

LANGUAGE IN INDIA
Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow
Volume 10 : 7 July 2010
ISSN 1930-2940

Managing Editor: M. S. Thirumalai, Ph.D.
Editors: B. Mallikarjun, Ph.D.
Sam Mohanlal, Ph.D.
B. A. Sharada, Ph.D.
A. R. Fatihi, Ph.D.
Lakhan Gusain, Ph.D.
K. Karunakaran, Ph.D.
Jennifer Marie Bayer, Ph.D.
S. M. Ravichandran, Ph.D.

**Polite Request Strategies as Produced by
Yemeni EFL Learners**

Yahya Mohammed Ali Al-Marrani, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate
Azimah Binti Sazalie, Ph.D.

Abstract

This is a socio-pragmatic investigation into polite request strategies made by Yemeni learners of English as a foreign language. For this study, 196 Yemeni learners of English were asked to respond in English to six different situations in which they carried out the speech act of request. The data was collected using a Discourse Completion Test (DCT). The data was analyzed according to the models proposed by Blum-Kulka, et al (1989).

Blum-Kulka, et al's (1989) analytical framework classified request into three levels of directness: direct strategies, conventionally indirect strategies, and non-conventionally indirect strategies. Five strategies are considered direct (mood derivable, performative, obligation statement, want statement), two strategies are considered conventionally indirect (query preparatory, suggestory formulae), and two strategies are non-conventionally indirect strategies (strong hints and mild hints).

Results indicate that the Yemeni EFL students prefer to use conventionally indirect strategies more than other strategies when the social distance, social power and ranking

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
10 : 7 July 2010

Yahya Mohammed Ali Al-Marrani, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate
Azimah Binti Sazalie, Ph.D.

Polite Request Strategies as Produced by Yemeni EFL Learners

of imposition are very high between the requester and requestee. On the other hand, they would choose to use direct strategies when the speaker and hearer have equal status and when the speaker has a higher status than the hearer to show solidarity between them.

Key words: Request, Politeness, Request Strategies, direct, indirectness

Introduction

In recent years, linguistic studies have shown a shift of emphasis in second and foreign language teaching and learning theories from a grammatical or structural approach to a communicative or pragmatics studies (Widdowson, 1987; Canale, and Swain, 1980) as cited in (Al-Zumor,2003).

One of the important approaches in pragmatics is the application of the notion of speech acts. The basic notion of speech act theory is that language performs communicative acts. This theory was developed by Austin (1962) who proposed that speech is a unit of speaking, used to perform different functions in communication and .certain actions can only be carried out using language.

Following Austin (1962), an utterance can be categorized into three layers:

- (1) Locutionary act refers to an utterance simply constructed by its literal meaning. For example, if your friend tells you, “the suit you wear is very nice”, you get the meaning that this expression describes the suit.
- (2) The illocutionary act is performed by the utterance. As a consequence, “the suit you wear is very nice” can function as a compliment from your friend to praise your choice.
- (3) The prelocutionary act refers to the effect of the utterance on the listener. Under such circumstances, if the listener is good, he may realize the indirect meaning; the listener will thank and offer the speaker his suit as a gift.

Austin considered the illocutionary act as the most important act, because it is actually what the speaker wants to achieve through the action of uttering the sentences. For example, “could you lend me your book, please?” is an illocutionary act and can function as a request. The requester asks the requestee to perform something for him.

Searle (1969) built on Austin’s work and proposed a systematic framework by which to incorporate speech acts, or more specifically, illocutionary acts, into linguistic theory.

According to Searle, Austin’s classification of speech acts is problematic and inconsistent. Searle (1976, cited in Lin, 2005) argues that Austin’s classification “does

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

10 : 7 July 2010

Yahya Mohammed Ali Al-Marrani, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate

Azimah Binti Sazalie, Ph.D.

Polite Request Strategies as Produced by Yemeni EFL Learners

not maintain a clear distinction between illocutionary verbs and acts; nor are the categories based on consistently applied principles.”

Furthermore, Searle classified illocutionary acts into five categories which reflect the different types of conditions underlying speech acts:

1. Representatives which tell people how things are, (e.g. suggest, insist, swear, etc.)
2. Directives which try to get people to do things (e.g. order, request, invite, etc.)
3. Commissive which make us commit ourselves to do things (e.g. intend, favour, etc.)
4. Expressive which make us express our feelings and attitudes (e.g. thank, congratulate, apologize, etc.)
5. Declarations which make us bring about changes through our utterances (e.g. resign, appoint somebody, fire somebody, etc.)

Furthermore, Searle (1975) categorized speech acts into two types ‘direct speech acts’ and ‘indirect speech acts’.

1. Direct speech acts are defined as utterances in which the meaning of the expression is consistent with what the speaker means or intends.
2. Indirect speech acts are defined as utterances in which there is no relation between the sentence meaning and speaker meaning. For example, when the speaker utters the sentence as “can you reach the dictionary?” and mean it not merely as a question but as a request to pass the dictionary. The problem posed by indirect speech act is how a hearer can understand the indirect meaning of the sentence.

According to Searle (1975) what speaker means is more than what a speaker says. He also contends that certain linguistic forms will tend to become conventionalized standard idiomatic forms for indirect speech acts. For example, utterance such as “can you reach the dictionary?” is conventionally used to make indirect request.

