THE SPEECH ACT OF PROMISING AMONG SAUDI FEMALE EFL STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY AT JOUF UNIVERSITY

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by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SA	Saudi Arabia
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
DCT	Discourse Completion Test
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
SSI	Semi-Structured Interview
RO	Research Objective
RO1	Research Objective One
RO2	Research Objective Two
RO3	Research Objective Three
RO4	Research Objective Four
RO5	Research Objective Five

LIST OF APPENDICES

LAKUAN PERTUTURAN PERJANJIAN DALAM KALANGAN PELAJAR WANITA EFL: KAJIAN KES DI UNIVERSITI JOUF

ABSTRAK

Kajian semasa mengkaji keupayaan pelajar EFL Saudi untuk menghasilkan dan mengenal pasti ujaran berkaitan dengan lakuan perjanjian di wilayah selatan Arab Saudi. Ia adalah kajian kualitatif yang digunakan di Universiti Jouf. Demi mencapai matlamat yang dinyatakan sebelum ini, kajian memilih 20 situasi hipotetikal yang diadaptasi daripada DCT Beebe et al. (1990). 20 situasi ini memperlihatkan lakuan pertuturan perjanjian dan menggambarkan situasi kehidupan sebenar di Arab Saudi. Situasi ini dikumpul secara lisan daripada 20 orang pelajar wanita Saudi melalui temu bual separa berstruktur (selepas ini SSI). Sebagai tambahan, enam soalan SSI telah dicadangkan untuk meningkatkan dan memperkuatkan dapatan dengan menumpukan mengenal pasti pelbagai cara perjanjian dan mengenal pasti masalah pelajar apabila melakukan perjanjian dan mengatasi masalah ini dalam komunikasi. Sementara itu, empat perbincangan kumpulan fokus (selepas ini FGD) telah diadakan dalam kalangan 16 pelajar wanita Saudi, dengan empat pelajar dalam setiap kumpulan. Sesi FGD dijalankan secara lisan dan dirakam secara audio untuk mengenal pasti fungsi lakuan pertuturan perjanjian dalam komunikasi dan memberi tumpuan kepada kesan budaya Islam terhadap penghasilan lakuan pertuturan perjanjian dalam komunikasi. Populasi kajian untuk kedua-dua SSI dan FGD telah dipilih secara rawak daripada Jabatan Bahasa Inggeris di Universiti Jouf untuk tahun ke-3 dan ke-4 Tabarjal- peringkat ke-5, ke-6, ke-7, dan ke-8. Data yang dikumpul kemudiannya ditranskripsikan menggunakan perisian NVivo versi-12. Data yang dikumpul kemudiannya dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik. Kajian tertumpu kepada pelbagai jawapan kepada

setiap soalan yang diberikan oleh setiap responden. Lakuan pertuturan ditonjolkan dalam pelbagai cara dan fungsi. Salah satunya adalah tentang pengaruh budaya Islam dalam perjanjian. Dapatan menunjukkan bahawa pelajar EFL Saudi menghadapi kesukaran yang ketara untuk menghasilkan dan mengenal pasti tindakan lakuan pertuturan perjanjian. Secara khusus, 37% pelajar menunjukkan kebolehan untuk mengenal pasti lakuan pertuturan perjanjian, manakala majoriti pelajar, 63%, tidak. Selain itu, dapatan menunjukkan bahawa pelajar kerap membuat janji tanpa syarat, tidak menepati janji, atau melengahkan janji. Secara ringkasnya, analisis mendedahkan bahawa orang Arab Saudi mengeluarkan ikrar dalam pelbagai cara untuk pelbagai sebab. Malah, mereka mengeluarkan ikrar dalam pelbagai fungsi. Terutamanya, sembilan fungsi telah disimpulkan apabila pelajar memilih untuk berjanji. Kajian semasa memberi sumbangan kepada linguistik dengan memfokuskan kepada meneliti lakuan pertuturan secara umum dan lakuan pertuturan perjanjian dengan memfokuskan kesan budaya Islam terhadap penghasilan lakuan perjanjian dalam komunikasi dan dengan mengetengahkan cara dan fungsi lakuan pertuturan perjanjian.

THE SPEECH ACT OF PROMISING AMONG SAUDI FEMALE EFL STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY AT JOUF UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

The current study investigated the ability of Saudi EFL students in the southern region of Saudi Arabia to produce and recognise utterances related to the speech acts of making promises. The qualitative study was conducted at Jouf University. To achieve the objectives set in the study, 20 hypothetical situations adapted from Beebe et al.'s (1990) DCT were selected. The 20 situations expressed the speech acts of promising and imitated real-life situations in Saudi Arabia; These situations were collected orally from 20 female Saudi students through semi-structured interviews (hereafter SSI) conducted with them. In addition, seven questions of the SSI were proposed to enhance and enrich the findings. The focus was placed on identifying the various ways of promising and identifying students' problems when producing a promise and overcoming these problems in communication. Meanwhile, four focus group discussions (hereafter FGD) were held with the 16 participating female Saudi students, with four students in each group. The FGD sessions were conducted orally and were audio-recorded to identify the functions of the speech act of promising in communication. It also focused on the impact of Islamic culture on the production of the speech act of promising in communication. The study's population for both the SSI and the FGD were chosen at random from the English Department at Jouf University in Tabarjal's 3rd and 4th year- 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th levels. The collected data were then transcribed using the NVivo software-12 version and analysed using thematic analysis. The study focused on the various responses to each question provided by each respondent. The speech acts were underlined in a variety of ways and functions.

