Cultural Dimensions and Pragmatic Failure:
The Case of Moroccan EFL University Students

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Abstract: This study examines the impact of cultural values on the production of three speech acts (complaints, apologies, and refusals) by Moroccan Learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The study involves three groups of participants: Moroccan EFL learners (MLE), American speakers (AE), and Moroccan Arabic speakers (MA). The objective of this cross-cultural pragmatic study is to explore and identify the extent to which pragmatic failure can be attributed to the cultural value and dimensions of the learners rather than their linguistic incompetence. Participants were given Discourse Completion Task questionnaires to elicit their reactions to various situations. The results, based on Hofstede's cultural dimension framework (2010) and Hall's cultural specifications (1976), showed that culture has a significant effect on the performance of the speech acts under investigation. Findings suggested that cultural specificities do effect the pragmatic choices made by the interlocutors across the three groups of informants.

Keywords: apologies, complaints, cultural values, refusals, pragmatic failure

Introduction

Cross-cultural pragmatics is an important field of study that recognizes the impact that context has on communication and how it shapes the meaning of language. Effective communication involves taking into account the situational and cultural elements that affect communication. This involves considering shared knowledge, assumptions, and expectations that may be implicit in a particular context.

Language proficiency alone is not enough for successful cross-cultural communication. Research shows that foreign language speakers may face communication difficulties because they lack awareness of the cultural components that go beyond the literal meaning of words (Oranje & Smith, 2018; Yates, 2015). Therefore, to enhance interlanguage pragmatics, instructors should focus on building students' cultural awareness by highlighting the differences between the target culture and their own culture through contrasts.

In addition, cross-cultural pragmatics investigates the impact of language attitudes, beliefs, and stereotypes on communication across cultures. Politeness and face-saving strategies also play a critical role in shaping communication across cultures. Power dynamics and cultural differences must be taken into account to understand how meaning is created and interpreted in communication (Ting-Toomey, 1999). By exploring these aspects of cross-cultural pragmatics, teachers can provide students with a deeper understanding of how language and communication function in diverse cultures.

Literature Review

Intercultural communication requires individuals to have the ability to communicate with others, be receptive to diverse perspectives, and possess both linguistic and intercultural competencies (Byram, 2001; Byram & Zarate, 1997; Kramsch, 1998). The works of Byram, Zarate, and Kramsch emphasize the importance of these competencies in enabling effective intercultural communication.

Improving the recognition of cultural differences by EFL learners can enhance their communication skills and message comprehension. This research explores the significance of cultural values and dimensions in shaping the choices made by participants when realizing speech acts, such as requests, apologies, and complaints. Previous studies have attempted to investigate these speech acts (Eslami Rasekh & Fatahi, 2004; House & Kasper, 1987; Kasper & Dahl, 1991; Kasper, 1981; LaForest, 2009; Olshtain & Cohen, 1983; Robinson, 1992; Trosborg, 1995).

Moreover, the study of pragmatics has shown that intercultural communication also involves the interpretation of implicit meaning and the consideration of nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, gestures, and tone of voice (Blum-Kulka, 1987). Blum-Kulka's work highlights the importance of nonverbal cues in intercultural communication and the role they play in interpreting implicit meaning.

Additionally, pragmatics research has also emphasized the role of face-saving and politeness in intercultural communication (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The concept of face refers to an individual's positive social value and the need to maintain face during interactions (Goffman, 1967). Politeness strategies are employed to avoid face-threatening acts and to maintain positive face in communication (Brown & Levinson, 1978). Understanding the cultural norms surrounding politeness and face-saving can greatly improve cross-cultural pragmatic awareness by allowing individuals to engage in culturally appropriate behaviors.