Searle (1979:48) also states, “the chief motivation for using indirect forms is politeness.” Using the ‘can you’ form as a request instead of using imperative shows that the speaker is polite and does not presume to know about the hearer’s ability and also gives the hearer the option of refusing.

Politeness and Speech Act of Request

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

10 : 7 July 2010

Yahya Mohammed Ali Al-Marrani, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate

Azimah Binti Sazalie, Ph.D.

Polite Request Strategies as Produced by Yemeni EFL Learners

The terms *politeness* plays an important role to protect face during the realization of speech acts such as requests. Brasdefer (2005) states a request is a directive act and a pre-event which initiates the negotiation of face during a conversational interaction. Request is a type of speech act where the speaker (requester) demands from the hearer (requestee) to perform an act which is for the benefit of the requester at the cost of the requestee.

This act can be verbal or non-verbal. Request belongs to the directive type of speech act (Reiter, 2000). Leech (1983) refers to it as 'impositive' in order to avoid confusion in using the term 'directive' in relation to direct and indirect illocutions.

A request is composed of two parts: head act and modifiers. Head act is the main utterance which conveys a complete request and can stand by itself without any modifiers in order to convey request. The head act is followed or preceded by modifiers that mitigate or aggravate the impact of the request on the addressee (hearer) (Reiter, 2000).

Face is "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself. This face is emotionally invested, and [it can be] lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to interaction" (Brown and Levinson, 1987:61).

Lin (2009) points out that making requests, as a directive which involves the speaker's effort to get the assistance of the hearer, is one of the most difficult speech acts for learners, especially second language (L2) learners, because it calls for considerable cultural and linguistic expertise on the part of the learner, and requires a high level of appropriateness for their successful completion.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), requests are intrinsically face-threatening because they are intended to threaten the addressee's negative face (i.e., freedom of action and freedom from imposition). They explain that direct forms appear to be impolite and face threatening act, but indirect forms tend to be more polite and are a suitable strategy for avoiding threatening face.

Al-Eryani (2007) states different cultures have different perceptions and interpretations of appropriateness and politeness. Moreover, Chen and Chen (2007) state that the appropriateness of requests depends on a culture in a specific situation and some factors which influence the production of requests such as status of the hearer, familiarity, age, the sex of the participants, and social power

Furthermore, Lanteigne (2007) states that cultural differences affect perceptions of politeness and one can be polite within one language and/or culture, but impolite in other

languages and/or cultures. On the other hand, politeness depends on the culture of society.

In addition, Warren-Rothlin (2007) states that most languages have a wide variety of strategies for communicating politeness, however these are always highly culture-specific and relate closely to broader cultural norms.

Theoretical Background of the Study

The primary theoretical framework of this study is based on Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987). The main idea of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory is that certain speech acts are intrinsically threatening to face and thus require softening by means of politeness strategies.

The theory focuses on the effects of linguistic choices on the face wants of the hearer, whether they feel approved of, liked, or respect. The theory emphasizes softening of the request as the main purpose for using politeness strategies. This study is also based on an adaptation of Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) CCSARP (Cross Cultural Speech Act Realization Project) coding scheme used to study the realization of speech acts in a number of languages such as American English, French, Hebrew, Argentinean Spanish, Russian and German.

Related Literature

Several research and many studies have been conducted in the area of speech acts of request. Blum-Kulka (1982, 1983) conducted a study on the request behaviour in Hebrew and compared it with the Canadian and American speakers of English.

The findings of those studies show that the degree of social distance and power relationship between interlocutors are very important factors in making request. And also those studies confirm the view that each language provides the forms for its speakers to perform speech acts. However, the choice of the appropriate form for a speech act is not language specific, but culture specific. Also they confirm that politeness value is not determined by the language form, it is determined by the context of speech act, because what may be viewed as polite in some culture may not be viewed with the same degree of politeness in another culture. Therefore, misunderstanding and using inappropriate forms in cross cultural communication should be expected.

Reiter (2000) carried out across-cultural study of linguistic politeness in Britain and Uruguay based on Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987). In her study the collected linguistic data are analyzed by using a modified coding scheme from the Cross-

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

10 : 7 July 2010

Yahya Mohammed Ali Al-Marrani, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate

Azimah Binti Sazalie, Ph.D.

Polite Request Strategies as Produced by Yemeni EFL Learners

Cultural Speech Act Realization project (CCSARP). This model is based on Cohen and Olshtain (1981, 1983) and further elaborated into the (CCSARP) coding manual (Blum-Kulka et al, 1989) in their coding model.

The findings show that British English and Uruguayan Spanish speakers varying the way they frame their requests according to the social distance between the interlocutors. The Uruguayans employ higher levels of directness than the British. On the other hand, the British employed higher levels of non-conventional indirectness which had vary low incidence in Uruguayan Spanish. Reiter (2000:180) concludes that “with the case of request it seems that speakers of Uruguayan Spanish don’t consider ‘negative’ politeness as weighty as the British who show more of a need to redress the addressee’s ‘negative’ face.” Reiter’s study suggests that Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory is applicable to the British and Uruguayan community.