One of them accurately pertains to the influence of Islamic culture on promising. The findings indicated that Saudi EFL students faced significant difficulties when it comes to producing and recognising the speech act of promising. Specifically, while 37% of students demonstrated the ability to recognise the speech act of promising, the overwhelming majority of students (63%) did not. Additionally, the findings showed that students frequently made unconditional promises rather than conditional promises, refusing promises, or delaying promises. In summary, the analysis revealed that Saudis issue pledges in various ways for various reasons. Also, it revealed that Saudis issue pledges for a variety of functions. Mainly, nine functions were identified when students opt for promising. Indeed, the current study made a contribution to linguistics by focusing on examining speech acts in general and the speech acts of promising in particular by focusing on the impact of Islamic culture on the production of the speech act of promising in communication. This is accomplished by highlighting the prominent ways and functions of the speech act of promising.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction

Primarily, communication is the transfer of information from one person to another (Keyton, 2011 cited in Lunenburg, 2010). It is also a social interaction that relies on various means such as speech, gestures, and texts (Cornelissn et al., 2015). In other words, communication is viewed as a dynamic process that occurs at all times in order to study "how we create meaning in our lives (Wood, 2004; 25)." The present study is focused on communication, specifically cultural communicative theory pertaining to the Islamic culture. Islamic culture communication is worth mentioning because it is used in the current study at Jouf University to determine its impact on Saudis' reaction to their promise's speech acts.

However, the most influential theory for studying how individuals comprehend, produce, and respond to utterances is Austin's (1962) Theory of Speech Acts, which was later developed by Austin's successor, Searle (1969). The current study examined the speech act of promising theory in terms of communication theory, specifically Islamic culture communication. Given that language is the fundamental mode of communication (Widdowson, 1978), cultural interactions are critical for cognitive development and individual development, as they influence individual responses (Nguyen and Terry, 2017). The different traditions, customs and perspectives are therefore supposed to influence the responses of the respondents to this study. In this regard, Anderson (1990), Olshtain and Cohen (1983), and Wolfson (1981) state that learners of a language should deal with the linguistic rules of the language as well as its communicative rules because producing an utterance, which can be determined by

contextual factors rather than by mere linguistic and grammatical factors. These contextual factors vary from one country to another and from one culture to another.

Various theories could be applied to the speech act in order to determine its performance. In this study, the researcher explicitly employed communication theory, notably the idea of Islamic cultural communication, to determine the speech act of promises in Saudi communication. The focus is on understanding the impact of Islamic cultural communication when Saudi EFL students make explicit or implicit promises. By focusing on Islamic cultural communication, the researcher was able to comprehend how respondents' responses were influenced by their culture and how to appropriately analyse the acquired data. It is assumed that the use of Islamic cultural communication enabled researchers to discover the ways and functions recommended by Al-Dwairi (2008) regarding the speech act of promising. In summary, using Islamic cultural communication theory in this study is critical for data analysis.

One of the primary goals of this research is to highlight the promising Islamic cultural communication of the KSA. Furthermore, the current study aims to improve the study results based on the research questions listed below. This study is concerned with producing and recognising the speech act of promising while communicating. It deals with various speech acts and functions performed by the respondents to build the pledge made by Saudi English learners based on Islamic cultural communication. In addition, it enables Saudi EFL students and researchers to further understand about the development of encouraging responses made by Saudi EFL students at Jouf University.

This study contributes to the literature regarding the speech act of promising between EFL students and their lecturers in KSA, as the researcher focus on the ability of Saudi students to produce and recognise their promises as well as the functional

aspects employed by Saudi students when answering the SSI' questions and conducting the interviews. Only a few studies had previously investigated the speech act of promising used by Saudi EFL students. This study investigated the speech act of promising used by Saudi EFL students studying at Jouf University in terms of analysing Islamic cultural communication and its functions in promise-making. Since research on promising speech acts involving Saudi respondents is limited, the current study has a novelty value. Thus, feedback from this study is expected to elucidate the impact of Islamic cultural communication on the respondents' responses. It is assumed that Islamic cultural communication significantly impacts the respondents' responses, particularly in their use of different methods and functions when making promises. The findings indicated that EFL students in the KSA use a variety of ways and functions when making promises. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate the act of promising by Saudi students. Fundamentally, many Saudi students are influenced by the Islamic religious tenets that Muslims should be obligated to their promises. These tenets have an impact on the students' choices and reflect the influence of Islamic cultural communication on their choices.