Interlanguage pragmatics research on EFL learners' realization and perception of speech acts provides valuable insights for teaching and learning. This study aims also to explore the impact of cultural values and dimensions on the performance of speech acts by Moroccan EFL learners. The main question raised by this research is based on the idea that language learners' performance of an illocutionary act can show evidence of pragmatic transfer from their native culture (Eslami-Rasekh et al., 2010; Trosborg, 1995). The use of Geert Hofstede's (2010 [1991]) cultural values taxonomy and Edward Hall's (1976) framework helps to analyze the linguistic and pragmatic choices made by the participants. Hence, The main focus of this study is to determine the extent to which cultural values and specificities may yield instances of pragmatic failure in the Moroccan EFL context.

Pragmatic transfer, the transfer of pragmatic knowledge from a learner's first language to the target language, has been extensively studied in second language acquisition research. Scholars such as L. Beebe, S. Takahashi, and J. S. Gass (1990) in their study "Pragmatic Transfer in ESL Refusals" have found evidence of both positive and negative transfer in second language learners, where positive transfer can aid communication, while negative transfer can result in grammatical or phonetic errors and cause pragmatic failure.In addition, Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993) in their book "Interlanguage Pragmatics" highlight the significance of pragmatic competence in the target language and the pressure on learners to achieve it, as well as the responsibility placed on learners for misunderstandings.

These findings are further supported by research conducted by N. Gass and L. Selinker (2008) in their book "Second Language Acquisition: An Introductory Course," where they discuss the importance of developing pragmatic competence in the target language to avoid misinterpretation of the learner's intentions and the potential consequences, such as being perceived as impolite, intrusive, or insincere by native speakers.

Furthermore, the influence of culture on pragmatics has been widely studied and documented in the field of pragmatics (Blum-Kulka, 1987; Laforest, 2009). Culture plays a crucial role in shaping a person's communicative competence, as different cultures have distinct norms and expectations for language use (Hofstede, 2004). For example, directness and indirectness in communication vary across cultures, and a failure to adapt to these norms can result in negative transfer and communication breakdowns (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997; **Kasper & Rose, 2002).** The study of pragmatics basically stresses the importance of considering the context of communication, such as the setting, the participants, and the relationship between the participants, in understanding and producing speech acts (Levinson, 1983**).**

The consideration of these contextual elements is essential for successful intercultural communication and can greatly benefit language learners seeking to improve their pragmatic competence in the target language. According to Levinson, speakers and listeners rely on contextual cues to infer the meaning of an utterance, such as the speaker's intentions, the speaker's attitude towards the listener, and the speaker's social identity. In the same vein, Taguchi (2020) emphasizes the importance of context in developing pragmatic competence in a second language. She suggests that learners need to be exposed to authentic examples of speech acts in context, and that teachers should provide opportunities for learners to practice using language in interaction with native speakers and other learners. By doing so, learners can develop a deeper understanding of how language is used in different contexts, and they can learn to adapt their language use to different communicative situations.

Furthermore, understanding the context of communication is essential for successful intercultural encounters. As Alcón-Soler and Safont-Jordà (2021) argue, learners need to develop intercultural communicative competence in order to navigate the complexities of cross-cultural communication. They suggest that learners need to be aware of cultural differences in communication styles and norms, and that they need to be able to adapt their communication style to different contexts. Failure to consider the context of communication can result in misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and even offense, which can damage relationships and hinder effective communication.

Thomas (1983) identified two categories of pragmatic failure: pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic. Pragmalinguistic failure is a result of variations in pragmatics, while sociopragmatic failure is caused by a lack of knowledge of sociolinguistic norms in the target language. For instance, speakers of English as a second language may have difficulty interpreting idiomatic expressions, indirect requests, or sarcasm, resulting in pragmatic failure (Rose, 2019). In contrast, sociopragmatic failure is due to the lack of awareness of social and cultural norms. Speakers may use inappropriate language or tone in a particular context or situation, leading to misunderstandings or conflicts (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988).

The relationship between language, communication, and culture is complex as culture influences human behavior, including language and communication. Hofstede (2004) referred to culture as the "software of the mind." Cultural differences can affect the interpretation of messages and the way they are conveyed. For example, in some cultures, indirect communication is preferred, while in others, direct communication is valued (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 2011).