Maria Kogotsidis (2002) conducted a study to examine whether there are marked cross-cultural differences in the degree of requestive directness between the Greek native speakers (GNSS) and the British English native speakers (ENSS) in telephone business encounters. The subjects in this study were two hundred random callers were used as subjects, one hundred Greek callers (46 female, 54 male), and one hundred English callers (54 female, 46 male). Due to the nature of telephone data, no homogeneity in the callers used could be ensured (their age, educational background, social background, cultural background etc.). For this reason, only their gender was recorded. The method of data gathering followed the collection and comparison of telephone opening requests produced by callers at the call centre of a UK airline based in the South of England and semi-structured interviews were also carried out in relation to the telephone operators who received the calls. These interviews were conducted in order to gain some qualitative insights into how the callers’ requests and telephone behaviour were perceived by the hearers (operators). The findings of the study show that there are marked cross cultural differences in the strategy selection and degree of directness employed between the GNSS and the ENSS as far as their requesting strategies are concerned, and reveal the tendency on the part of the Creek native speakers to employ greater directness in their requestive production more than ENSS.

Byon (2004) conducted a study to investigate and describe socio-pragmatic features of American Korean Foreign Language learners in the Korean communicative act of request. The subjects in this study were 150 female university students. Fifty female Korean native speakers provided the native Korean data, fifty female American English native speakers provided the native English data and fifty female American native speakers of English who were Korean Foreign Language learners provided the non-native data. The data of the study was collected through a written questionnaire in the form of the Discourse Completion Test. The findings of the study show that the American Korean

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

10 : 7 July 2010

Yahya Mohammed Ali Al-Marrani, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate

Azimah Binti Sazalie, Ph.D.

Polite Request Strategies as Produced by Yemeni EFL Learners

foreign language learners as advanced learners appear to develop a greater sensitivity to the use of politeness strategies in requesting than is seen in native speakers. Also the study supports that the American Korean foreign language learners as advanced learners do not acquire fully native speakers-like ways of requesting and they tend to produce longer request than native speakers do. The KFL learners used a greater number of formulae are more varied in form than the Korean native speakers. Also the findings of the study suggest that the study can help the KFL teachers become aware of cultural differences in language usage, by emphasizing the importance of a curriculum that utilizes the act of request within its cultural contexts. Also KFL textbook dialogues should be constructed so as to reflect the Korean way of speaking and thinking.

Felix-Brasdefer (2005) conducted a study to examine the notions of indirectness and politeness in speech act of requests, including head acts and external modifications, among Mexican university students in role play situation. The subjects of the study were ten NSs of Mexican Spanish included four male and six females. The data of the study was collected through an open-ended role-play. The findings of the study show that NSs of Mexican Spanish prefer to use conventional indirectness strategies by means of 'query preparatory' when making request in situations which display + Power or + Distance, whereas prefer to use directness strategies when the relationship between the interlocutors was closer (-Distance). Also the study proves that there is no relation between indirectness and politeness as observed by Brown and Levinson's (1987) and Leech's (1983). The findings of the study show that direct requests are situation-dependent and seem to be the expected behavior among Mexican subjects in a solidarity politeness system (-Power, - Distance). Also the findings of the study are consistent with other studies which found that directness in German and Polish cultures should not be considered impolite, but rather should be seen as a way of expressing closeness and affiliation.

Marti (2006) conducted a study to identify the realization and politeness perception of requests made by Turkish monolingual speakers and Turkish-German bilingual returnees and investigate the possibility that the Turkish-German bilingual returnees' pragmatic performance may have been affected by pragmatic transfer from German. The researcher used in his study (DCT) in order to collect data from Turkish monolinguals and Turkish-German bilingual returnees, in order to elicit requests in 10 different situation and to investigate the relationship between indirectness and politeness. The findings of the study are generally in accordance with Blum-Kulka (1987) there is no linear relation between indirectness and politeness. Indirectness and politeness are strongly connected concepts. Also the study shows the Turkish speakers adopt quite direct strategies whereas German speakers prefer indirect strategies.

Chen and Eileen Chen (2007) conducted a study to explore the use of request strategies and the effect of social variables on Taiwanese EFL learners and American native speakers. Fourteen native English speakers and fifty Taiwanese EFL learners participated in this study. The researchers used Cross Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) (Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper, 1989) to collect data. The findings of the study show that conventionally indirect strategy is the most preferred choice for both groups and in term of the influence of social variables the analysis of the main request strategy types reveals when the interlocutors have equal social status, they prefer to use conventionally indirect strategy whereas the speaker's social status is higher than the addressee's social status, the choice of strategy tends to move towards directness. Therefore, the study show that cross cultural variations influenced by the factor of social status.

Lin (2009) carried out a study to compare the use of query preparatory modals in conventionally indirect requests made by native speakers of English (NS-Es), native speakers of Chinese (NS-Cs), and Chinese learners of English-as-a-Foreign Language (EFLs). The subjects of the study were sixty native speakers of Chinese in Taiwan and 60 native speakers of English in the US. They were all university students aged from 21 to 30 at the time of the study. Each group was composed of 30 males and 30 females. All the Chinese participants of the study were students in the third year in National Sun Yat-sen University and National Kaohsiung Normal University and American participants were students in the University of Illinois. The data were collected by using the Discourse Completion Task (DCT). The findings of the study provide support for Blum-Kulka's (1989) generalizations on the conventionality of indirect request. First, although the same range and types of modals are used in Chinese and English, the preference orders and distributions of the sub-strategies vary cross-culturally, which results in inter-language deviations from what is observed in DCT-elicited NS English data. Second, the sub-strategies also vary in terms of form, function, and distribution.

