown in Table 8, 89% of the Saudi email data was classified as using the expository mode of writing to persuade. Although the Australian participants also wrote in expository style, a narrative style emerged in their data when discussing how the PhD was going to be conducted and planned. Thus, 80% of the Australian data consisted of narrative style.

Typically, in the current Saudi data, the expository style in subjects' emails started with pronouns like 'I' or 'my': 'My name is X. My background includes (…). I have undertaken research …(..). I have broad experience. (..). My interests. (..). I am looking at applying. (..). I look forward to hearing from you soon'. (See Appendix F for a complete Saudi male email example). Although the Australian data followed the expository style in the first two or three lines when introducing themselves, there tended to be a paragraph in the middle that broke away from the norm and merged into a more narrative style. This included phrases like 'On further reflection on your presentation…' or 'To this end, I have two main areas of interest…' and 'For my PhD, I would like to look into the…' These points emerged when Australian students were highlighting the core rational appeal — talking about their PhD plans — making the email more engaging and oriented towards a narrative style. (See Appendix F for an Australian female full email example). There were two Saudi emails written in a storytelling style, with longer details than a typical email; nine other emails included narrative style in the middle of the message. Three Australian females relied heavily on expository style as they focused more on their CV information. This may also have some resemblance with Saudi female data,

presenting their self-promotion and achievement aspects in their communicative style.

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

4. Research Summary

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

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

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

At both theoretical and methodological levels, this research provided details regarding issues with designing the study and critiques of the old and new waves of politeness. In particular, it identified two major areas to consider: 1) the relationship between modern (im) politeness and persuasive tactics; and 2) the distribution of moves under each persuasive appeal that participants from specific cultural groups utilise to meet expectations in an intercultural setting. This helps to both provide bottom-up and top-down investigation and explore meaningful patterns across gender and culture. Further, it addressed gaps existing in both old and new waves of politeness. In terms of the new waves of politeness, there was a notable gap that

rationality was not considered as part of its dimensions. While first-wave theorists believed power-distance was a predictable factor for certain linguistic production, new wave theorists challenge the notion that power is a predictive factor in how interactants negotiate face, as this involves a degree of complexity. While addressing affective appeals, which are traditionally seen as impolite, modern impoliteness theorists suggest that the judgement of impoliteness is instead dependent on the hearer's interpretation of the speaker's intentions.

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

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