1.2 The Context of the Study

Saudi Arabia (abbreviated SA) is a Middle Eastern country that occupies most of the Arabian Peninsula and has coastlines in the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. It is Asia's fifth-largest country and the Arab world's second-largest after Algeria (Melibari, 2015). After years of being an underdeveloped desert, SA has become the wealthiest nation in the world due to its oil resources. Ibn Saud founded it in 1932 and unified it under the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (BBC News, 2015). In 2018, it had a population of approximately 32 million. In 1938, after oil was discovered, Saudi Arabia was regarded

as one of the world's largest oil producers and exporters. The discovery of oil has affected and driven the rapid development of various aspects of daily life in this nation (Caryl, 2014), resulting in wide-ranging changes in society as well as individual lifestyles and attitudes. As a consequence, this comprehensive development could offer some insight into Saudi higher education developments and shifts.

In particular, SA is a young country that has seen many changes. Saudis have traditionally been Bedouins, descended from nomadic tribes. They moved from one location to another, tracing the sources of rain and water for their cattle herds (Alfuraih and Mitchell, 2017). However, since the discovery of oil revenues, SA has grown and become more urbanised. In other words, due to oil revenues and its vast economy, SA has witnessed massive growth from its founding in 1932 to the present day.

Figure 1.1:   The Map of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia (source: http://mapsof.net)

Saudi Arabia is a Muslim country with Arabic as its native language which is a communal language used in daily interactions (Bersamina, 2009 cited in Melibari, 2015). English is taught at different levels in Saudi schools. It does not, however, have the same teaching status as witnessed in most developing countries (Khan, 2011). Teaching English as an EFL in non-native speaking countries such as Saudi Arabia is challenging. As a result, it is only used in a few domains of everyday life in these countries (Khan, 2011). English is an international language that serves as a means of communication between various communities and cultures. In this regard, the KSA acknowledges the significance of teaching English as an EFL in schools and universities. According to Liton (2012), English is used as a foreign language (EFL) in KSA schools because it is fundamental in various domains in the kingdom, such as trade, economics, aviation, higher education, research, and diplomacy, among others. In other words, (Al-Ahaydib, 1986, cited in Liton, 2012) demonstrates that, since 1925, the Ministry of Education has introduced English as an EFL in schools at various stages in order to meet the new challenges posed by major developments in the political, social, and economic domains.

In general, learning English by non-native English speakers necessitates overcoming a number of challenges that impede participation in learning. Some of these barriers include lack of time, trust, motivation, and scheduling issues, among others (Lieb, 1991 cited in Khan, 2011). In the case of KSA, "it is very rare that they lack confidence, and there is little pressure from society, parents, or even their families" (Khan: 2011; 245). Other barriers include a lack of student motivation, unqualified and inexperienced teachers who impact the teaching of English there (Khan, 2011).

Furthermore, learning English in KSA schools means that Saudi students can learn English without having to travel abroad. It is not only necessary to learn English grammar and lexical structures; it is also necessary to understand the culture of the language, as it is a means of communication (Chlopek, 2008). According to Chlopek (2008), communication is a source of misunderstanding and miscommunication if it lacks appropriate cultural content in humorous incidents or worse. Furthermore, successful international communication is an excellent way to introduce an intercultural approach into EFL classrooms.

This study looks into the speech act of promising among Saudi EFL students, as well as the impact of Islamic cultural communication on Saudis' way of making promises. In other words, it primarily examines aspects of producing and recognising the speech act of promising. Furthermore, it addresses not just the speech act of promising ways but also its functions from the viewpoint of the respondents and based on Islamic cultural communication. Finally, the current study is intended to provide feedback to Saudi students and researchers regarding interaction on the development of encouraging responses by Saudi EFL students at Jouf University.

1.3   Profile of Jouf University in KSA

The data were collected from Jouf University, Al-Jouf (Arabic: الجوف al-Ğawf pronounced [alˈdʒoːf]), which is located in the north-west region of Saudi Arabia. It has a population of around 361,000 people and covers 139.00 km2. Sakaka City, the capital of Al-Jouf, is the centre of administration. Al- Jouf is significant due to its strategic location as KSA's northern gate and the Middle East's largest port. Historically, traders and pilgrims used Al- Jouf to travel between the Arabian Peninsula, the East, and Egypt. Al-Jouf is well-known for its lush vegetation and historic sites. It is densely forested

with palm and olive trees that cover large areas of the region and form strong marketing links between Al-Jouf and other Saudi cities. Omar Ibn Al- Khattab's Mosque and the Marid Palace in Dumat Al-Jandal are two historical sites.

Jouf University was established by a decree of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques in 1426AH/ 2005. The goal of establishing Jouf University, which is both historically and geographically significant, is to develop the Al-Jouf region as a pillar of the Kingdom's Renaissance. Jouf University, through its various colleges, serves four governorates in the Al-Jouf region, including Sakaka, Dumat Al-Jandal, Qurayyat, and Tabarjal, to which the researcher applies her research.