Jalilifar (2009) investigated the request strategies as used by Iranian learners of English as a foreign language and Australian native speakers of English. The respondents of the study divided into two groups. First group involved 96 BA and MA Persian students and second group 10 Australian native speakers of English. A Discourse Completion Test (DCT) was used to collect data related to the request strategies used by each group. The situation in DCT was based on two important social factors: power and social distance. The result of the study that there is pragmatic development, particularly in the movement from direct to conventionally indirect strategies on the part of EFL learners, the learners who have higher proficiency in English use indirect strategies more than other strategies, whereas native speakers of English balance between this strategies. The learners who have lower proficiency in English use direct strategies more than other strategies. In terms of the influence of the social variables, the findings of this research reveal that as

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

10 : 7 July 2010

Yahya Mohammed Ali Al-Marrani, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate

Azimah Binti Sazalie, Ph.D.

Polite Request Strategies as Produced by Yemeni EFL Learners

far as social dominance is concerned, EFL learners display closer performance to native speakers. But in terms of social distance many differences are observed between the types of request strategy made by native speakers and Iranian learners. It seems that EFL learners have not acquired sufficient sociopragmatic knowledge to be able to display the proper social behavior. That is, they are not sensitive to both social power and social distance.

The Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate polite request strategies as produced by Yemeni learners of English as a foreign language and the effect of social distance, social power and ranking of imposition in the choice of request strategies in their daily conversation. The current study does not aim to investigate the gender differences in the choice of polite request strategies.

Method

Subjects

The respondents of the study comprise 196 undergraduate students, namely 98 male respondents and 98 female respondents. The respondents were university students who are studying at the Departments of English language, Sana'a University, Faculty of Education Sana'a, and Arhab. The respondents are relatively homogeneous in terms of their cultural background and academic/ linguistic experiences.

Procedure

All respondents were asked to fill out a Discourse Completion Test (DCT). This test was originally designed by Blum-Kulka (1982) and has been widely used since then in collecting data on speech acts realization both within and cross language groups. The questionnaire used in this investigation involves six written situations. Respondents are then asked to complete each dialogue by writing a suitable request in English language. Respondents were asked to put themselves in real situation and to assume that in each situation they would, in fact, say something they were asked to write down what they would say. The researcher administered the questionnaire in the second semester of the academic year 2008/2009.

Table 1: Classification Situations According to Social Variables

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

10 : 7 July 2010

Yahya Mohammed Ali Al-Marrani, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate

Azimah Binti Sazalie, Ph.D.

Polite Request Strategies as Produced by Yemeni EFL Learners

Situations	Social power	Social distance	Ranking of imposition
1- Customer asks the waiter for bill.	S>H	+SD	Low
2- Speaker asks his brother to bring some vegetables.	S>H	+SD	Low
3- A university student asks teacher to lend him his book	S<H	+SD	Low
4- An employee asks his/her manager to leave work early	S<H	+SD	Low
5- Student asks his/her friend to borrow his/her note	S=H	-SD	High
6- Speaker asks his neighbour to drive him to market	S=H	-SD	High

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data of the study is based on an adaptation of Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) CCSARP (Cross Cultural Speech Act Realization Project) coding scheme used to study the realization of speech acts in a number of languages. Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) analytical framework is based on the universal premise that request strategies in all languages will show three major levels of directness: direct, conventionally indirect, non-conventionally indirect. According to this scale, the researcher can identify request strategies types as produced by Yemeni learners of English as a foreign language. The researcher will use SPSS to analyze data in terms of frequency and percentage.

Discussion of the Results

The result presents the distribution of request strategy types in Tables and Figures. The frequency and percentage of the request types occurred across s situations. In this section the researcher will analyze the data and the findings will be presented in terms of request strategies used by Yemeni EFL learners.

Situation 1

In situation one (Customer is asking the waiter for bill.), table 2 and figure 1 below show that Yemeni EFL Learners have a great tendency to use direct strategies by mean of mood derivable 62.8% in addressing the waiter more than other strategies. The next most frequently chosen strategies are indirect strategies by means of query preparatory 35.2% and direct strategies by means of want statements 2.05.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

10 : 7 July 2010

Yahya Mohammed Ali Al-Marrani, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate

Azimah Binti Sazalie, Ph.D.

Polite Request Strategies as Produced by Yemeni EFL Learners

Table 2: Distribution of Frequency and Percentage of Request Strategies in situation one

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Want statements	4	2.0	2.0	2.0
Query preparatory	69	35.2	35.2	37.2
Mood derivable	123	62.8	62.8	100.0
Total	196	100.0	100.0	

The finding has shown that Yemeni EFL Learners tend to use direct strategies when the requesting people in lower position. It has shown that the more distant the relationship and power between the interlocutors, the more likely it is for these subjects to issue a request directly. It should be noted that direct requests strategies which implied by Yemeni EFL Learners were often modified by the lexical which mitigate the direct request such as 'please', 'excuse me', 'I am sorry for bothering you', 'if you don't mind' and 'I wonder if'