Additionally, several studies have shown that individuals from different cultural backgrounds have distinct communication styles (Ahearn, 2012). For instance, some cultures may value the use of silence or pauses in communication, while others may view them as awkward or uncomfortable (Chen, 2010).So, pragmatic failure can occur due to variations in pragmatics or a lack of knowledge of sociolinguistic norms in the target language. The relationship between language, communication, and culture is intricate, and cultural differences can affect the interpretation of messages and the way they are conveyed. It is important to recognize these differences and adjust communication styles accordingly to avoid misunderstandings or conflicts.

Within this framework, the paper investigates the impact of culture on the communicative and pragmatic behaviors of AE and MLE speakers as compared to MA speakers. To examine the effect of culture on speech act performance, the cultural dimensions and values of Geert Hofstede (2004 [1991]) and Edward Hall (1976) are used. The study focuses on three major dichotomies relevant to pragmatics and face-concepts: individualism and collectivism, high and low context communication, and power distance. By adopting Hall's theory of high vs low context cultures and Hofstede's cultural dimensions as theoretical frameworks, the paper aims to assess the impact of culture on communication styles and speech act performance.

Hall (1990) presents an interesting account and comparison of cultural differences with regards to how the concept of time is perceived, classifying cultures into two categories: monochronic and polychronic. Monochronic cultures, such as American culture, view time as linear, with a focus on schedules and deadlines. They prioritize task completion and punctuality, and consider it rude to be late to appointments or meetings. On the other hand, polychronic cultures, such as some African and Asian cultures, prioritize relationships and connections over

schedules. They may have a more relaxed attitude towards punctuality, considering it less important to be on time for appointments or meetings.

This distinction between monochronic and polychronic cultures highlights the importance of intercultural awareness and sensitivity in cross-cultural communication. Misunderstandings can arise when individuals from monochronic cultures interact with those from polychronic cultures and expect punctuality to be valued, or when individuals from polychronic cultures interact with those from monochronic cultures and do not understand the importance of adhering to schedules and deadlines

More recent works have continued to explore the impact of cultural differences on time perception and intercultural communication. For instance, Henttonen and Moisander (2019) reviewed existing research on cross-cultural differences in time perception and their impact on communication, and suggested a research agenda for future studies. Equally, other studies Karanja and Masinde (2019) provided a systematic review of existing research on cultural differences in time perception and their implications for intercultural communication and Kim and Lee (2021) explored how cultural differences in time perception can impact intercultural communication, and offered practical suggestions for navigating these differences (Kim & Lee, 2021; Karanja & Masinde, 2019).

Cultural differences in time management and perception have been also been investigated in relation to business and organizational settings (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997; Kavoura, 2018; Taras, Steel, & Kirkman, 2010). In global business settings, it is essential for individuals to be aware of and sensitive to cultural differences in time perception, as it can have a significant impact on cross-cultural collaboration and teamwork.

Moreover, these differences in time perception can also affect language use, with some cultures using indirect language in order to avoid direct confrontation and maintain social harmony (Ting-Toomey, 1988). By understanding the cultural influences on time management and perception, learners can effectively navigate cross-cultural communication and avoid misunderstandings. In a nutshell, the studies attempted to show the ongoing importance of understanding and navigating cultural differences in time perception for effective intercultural communication and collaboration

Methods

This study was conducted at two institutions: the School of Law and Economics in Casablanca and the School of Management and Business in Settat. The participants included 30 Moroccan learners of English (MLE), 25 American native speakers (AE), and 30 Moroccan Arabic speakers (MA). The participants volunteered for the study and the American participants were recruited from three universities and a virtual exchange program.

Data Collection and Analysis

The study employed data collection techniques that took into account triangulation and validity and reliability issues. To this end, the data was collected using three instruments: background questionnaire, discourse completion task (DCT), and a metapragmatic questionnaire. The DCT involved situational descriptions in a university setting, with balanced variables of power, distance, and severity, and required participants to respond using the speech acts of complaint, apology, and refusals. The interviews were also conducted to evaluate the

learners' perception of their pragma-linguistic awareness. The background questionnaire helped filter participants based on their relevance to the study, and the metapragmatic questionnaire was used to increase the trustworthiness of the results by assessing the social variables controlled in the study. All of these methods were chosen to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected and to yield the intended outcome.