1.3.1   Programmes Offered at Jouf University in KSA

The Jouf University's main campus is in Sakaka, the capital of the Al-Jouf region. As previously stated, this university serves four governorates in the Al-Jouf region: Sakaka, Dumat Al-Jandal, Qurayyat, and Tabarjal. Today, the university is experiencing fundamental growth in all academic and educational fields across its three branches in Sakaka, Qurayyat, and Tabarjal. Tabarjal has two colleges for both male and female students: Science and Art College and Community College. Academic programmes at the college are current and comparable to those at all Saudi universities, particularly the main university in Sakaka. The college strives to qualify its graduates by providing an integrated education programme with a variety of majors that meets the requirements and needs of the KSA market.
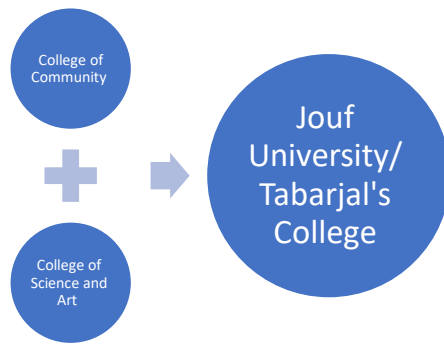
Figure 1. 2:   The colleges of Jouf University/ Tabarjal's College

There are two departments at Tabarjal's Community College for both male and female Saudi students: the English Department and the Business Management Department. There are seven departments for both male and female students at Science and Art College: Arabic Department, English Department, Mathematics Department, Business Management Department, Physics Department, Computer Science Department, and a newly opened Islamic Studies Department. Furthermore, the Kindergarten Department was offered to the college six years prior to its closure. It is still in use at the college level to graduate students who enrolled prior to the programme's closure and to provide general skills to students of various majors. On the one hand, Tabarjal's female college relocated to a new building outfitted with cutting-edge physics, language, and computer laboratories to improve learning and teaching, as well as scientific research. There is also a library with many books in various fields to help students with their mission of scientific research and to enrich their knowledge. On the other hand, the male section's new construction is scheduled to begin later this year.
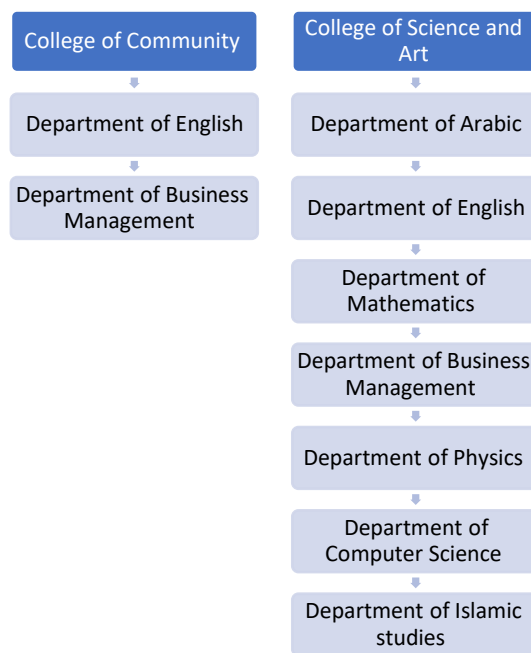
Figure 1.3:   **Departments of Tabarjal's Colleges**

1.3.2 English Department at Jouf University in KSA

The English Department, located at the gate of Jouf University, is regarded as one of Tabarjal College's leading departments. It aspires to be a pioneer in teaching English literature and linguistics, as well as a vibrant centre for English teaching and research both locally and internationally. The main reason for establishing the English Department here is to meet the market needs for qualified graduate students in various fields of learning, editing, and translation. Students enrolled in the English Department may apply to either the Science and Art College (four years) or the Community College (two years) to enrol in one of the two English programmes. The department offers two different types of courses. The first type focuses on the teaching of general English skills to students from a variety of majors. The second type includes linguistics,

literature, and translation, which are restricted to English Department students in order to enrich their knowledge of a variety of linguistics, literature, and translation areas of study and enable them to fulfil their learning and research objectives.