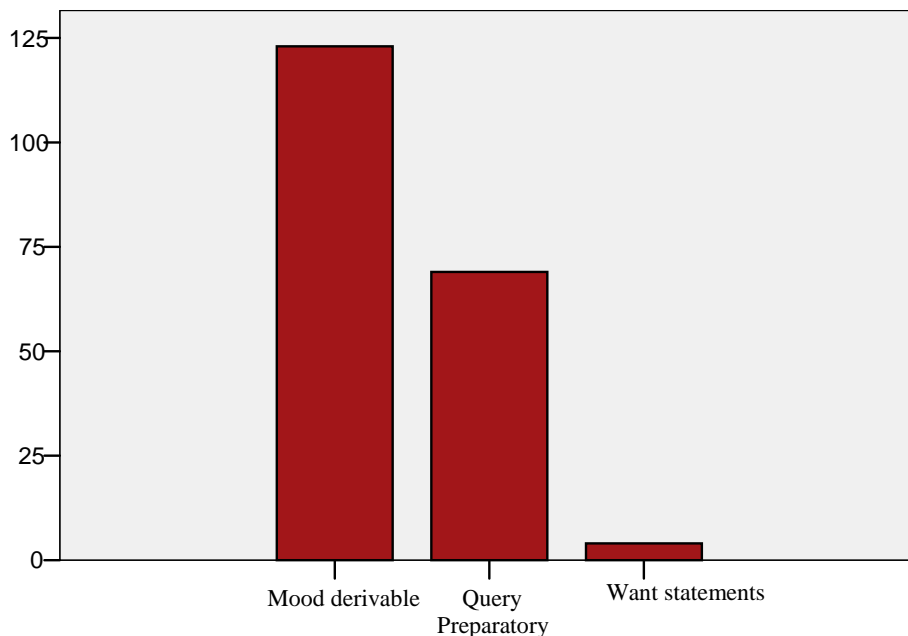


Figure1: Request strategies used by Yemeni EFL Learners (situation1)

Situation 2

In situation two (Speaker is asking his younger brother to bring sugar.), table 3 and figure 2 below show that Yemeni EFL Learners tend to use direct strategies by means mood derivable 62.4% more than other strategies and the next most frequently chosen strategies are indirect strategies by means of query preparatory 26.0% and direct strategies by means of want statements 3.6%, obligation statements 1.5% and hedge performative .5%.

Table 3: Distribution of Frequency and Percentage of Request Strategies in situation two

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Hedge performative	1	.5	.5	.5
Obligation statements	3	1.5	1.5	2.0
Want statements	7	3.6	3.6	5.6
Query preparatory	51	26.0	26.0	31.6
Mood derivable	134	68.4	68.4	100.0
Total	196	100.0	100.0	

The finding has shown again that Yemeni EFL Learners tend to use direct strategies when requesting people in lower position. Direct strategies or imperatives are classified according to Scollon and Scollon (2001) as solidarity politeness strategies because they imply that the speaker assumes only a small social distance between him/herself and the interlocutor.

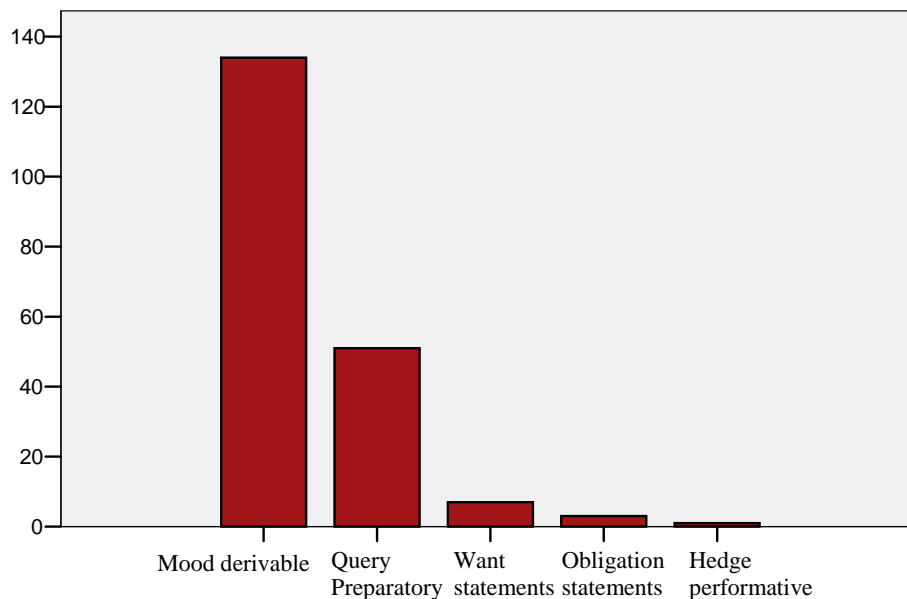


Figure 2: Request Strategies used by Yemeni ELF Learners (situation 2)

The findings of situation one and two reveal that the Yemeni EFL learners prefer to employ direct strategies by means of mood derivable more than indirect strategies when requester in higher position than requestee. Also the preference for direct request strategies in these two situations seems to be an instance of positive politeness strategies

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

10 : 7 July 2010

Yahya Mohammed Ali Al-Marrani, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate

Azimah Binti Sazalie, Ph.D.

Polite Request Strategies as Produced by Yemeni EFL Learners

according to Brown and Levinson (1987). Furthermore, the explanation for this is that Yemeni culture permits to use direct request strategies when requesting people in lower position than requester.

Situation 3

In situation three, (A university student is asking his teacher to lend him his book.), table 4 and figure 3 reveal that Yemeni EFL Learners have a great tendency to use indirect strategies by means of query preparatory 87.2% in addressing their teacher more than direct strategies by means of want statements 7.7%, mood derivable 3.6% and hedge performative 1.5%.