Equally, The statistical analysis was done using SPSS. The chi-square test was used to examine the similarity and difference in complaint, apology, and refusal behaviors of three groups, while the Mann-Whitney test was used to look at the average level of directness used in social interactions with regards to apologies and refusals. Negative pragmatic transfer is indicated by significant differences in language use between the MLE and AE groups and the MA and AE groups, with no difference between the MA and MLE groups. Positive pragmatic transfer is seen when there's no significant difference in language use between the mother language, Interlanguage, and target language norms. Interlanguage developmental patterns were also analyzed.

Results and Discussion

This study investigated three speech acts - apologies, complaints, and refusals - at different levels of directness. Complaints and refusals were analyzed for directness, while apologies were analyzed for frequency of strategies used. The levels of directness and frequency were explored in relation to social power and distance to identify correlations.

Table 1

Directness Interacting With Social Power

Mann-Whitney Comparisons of Influence of Social Power on Average Level of Directness *by Group*

Group	+P	=P	-P	+P/=P	+P/-P	=P/-P
	MR	MR	MR	Z	Z	Z
MLE	56.34	42.56	36.10	-3.160 *	-2.823 *	-2.951 *
AE	50.20	45.10	40.30	-2.204 *	-3.273*	-0.895
MA	54.30	45.58	35.30	-2.131 *	-2.951 *	-2.561 *

Note. MLE = Moroccan learners of English, AE = native American English Speakers, MA = Moroccan Arabic speakers. (+P) = speaker has more social power than hearer (S > H), (= P) = speaker and hearer have equal social power (S = H), (–P) = speaker has less social power than hearer (S< H). *MR* = Mean rank.*$p < 0.05$

The results of the study on complaints suggest that MLE participants experienced a greater shift in the level of directness (from 36.10 to 56.34) compared to AE participants (from 40.30 to 50.20), indicating a pragmatic negative transfer from the Moroccan Arabic language and culture (Balambo, 2014; Ezzaoua, 2020). The direct approach in MLEs' production of complaints may impact how they perceive power relationships.

Moroccan communication style is known for being high context, meaning it is indirect and focuses on maintaining harmony and saving face (Balambo, 2014). High-context cultures are typically collectivist, where the context is manipulated to convey meaning. In contrast, low-

context cultures derive the meaning of messages primarily from the linguistic code of the message (Hall, 1997).

According to Hall (1976), a less clear or more ambiguous communication style in high-context cultures helps to save face as it allows for alternative meanings to be inferred. The power relationships between interlocutors also play a significant role in determining the meaning of messages in high-context cultures (Hall, 1997). Hence, the shift in directness observed in MLEs may reflect the influence of their native language and culture, which prioritizes indirect communication and face-saving. The impact of this shift on power relationships highlights the significance of pragmatic transfer in intercultural communication. Let's consider these examples:

1. *Hi Sir, The committee has not received the letter. I was wondering if something wrong happened .(MLE)*
2. *Hey! Remember the reference letter I asked for concerning an exchange program? The committee says they haven't received one from you? What happened? (AE)*

3. **Translation of MA:** *Hi Sir. I don't know why the committee didn't receive the letter*. (MA)

The examples in the passage demonstrate a preference for implicitness and ambiguity in communication among cultures classified as high-context. According to Kim (2020), high-context cultures such as those in the MENA region value indirect communication as a means of maintaining social harmony and avoiding conflict. Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998) note that face-saving is a crucial aspect of communication in these cultures, and individuals are expected to save face for themselves and others to avoid causing embarrassment or shame.

In the examples from the Moroccan subjects (MLE and MA), their messages displayed a cultural and pragmatic inclination to avoid directly blaming the teacher, as seen in their statement "The committee hasn't received the letter." This indirect approach is consistent with the communication styles observed in high-context cultures. On the other hand, the American participant's message was more explicit, stating "The committee says they haven't received one from you", indicating that the teacher did not send the letter.