By conducting research in various aspects of English, translation, literature, and linguistics, the department aims to develop students' critical and innovative thinking skills and improve their research capacities. It also aims to educate qualified students who can meet the needs and requirements of the labour market in KSA in general, and the Al-Jouf region in particular, as well as to promote cross-cultural communication. The Science and Art College has approximately 700 students, while the Community College has approximately 180 students.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

The current study identifies four issues. These issues include (1) the ability to understand (recognise) the speech act of promising, (2) the ability to use (produce) the speech act of promising (Al-Dwairi; 2008), (3) the lack of recognition of the ways and functions behind issuing promising (Al-Dwairi; 2008 & Al-Omari and Abu Melhim; 2013), and (4) limited findings related to analysing the effect of Islamic culture communication on speech acts (Al-Khateeb, 2009 & Commins, 2015). Given the importance of the issues to be addressed, this study seeks to fill a gap in the literature by investigating the Saudi EFL students' pragmatic knowledge (production and comprehension) of the speech act of promising. The speech act of promising offers a rich source of information about both the speakers and the community under investigation. In other words, the ongoing research interest in the topic of speech acts is likely to mirror the culture of the community under consideration. This study differs from previous studies in that it focuses on recognising the functions of the speech act

of promising employed by EFL students using EFL context and culture. It is also distinct from previous studies in that it focuses on the impact of Islamic culture on the respondents' responses. Previous research, on the other hand, has focused on analysing participants' strategies (Al-Dwairi, 2008; Mugableh and Ariff, 2013) and types (Al-Omari and Abu-Melhim, 2013) of the speech act of promising using Arabic context and culture rather than EFL. However, because it is a new area of study in Saudi Arabia, there is a need to investigate the ability of Saudi students to perceive the speech act of promising and their functions in communication using the EFL context and culture and to highlight the impact of Islamic culture on the respondents' responses.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the speech act of promising used in the English language, specifically among EFL Saudi students. It investigates Saudi students' ability to issue and recognise the speech act of promising in communication. This study also investigates the promising ways and functions Saudi EFL students use when issuing the speech act of promising. The study focuses on the Islamic cultural effects on students' responses used in the EFL context. Essentially, "the forms of an act may vary depending on culture and language, implying different interpretations" (Alfaleh, 2019; 108). Therefore, the issue addressed in this study depends on a large body of research for selecting appropriate ways and functions to assess the impact of the speech act of promising on communication between selected Saudi EFL students at Jouf University. According to the literature review, no reported studies in periodicals, thesis, and journals show that (i) the speech acts of promising have been investigated in Saudi Arabia - Jouf University. Unfortunately, some studies on the theory of the speech act of promising have been conducted in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, there is no research in the same field that looks into (ii) the impact of Islamic cultural communication on the speech act of promising in Saudi Arabia. Additional knowledge

is supposed to be added to the literature when conducting the current study, as it provides additional references to the landscape of Saudi EFL students and researchers in terms of communication on the production of promising responses by students of the Saudi EFL.

In Saudi Arabia, researchers have looked into the various types and domains of the speech acts theory (Salameh, 2001; Al-Haidari, 2009, Al-Ageel, 2016; Al-Shorman, 2016; Alharbi, 2017; Alsulayyi, 2017). Different types of speech act theory are being conducted by various researchers in various places and domains. Some of these speech acts' types are speech acts of promising (Al-Dwairi, 2008; Al-Omari and Abu-Melhim, 2013; Mugableh and Ariff, 2013; Al-Shaer, 2013), apology (Alsulayyi, 2017), invitation and offer (Abbood, 2016), complaint (Al-Shorman, 2016), refusal (Boonsuk, 2019; Zadeh Gol, 2013; Al-Haidari, 2009), requests (Al-Ageel, 2016; Maros and Halim, 2018), compliment (Salameh, 2001) and apologise, complain, refuse and thank (Bayat; 2013).

Several studies focused on the different strategies, taxonomies and functions of the speech act (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1976; Salameh, 2001; Egner, 2006; Al-Dwairi, 2008; Salgueiro, 2010; Mahadin and Jaradat, 2011; Al-Shaer, 2013; Al-Omari and Abu-Melhim, 2013; Mugableh and Ariff, 2013; Bagheri and Poupari, 2013; Kohandani et al., 2014; Alsulayyi, 2017; Essam, 2017; Beller and Bender, 2017; Mubais and Sofwan, 2018). In these studies, many functions have been applied to different types of speech acts, such as the pragmatic function (Al-Dwairi, 2008; Mahadin and Jaradat, 2011; Al-Omari and Abu-Melhim, 2013; Mugableh and Ariff, 2013; Al-Shaer, 2013; Bagheri and Poupari, 2013; Kohandani et al., 2014; Alsulayyi, 2017; Mubais and Sofwan, 2018), communicative function (Al-Khateeb, 2009; Essam, 2017) and cultural function

(Salameh, 2001; Egner, 2006; Al-Khateeb, 2009; Al-Shaer, 2013; Commins, 2015; Boonsuk, 2019). In addition, a variety of research studies have been published on the different strategies and functions of the speech act of promising (Egner, 2006; Al-Dwairi, 2008; Salgueiro, 2010; Mahadin and Jaradat, 2011; Al-Shaer, 2013; Mugableh and Ariff, 2013; Essam, 2017; Beller and Bender, 2017; Mubais and Sofwan, 2018). The present study particularly examined the Islamic cultural communication and promising functions practised by Saudis in various speech acts. Analyzing the language and meaning of Saudi Arabic English bridges the literary gap between speakers of different languages. It may reveal norms and prevailing values, particularly in Saudi society and Arab society in general. In other words, it assists speakers in paying attention to pragmatic failures that may occur in various domains such as social, pedagogical, and translational aspects. It also allows speakers of different languages and cultures to address communication issues (Austin, 1962).