Table 4: Distribution of Frequency and Percentage of Request Strategies in situation three

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Hedge performative	3	1.5	1.5	1.5
Mood derivable	7	3.6	3.6	5.1
Want statements	15	7.7	7.7	12.8
Query preparatory	171	87.2	87.2	100.0
Total	196	100.0	100.0	

The findings as shown in Table 3 reveal that Yemeni EFL Learners tend to use query preparatory request strategy more frequently than other strategies. This result support that the three social factors, the distance (D) between the speaker (S) and the hearer (H), the power of the hearer over the speaker (P) and the risk of imposition determined the performance of the subjects in this situation, and that gives support for the claim of Brown and Levinson (1987).

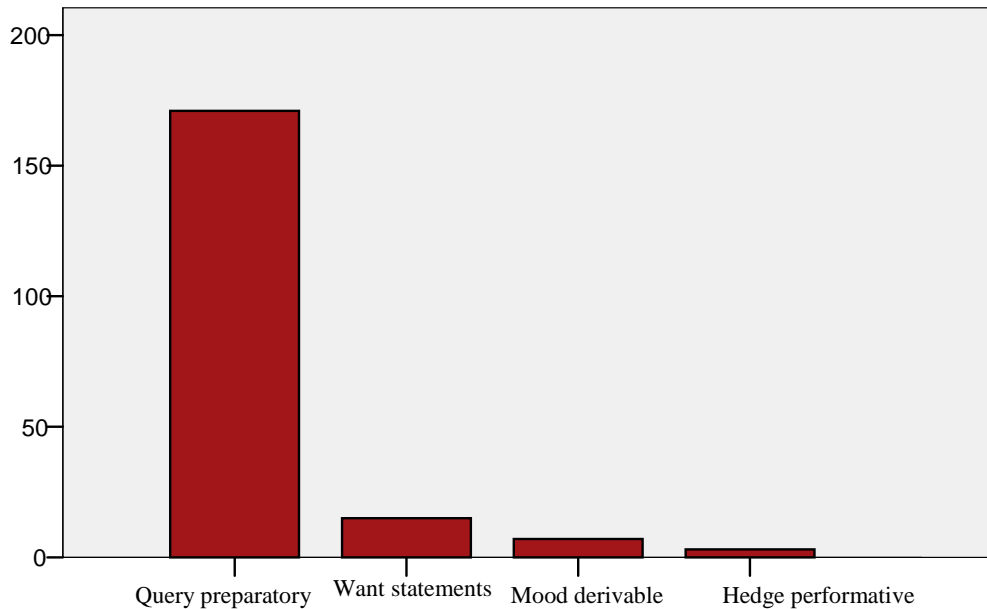


Figure 3: Request strategies Used by Yemeni EFL Learners (situation 3)

Situation 4

In situation four, (An employee is asking his manager to leave work early.), table 5 and figure 4 below show that Yemeni EFL Learners tend to use indirect strategies by means of query preparatory 60.2% in addressing their manager more than direct strategies by means of want statements 27.6%, mood derivable 9.2%, and hedge performative 1.5%. Non-conventionally indirect strategy by means of strong hints 1.5% is also observed in the data to show a high degree of politeness in this situation.

Table 5: Distribution of Frequency and Percentage of Request Strategies in situation four

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Hedge performative	3	1.5	1.5	1.5
Strong hints	3	1.5	1.5	3.1
Mood derivable	18	9.2	9.2	12.2
Want statements	54	27.6	27.6	39.8
Query preparatory	118	60.2	60.2	100.0
Total	196	100.0	100.0	

The findings as shown in Table 5 reveal that Yemeni EFL Learners prefer to use indirect strategies when the hearer has social distance and power more than the speaker and when

the ranking of imposition is very high. So the performance of the respondents in this situation gives support for the claim of Brown and Levinson (1987).

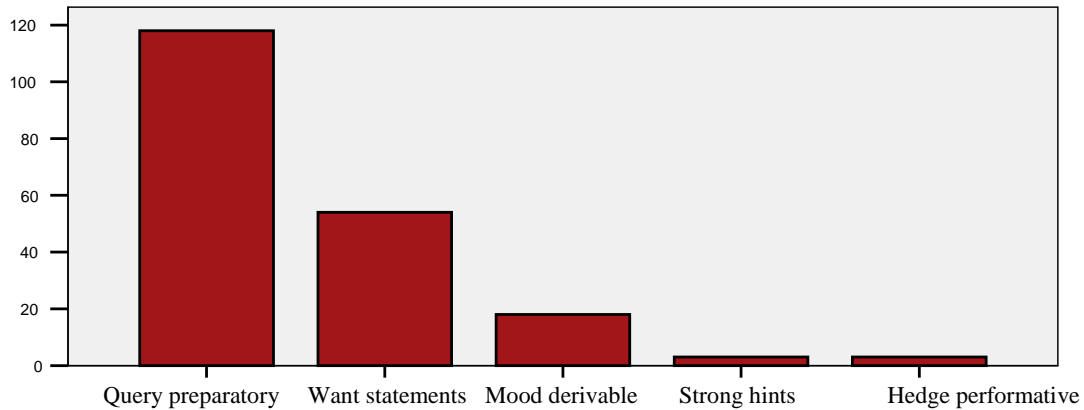


Figure 4: Request Strategies Used by Yemeni EFL Learners (situation 4)