American culture is described as positive-politeness oriented, where "effusive explanations" are characteristic to understand the speaker's position (Ogiermann, 2012). These examples illustrate how communication styles vary across cultures, with high-context cultures preferring implicitness and ambiguity while low-context cultures such as the US value more direct communication. These differences can lead to instances of communication breakdown, especially during encounters with native speakers.

The results also align with Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory. Morocco is rated high in power distance (70), meaning society endorses unequal power relationships (see figure 1). America, on the other hand, is low in power distance (40), meaning society values equal power relationships. The study shows that MLE and MA participants are more sensitive to social power compared to American participants. The power distance dimension of Hofstede's theory can explain this difference in perceptions. The structure of power relationships and hierarchies in society are considered part of the norm, and members are expected to show respect to those

in positions of superior power. This is a result of Morocco's history and acceptance of power relationships, as stated by Eddakir (2003) cited in Balambo (2014).

Figure 1

Hofstede's Cultural Dimension Calculator

Note: Cultural Dimensions Calculator. Morocco Vs United States.

Retrieved from https://www.hofstede-insights.com/product/compare-countries/

Let's consider these examples which are taken from two participants (MLE vs AE) complaining to people with different power values:

4. *In (− P) scenario: Hello sir, I 've just heard that the committee did not receive my letter, please, do you have any idea about this situation, and what should I do? (S1, MLE, #41)*
5. *In (+P) scenario: This is unacceptable. Now I am running out of time because of you. You have no sense of responsibility. (S4, MLE, #2)*
6. *In (− P) scenario: Hello professor, I would like to know whether you sent the letter you promised you will send to the committee because I have been informed that they didn't receive any letter!? If you didn't. I would like very much an explanation from you !? (S1, AE, #8)*
7. *In (+P) scenario: I need the copies now, please . How fast can you do them? (S4, AE, #18)*

The responses suggest a significant difference in the level of directness in the production of complaints by MLEs and American participants. The MLE participant was implicit and indirect when addressing the professor, while the American was more direct. However, when

both MLE and American participants had more power over the complainee, the MLE's level of directness increased significantly, whereas the American's was not as drastic.

The reason for this difference in directness may stem from cultural and linguistic factors. In many cultures, it is considered impolite to express criticism directly, and people may prefer to use indirect language to avoid causing offense or disrupting social harmony. In contrast, in American culture, direct communication is often valued as efficient.

Table 2

The Influence of Social Power on The Use of Apology Strategies

Group	+P %	=P %	-P %	+P/=P χ^2	+P/-P χ^2	=P/-P χ^2
MLE	28.33%	29.18%	42.49%	0.982	5.3520*	5.539*
AE	26.91%	34.14	38.96%	0.877	12.0731*	2.047
MA	27.91%	30.27%	42.15%	2.734	32.2660*	12.003*

Note. AE = American English speakers, MLE = Moroccan learners of English, MA= Moroccan Arabic speakers. (+P) = speaker has more social H), (=P) = speaker and hearer have equal social power (S = H), (−P) = speaker has less social power than hearer (S < H). *$p < 0.05$

This supports Gallaher's (2011) claim that in American culture, violating power distance norms is not considered impolite. Power dynamics can change over time and space, as seen in American universities where professors may allow students to address them on a first-name basis.

Table 2 shows the chi-square comparison of apology strategies among +P vs. =P, +P vs. –P, and =P vs. –P in terms of frequency. Results indicate that MLE and MA participants adjust their apology strategies based on power relationships (+P vs. =P and =P vs. –P). There was no significant difference in +P vs. =P for both groups. In low power situations (-P), both groups used more apology strategies than in =P or +P. The American participants used more strategies only when the addresser had low power (-P) compared to when they had high power (+P). These findings suggest the influence of the mother culture on apology use in English and highlight the correlation between the use of apologies and power relationships as described by Hofstede's (1991) power-distance dimension. Additionally, both Moroccan participants used more apology strategies than their American counterparts.