There are numerous studies of speech acts available today in various languages and contexts. Many theoretical approaches and methodological frameworks can be applied to the act of speech. In general, speech acts are governed by cultural communication, which determines the performance of the respondents (Boonsuk, 2019). The researcher of this study, in particular, investigates the responses of students of Saudi EFL based on cultural communication techniques used in data analysis. This is primarily because their culture and community impact their responses. In this regard, Rubin (1983) demonstrates that speech acts reflect the main cultural values, which may be specific to a speech community. According to (Lyons, 1977), a speech act is defined as "an act performed by saying something" (p. 730). In other words, the respondents' reaction to a specific speech may be influenced by various cultural and social notions. Furthermore, the notion of communicative competence is stated by (Hymes, 1972;

Canale and Swain, 1980). A speech act is defined as "the traffic rules of social interaction" (p. 228), based on the importance of achieving patterns of speech act realisation (Goffam, 1974).

The linguistic approach used in this study is primarily based on Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1969) Speech Acts Theory. The researcher prioritises the impact of Islamic cultural communication among Saudi students when making promises in this study. The way in which the respondents follow different methods of making promises reveal the production, the recognition and the functions (recommended by Al-Dwairi, 2008) of the speech acts of promising. The respondents of this study were selected from the Jouf University-Tabarjal-Science and Art College-English Department. The selection of Saudi EFL students to carry out this research is significant for the following reasons: (1) a review of related studies reveals that few studies have been conducted on the selected domain of the study; (2) the study is limited to females only due to the separation in education between females and males in the KSA; and (3) due to the lack of proficiency in non-native-English speakers in the selected study by tertiary students.

Saudis, including the respondents, are expected to observe various ways and be aware of various functions of the speech act. This research investigated the functions of a speech act of promising in greater depth. Al-Dwairi (2008) suggests that such functions include placating the listener, alleviating someone's rage, encouraging others to achieve more in work or study, and so on. By analysing the data collected pertaining to Islamic cultural communication, some light is shed on the effects of Islamic culture on the Saudis' responses. Most importantly, experimenting with various research instruments such as the DCT, the SSI and the FGD allows for a better understanding of

Saudi society. These research instruments can also help to support the findings and conclusions of data analysis.

As a result, this study relies heavily on the application of Islamic cultural communication to determine the response of speech acts performed by Saudi EFL students at Jouf University. Given the nature of the country chosen for the study, the emphasis is on Islamic cultural communication. Saudi Arabia is an Islamic and Arab country with distinct Islamic and Arab cultural boundaries. As a result, respondents' responses are expected to be influenced by communication, particularly Islamic cultural communication, which aids the researcher in meeting the research objectives. This study aims to determine the speech act responses to produce and recognise promising and to identify the promising functions used by the selected sample study and the impact of Islamic cultural communication. In short, communication has "constructed a history of its identity- the people, ideas, and events that have shaped what it is today (Wood: 2004; 1)."

1.5   Rationale to the study

This study seeks to fill a gap in the literature by investigating the Saudi EFL students' pragmatic knowledge (production and comprehension) of the speech act of promising. It focuses on the impact of Islamic culture on the production of the speech act of promising in communication. Foreign languages are certainly learned to communicate with others, understand them, talk to them, read what they have written, and write to them (Baron and Byrne, 1991). The English language, as a foreign language used in many countries, is without a doubt the most commonly used language of international communication (Yule, 1996). It is the medium of international communication, particularly involving the advancement of science and technology,

which use English as the primary means of interaction. Furthermore, the significance of English is measured not only by the number of people who speak it but also by the purposes for which it is used (Yule, 1996). Overall, it is the primary means of debate at the United Nations. That is, we no longer discuss the nature of language alone but also its function.

Even though culture is viewed as communication, and communication is culture (Al-Khateeb, 2009), this explains why different cultural and social interactions influence discourse language choices. As a result, speech acts, also known as 'social speech acts,' are expressions that serve a purpose in communication, such as an apology, a request, a promise, a refusal, or a greeting (Kasper, 1997). These utterances are regarded as essential elements of language that can help us better understand how human communication is carried out through linguistic behaviour (Austin, 1962; Olshtain & Blum-Kulka, 1985).

The current study involving EFL Saudi students is theoretically grounded in cultural communication and Speech Act Theory. Thus, it seeks to investigate promising ways and the functions of the respondents based on Islamic cultural communication that are inherently influencing the respondents' responses. Exploring the aspect of response to promises is significant because of the context in which it is conducted. To be sure, conducting the intended sample in a non-native country such as Saudi Arabia is a critical issue, as Khan (2011) points out that teaching English in KSA attracts the attention of researchers, particularly when the study relates to various issues in classroom situations. Overall, depending on the qualitative methods used to collect data from students using two different methodologies, it is critical to provide researchers with a clear and reliable view of data analysis. To summarise, the current study takes

into account the different perspectives of the students in order to provide a holistic vision of the promise-response production, recognition and function of the EFL students in Saudi Arabia and to adopt appropriate promising responses when the EFL students deliver their communication-affected promises.