The findings of situations three and four reveal that Yemeni EFL learners prefer to use conventionally indirect strategies by means of query preparatory more than other strategies. The explanation for this is that the requestee is in a higher position, so Yemeni EFL learners prefer to use query preparatory strategies to show their respectable and deference by making indirect request or negative politeness strategies to protect their faces and the requestees' faces

Situation 5

In situation five, (Student is asking his friend to borrow his note.), table 6 and figure 5 below show that Yemeni EFL Learners prefer to use indirect strategies (query preparatory 69.9%) in addressing their friends when the ranking of imposition is very high more than direct strategies (want statements 13.3%), (Mood derivable 13.3%), (hedge performative 1.5%), (strong hints 1.0%), (mild hints .5) and (performative .5%). Furthermore, the non-conventional indirect strategies (strong hints) and (mild hints) are also observed in this situation in a low statistical level.

Table 6: Distribution of Frequency and Percentage of Request Strategies in situation five

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Performative	1	.5	.5	.5
Mild hints	1	.5	.5	1.0
Strong hints	2	1.0	1.0	2.0
Hedge performative	3	1.5	1.5	3.6
Mood derivable	26	13.3	13.3	16.8
Want statements	26	13.3	13.3	30.1
Query preparatory	137	69.9	69.9	100.0
Total	196	100.0	100.0	

The findings as shown in Table (7) reveal that Yemeni EFL Learners prefer to use indirect strategies when the ranking of imposition very high and cost the hearer something even though with friends. Yemeni EFL Learners tend to use indirect strategies in this situation in order to show a high degree of politeness and mitigate and minimize the impact of request on the hearer and to protect his/her face and the hearer's face.

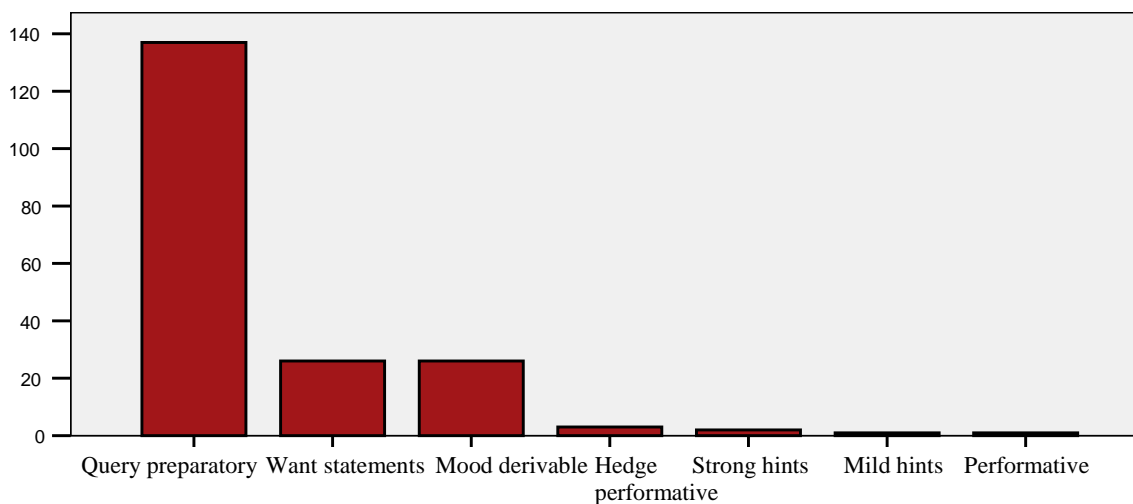


Figure 5: Request Strategies Used by Yemeni EFL Learners (situation 5)

Situation 6

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

10 : 7 July 2010

Yahya Mohammed Ali Al-Marrani, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate

Azimah Binti Sazalie, Ph.D.

Polite Request Strategies as Produced by Yemeni EFL Learners

In situation six, (Speaker is asking his neighbor to drive him to city mart.), table 7 and figure 6 reveal that there is a greater tendency by Yemeni EFL Learners to use indirect strategies by means of query preparatory 81.6% in addressing their neighbors more than other direct strategies by means of want statements 11.2%, hedge performative 3.1%, mood derivable 2.6%, non-conventionally indirect strategies by means of strong hints .5%, conventionally indirect strategies by means of suggestory formulae .5% and direct strategies by means of obligation statements .5%.

Table 7: Distribution of Frequency and Percentage of Request Strategies in situation six

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Obligation statements	1	.5	.5	.5
Suggestory formulae	1	.5	.5	1.0
Strong hints	1	.5	.5	1.5
Mood derivable	5	2.6	2.6	4.1
Hedge performative	6	3.1	3.1	7.1
Want statements	22	11.2	11.2	18.4
Query preparatory	160	81.6	81.6	100.0
Total	196	100.0	100.0	

The findings as shown in Table 7 reveal that Yemeni EFL Learners prefer to use indirect strategies when the social distance and the ranking of imposition are very high and cost the hearer something. Yemeni EFL Learners tend to use indirect strategies in this situation in order to show a high degree of politeness and mitigate and minimize the impact of request on the hearer and to protect his/her face and the hearer's face.