The findings indicate that the frequency of apology strategies is influenced by social power. A trend observed among the Moroccan participants was the use of honorifics when apologizing to those of higher status, which was not prevalent in the American responses.

8. *Please forgive me, sir. I promise you to send it tonight. Just give me a second chance, please (MLE, S5, #12)*

9

9.   *English Translation: Forgive me Sir. I deeply apologize. I had some very compelling circumstances. Would you please (for God's sake) give me a second chance.*

In LC cultures, business communication is direct, factual, and analytical, relying heavily on information (Liao et al., 2008). In contrast, HC cultures like Japan value additional context and prefer implicit communication (Cyr & Trevor-Smith, 2004). LC cultures have a tendency towards hard sell tactics with explicit information (Hermeking, 2005). Hall (1976) asserts that language is not the determining factor of HC-LC communication styles and that context, not the language itself, is key.

The results in the study show that both Moroccan learners of English and Moroccan Arabic participants utilized honorifics in situations where there is a high level of power relationship between the speakers. Morocco is known as a high-distance culture (Hofstede, 2004).

In contrast, American speakers, as stated by Koo (1995), "are supposed to use the same level of speech to everyone regardless of their power position." Social structures and ideologies surrounding these structures condition speakers to focus on specific linguistic behavior (143). Song (2014) confirms that social power or status is not a significant factor in American culture's communication, and "smooth conversation without conflict is the primary goal of politeness" (61, 62).

Moroccans, on the other hand, consider ranks as a crucial factor in determining power relationships. As MLEs, they transfer their cultural norms to the target language, causing pragmatic failure in English. Honorifics related to "institutional ranks" were also observed among Moroccan learners of English and Moroccan Arabic speakers, including seniority-based terms such as "Uncle," "Sir" in English and "ʃərif\a, ħa: ʒ/ ʒa," in Moroccan Arabic. In high power distance cultures like Morocco, young people are expected to obey their parents, teachers, and elders, preserving hierarchical structures in families and educational institutions (Hofstede, 1991).

The comparison of power values across 3 values showed no significant shift in MLE. But American participants used more downgraders in low power situations (-P) than in equal power (=P) and high power (+P) ones. No significant difference was found between high and equal power. Surprisingly, MLE's use of downgraders in a situation was not significantly different from American English speakers.

Moroccan society being collectivist (Hofstede, 2004), previous studies need to be considered. This pattern of MLE using more downgraders seems to contradict Suleiman's (2017) conclusion that collectivist cultures stress strong cohesion within groups and use less downgraders. Suleiman's study on Chinese EFL learners showed they produced fewer downgraders compared to native English speakers. The higher use of downgraders by MLE could be due to an inability to produce internal modifications or a trend towards native-like norms.

Another concept that has been explored in this study is that of time conception. The distinction between monochronic and polychronic concepts of time was proposed by Hall (1976). In monochronic cultures, time is seen as linear and segmented into precise units, and punctuality is highly valued. In polychronic cultures, time is seen as more fluid and less rigidly segmented, and punctuality is often less important.

Let's consider these examples from the data. The participants was instructed to respond to a particular scenario (Students was waiting for the head of the department, who arrived late to a planned appointment).

1. *Excuse me sir, I belong to this department and they said that I have an appointment today with you . Is it that true? (MA, S4, #8)*

2. *Is it still on date or should we delay it until another day ? (MLE, S4, #9)*

3. *American speaker says: Hi Sir , it probably skipped your mind, but we do actually have an appointment today. I believe I had an appointment with you at 10:00 (MLE, S4, #6)*

The example suggests that Moroccan speakers, both in Arabic and English, display a more flexible attitude towards punctuality compared to American speakers. This difference can be attributed to the different perceptions of time between the two groups.

The Moroccan Arabic speaker's question is polite and indirect, which may indicate a preference for a more relaxed approach to punctuality. The Moroccan learner of English's question also suggests a willingness to adapt to changing circumstances and a less rigid view of time.