1.6   Objectives of the Study (RO)

The primary goal of the current study is to investigate the functions of the speech act of promising in the KSA in accordance with Islamic cultural communication. This study investigates the impact of the Islamic communication on the respondents' responses in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, this study determines the production and the recognition of the speech acts of promising to forge the promise of Saudi EFL students, bridge cultural communicative gaps, and enrich Saudi EFL students, as well as researchers, with regard to communication pertaining to the production of promising responses by Saudi EFL students at Jouf University.

The following are the objectives of the study:

1. To determine the production of the speech act of promising in communication, performed by the Saudi EFL students at Jouf University.

2. To identify the adopted various ways of promising in communication employed by the Saudi EFL students, at Jouf University.

3. To identify students' problems when producing a promise and overcome these problems in communication employed by the Saudi EFL students, at Jouf University.

4. To identify the functions of the speech act of promising in communication employed by the Saudi EFL students, at Jouf University.

5. To focus on the impact of Islamic culture on the production of the speech act of promising in communication when the Saudi EFL students, at Jouf University responding to the promised responses.

1.7 Research Questions

To achieve the above objectives, this study aims to answer the research questions:

1. How is the speech act produce in communication, performed by the Saudi EFL students at Jouf University?

2. What are the adopted various ways of promising in communication conducted by Saudi EFL students at Jouf University when responding to the promises?

3. What are the students' problems in communication employed by Saudi EFL students at Jouf University, when producing a promise and how do they overcome these problems in communication?

4. What are the speech acts' functions in communication employed by Saudi EFL students at Jouf University, when they make a promise?

5. How is Islamic culture impact on the production of the speech act of promising in communication when the Saudi EFL students, at Jouf University responding to the promised responses.

1.8 Significance of the Study

The current study is a contribution to linguistics advancement because it deals with the act of speech in general and the act of speech of promise in particular by identifying the impact of Islamic culture on the production of the speech act of promising when communicating. The prominent ways and functions of the speech act

of promising receive a great deal of attention. According to the literature, few studies has been conducted on the speech act of promising at KSA-Jouf University with the goal of examining the Islamic cultural communication of the promised response among Saudi EFL students. As such, it contributes to the literature and serves as a resource for students of the Saudi EFL as well as researchers in the same field. This study seeks to fill a gap in the literature by investigating the Saudi EFL students' pragmatic knowledge (production and comprehension) of the speech act of promising.

Furthermore, this study involved Saudi EFL students at Jouf University's English Department to assist EFL learners at higher education levels highlight how they can make promises. It paid attention to Islamic cultural communication and its impact on the respondents' responses and on the promising functions by responding to a series of questions presented through the DCT and interviews. In other words, acknowledging the importance of Islamic cultural communication necessitates guiding the responses to promises in the right direction.

From one perspective, the study helped English students gain a better understanding of the impact of Islamic cultural communication on promising responses. Additionally, it allowed Saudi EFL students to explain the various functions they use when making their promises. Therefore, the study's findings are useful for EFL learners and teachers. The results of this study have a significant impact on the study of promise speech acts in the context of EFL.

1.9   Scope of the Study

This research primarily employed qualitative methods. To apply a DCT, a sample of 20 female students from the public university, Jouf University, was chosen and individual semi-structured interviews (hereafter SSI) were conducted with the

chosen sample. In fact, this study only included the female respondents because, due to religious reasons, the male and female students of the KSA are separated in educational settings. Regardless, the male students could produce different results. The target sample was limited to third- and fourth-year EFL Saudi students (specifically, Levels five, six, seven, and eight) from the female campus of Jouf University's English Department. The review of the relevant literature revealed that no study has been conducted in the selected location and domain. The findings from the sample were intended to shed light on the significant forms and functions used in response to promise responses. In addition, the analysis is based on the general framework of Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1976) speech act theory in order to identify the production and the recognition of the speech act of promising. Finally, the impact of Islamic culture on the production of the speech act of promising in communication was also investigated. As an example:

> The DCT question: *your father asks you to adhere to customs and traditions in a western country that you travelled to for studying. How would you promise him to do so?*
>
> The respondent's response: *I will be the son you used to know. Trust me, Dad.*
>
> Another response: *I promise not to disappoint you.*

1.10 Limitations of the Study

The current study has many limitations due to the nature of the research method. (1) The sample size was too small because the female section has a limited number of third- and fourth-year undergraduate students. The results were also influenced by the fact that the male section in the selected regions was not included in the study because

of religious reasons. Different findings might be obtained if they were included in the sample. However, the findings of this study can be applied to all Saudi universities because of the similarities in their context and background. The findings from different variables and populations can be used in similar studies of different types of speech acts. Some limitations could relate to the framework and models adapted in the study. The qualitative research method was adapted in the present study by applying the SSI and the FGD. This method was adapted to elicit data from respondents and to distinguish this study from its counterparts which depended on applying a quantitative research method, especially when adapting DCT.