In contrast, the American speaker's statement is direct and suggests a more monochronic approach to time, where punctuality is highly valued and tardiness is not acceptable.

Therefore, the example suggests that the Moroccan participants may hold a more polychronic view of time, while the American participant may hold a more monochronic view. This difference in perception can impact communication styles and expectations, as well as attitudes towards punctuality and deadlines.

Conclusion

The current study put forth the hypothesis that pragmatic transfer is a result of transferring cultural values from Moroccan Arabic to English. The research analyzed the three dimensions of power distance, individualism vs collectivism, and high-context vs low-context cultures in relation to complaints and found out that cultural values have a correlation with the communication styles adopted by (MLE) speakers. The significant pragmatic transfer from Moroccan Arabic supports the argument that pragmatic failure is not solely a linguistic phenomenon, but a transliteration of the cultural values of the mother language.

Moroccan culture is recognized as a collectivist one (Hofstede, 2010) , featuring a wide power differential and providing individuals with a strong sense of belonging to groups and respect for hierarchy. Equally, it is characterized as a high-context culture according to the cultural dimensions proposed by Hall (1976). On the other hand, the national cultures of English-speaking countries such as the United States of America prioritize individualism with a focus on equal rights for each individual and are characterized as a low-context culture according to Hall's dimensions. The results indicated that while the Moroccan subjects placed more emphasis on the context of communication, American participants adopted a more explicit style, regardless of the status of the interlocutors.

The results of the study on the realization of speech act of refusal by MLE, AE, and MA speakers showed that all groups utilized indirect strategies in expressing their refusal (Chen & Starosta, 1996). Although these indirect preferences seemed similar in the surface structure, they reveal contrasting cultural values (Gudykunst, 2003). The utterances of both MLE and MA speakers revealed traces of collectivist cultural tendencies as they prioritized group harmony and face-saving over clarity in messages (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). In contrast, American refusals reflected an individualistic cultural tendency, expressing refusal messages in a direct and explicit manner (Hall, 1976).

Moroccan participants, both native speakers and English learners, were found to be more concerned with minimizing offense and preserving the face of the interlocutor, reflecting empathy as a collectivist tendency in high-context cultures (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). This group-oriented communication style employed by the Moroccan participants was distinct from the individualistic, direct, and explicit approach adopted by native English speakers, which is typical of low-context Anglo-Saxon cultures (Hall, 1976).

The findings of this study have several implications for intercultural communication and language teaching. First, language learners and teachers need to be aware of the influence of cultural values on language use and communication styles. This awareness can help learners develop intercultural communicative competence and avoid pragmatic failure. Second, the study highlights the importance of teaching not only language skills but also cultural awareness and sensitivity to facilitate effective communication across cultures. Third, the study suggests that language learners need exposure to both high-context and low-context communication styles to be able to adapt to different cultural contexts.

Future research can expand on this study by examining other speech acts such as compliments, invitations, and requests, to further explore the influence of cultural values on communication styles. Additionally, future research can investigate the role of individual differences such as age, gender, and education in intercultural communication. Furthermore, longitudinal studies can examine the development of intercultural communicative competence and the effectiveness of language and cultural sensitivity training programs.

Some of the limitations of this study include the relatively small sample size, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Another limitation is the focus on only one variety of English, which may not be representative of other varieties. Additionally, the study only examined the communication styles of Moroccan Arabic speakers and American English speakers, and more research is needed to examine the communication styles of speakers from other cultural backgrounds. Finally, the study only focused on three speech acts, and more research is needed to examine the influence of cultural values on other types of communication, such as nonverbal communication.

Raising learners' awareness of target language culture and norms is crucial for successful foreign language acquisition. This study investigates the impact of national culture on foreign language learning, specifically examining the case of Moroccan learners. Results show instances of mother language transfer and pragmatic cultural attributes, revealing a gap between pragmatic competence and language mastery. This discrepancy can be attributed to the teaching methods in Morocco, which place greater emphasis on head acts and isolated instruction of speech acts.

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