1.11 Definition of Terms

This section defines the terms used throughout the study.

1.11.1 Speech Act: means that what the speakers do and perform when uttering various sentences *"including informing, promising, requesting, questioning, commanding, warning, preaching, congratulating, laying bets, swearing and exclaiming (McGregor: 2009;142)."*

1.11.2 Function of the Speech Act of promising: (Al-Dwairi, 2008) recommended some promising functions, namely: placating the hearer, assuaging someone's rage, encouraging others to achieve more in work or study

1.11.3 Direct Speech Act: represents expressing directly the meaning of the utterance as to express the same meaning literally. (Cheng & Ching, 2015)

1.11.4 Indirect Speech Act: represents expressing indirectly the relationship between the structure and its function (Yule, 1996)

1.11.5 The Speech Act of Promising: is a kind of speech act in which a speaker expresses his/her promise responses to a situation or to do something. Indeed, promising can be defined as: "a declaration that one will do or refrain from doing something specified" by (Merriam- Webster dictionary)

1.11.6 Communication: is regarded as a social issue that can occur in a social situation (Akmajian et al., 1990). To put it another way, communication entails relying on various contexts to provide information and understanding of a situation. According to Wood (2004), communication can occur in all communities at any time as a dynamic process to study the various ways that humans can make meaning in their lives.

1.12   Summary

The introductory chapter discusses the study's background. It begins with an overview of the Saudi educational system's history in the Kingdom. This chapter summarises the EFL's status from the Kingdom's inception to the present day. It also sheds some light on higher education, particularly at Jouf, University where the researcher provides a constructive profile of the region and the university in Tabarjal by providing details on the college, the department and the policies used in the learning and teaching of the EFL. Furthermore, the main reasons and rationale for conducting the study were outlined. The study's objectives, research questions, and significance were then investigated. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the study's limitations as well as the operational terms used in this study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITRATURE

2.1   Introduction

This chapter presents a review of related studies on speech act in general and promising in particular. It sheds light on defining models of speech acting theories, such as cultural communicative theories. Studying these theories bridges the gap, enriches current research, and assists the reader in understanding the topics presented in various dimensions. The emphasis is on distinguishing between direct and indirect speech acts, demonstrating how to use them in the analysis, and drawing attention to the theory of politeness in the respondents' responses. A review of related studies is then presented. Finally, the conceptual framework is represented in conjunction with the related studies to highlight the study's most important points.

2.2   History of Education System in Saudi Arabia

Before the KSA was declared a nation in 1932, education was limited to a few Islamic and Qur'anic schools and mosques where Saudi students were taught to learn Arabic, write and read, and recite and memorise the Holy Qur'an (Al-Liheibi, 2008; Alsharif, 2011 cited in Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). In terms of the Saudi educational system, there are three levels that are frequently devoted to Islam: elementary, intermediate, and secondary schools, in which students can choose between technical and religious paths (Wikipedia, Education in Saudi Arabia). Furthermore, teaching English in Saudi high school education dates back to the establishment of the Scholarship Preparation School (SPS) in Makkah in 1936 to provide students with the opportunity to travel abroad to receive western education to increase communication between western and Islamic cultures (Mahboob and Elyas, 2014).

Since its inception, the Ministry of Education has been in charge of the Saudi educational system. It was established in 1953 to oversee public education as well as the Teacher and Girls Colleges, until the Royal decision made in 2004 separate the Teacher and Girls Colleges under the supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education. The Ministry of Education's (MoE) policy of emphasising the basic objectives and goals of education in the country had an impact on the KSA educational system.

On the one hand, the dominant policy of KSA education is to improve education by incorporating the Islamic view of the universe and human life. The primary goals, on the other hand, are to adhere to the Ministry of Education's policy, the KSA Islamic Religion, and cultural prestige. Some of these goals are: (i) to demonstrate the compatibility of religion and science under the Islamic banner; (ii) to encourage and motivate researchers to conduct scientific research; and (iii) to provide Saudi students with live languages to support science and art, as well as to transfer knowledge to other communities (Ministry of Education in co-operation with Ministry of Higher Education and Vocational, 2008). In this regard, the International Bureau of Education (2010/2011) states that the overall goal of KSA education is to ensure that education is consistent with the understanding of Islam and its values, as well as to prepare Saudis to build the Saudi community in schools and universities. The kingdom's higher education system is discussed in the following section.

2.2.1 The Higher Education System in KSA

In 1975, the Ministry of Higher Education split off from the Ministry of Education. It was created not only to manage tertiary schools and universities but also to oversee educational offices abroad, international academic relations, and scholarships (Ministry of Higher Education, 2014, cites in Alrashidi and Phan, 2015).

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