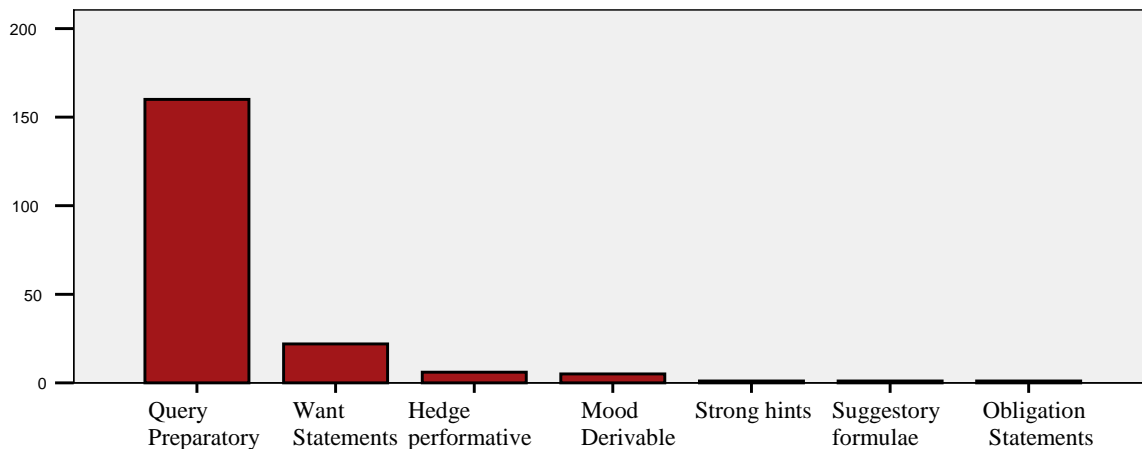


Figure 6: Request Strategies Used by Yemeni EFL Learners (situation 6)

The findings of situations four and five reveal that Yemeni EFL learners prefer to employ conventionally indirect strategies by means of query preparatory because of that ranking of imposition is very high, so the respondents prefer to use indirect strategies/ negative politeness strategies to be more polite than usual. Therefore, the performance of the respondents in these situations gives support for the claim of Brown and Levinson (1987).

Conclusion

In this paper the researcher examined the notion of polite request strategies among Yemeni EFL learners. It was found that conventionally indirectness, mostly realized by means of 'query preparatory' and directness realized by means of 'mood derivable', 'want statements', 'hedge performative', 'performative', and 'obligation statements'. Also non-conventionally indirectness was found in some situations with low frequency and percentage by means of 'strong hints' and 'mild hints'.

The findings reveal that in situations one and two, there is a great trend by EFL learners to use to employ higher levels of directness with softeners such as 'please', 'excuse me', 'I am sorry for bothering you', 'if you don't mind' and 'I wonder if'. Yemeni EFL learners employed high levels of directness without the fear of losing 'face'. This is not indicating the appropriateness of directness in 'close' social distance relationships, but probably the fact that it is the expected behavior in such situations. The use of direct strategy (imperative) by Yemeni EFL learners could be attributed to the closeness and the solidarity between the interlocutors. Al-Zumor (2003) states that imperatives with

softeners are more frequently used by Arab speakers when addressing their juniors as well as their equals provided that the situation is not difficult, when the action desired to be performed by the addressee is a light favor. In short, the preference for direct requests by Yemeni EFL learners seems to be an instance of solidarity or positive politeness between interlocutors

The findings of situations three and four show that there is a preference by Yemeni EFL learners to use conventionally indirectness strategies with high frequency and percentage in situations when the speaker (requester) has lower power and distance than the hearer (requestee), and requester has higher power and distance than requestee the preference strategies are conventionally indirectness strategies.

In situations five and six, there is equal power and distance between interlocutors but the ranking of imposition is very high so Yemeni EFL Learners employed indirectness strategies more than direct in order to mitigate and minimize the impact of the request and face threatening act.

Finally, the current study proves that Yemeni EFL learners employ different polite request strategies (direct, conventionally indirect and non-conventionally indirect) with softeners to mitigate and soften the impact of upcoming request. Also it proves that the social factors (social distance, social power and ranking of imposition) are very important and affect the choice of polite request strategies.

References

Al-Eryani, A. (2007) Refusal Strategies by Yemeni EFL Learners, *The Asian EFL Journal*, 9(2):19-34

Al-Zumor, A. (2003). *A pragmatic Analysis of Speech Acts as Produced by Native Speakers of Arabic*. Unpublished Ph.D thesis, Department of Linguistics, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh India.

Austin, J. (1962). *How to do things with words*, Harvard University, William James Lectures 1955. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
10 : 7 July 2010

Yahya Mohammed Ali Al-Marrani, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate
Azimah Binti Sazalie, Ph.D.

Polite Request Strategies as Produced by Yemeni EFL Learners

- Blum-Kulka,S. (1982). Learning how to say what you mean in second language: a study of speech Act performance of learners of hebrew as a second language. *Applied Linguistics* 3: 29 -59.
- Blum-Kulka, S. (1983). *Interpreting and performing speech acts in a second language: across cultural study of hebrew and english socio-linguistics and language acquisition*. Rowley,A: Newbury House.
- Blum-Kulka,S. (1987). Indirectness and politeness in requests: same or difference? *Journal of Pragmatics* 11: 131-146.
- Blum-Kulka,S. et al's (1989). *Cross cultural pragmatics: requests and apologies*. Norwood, New Jersey. Ablex.
- Brown, P. & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: some universals in language use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Byon, A. (2004). Sociolinguistic analysis of korean requests: pedagogical settings. *Journal of Pragmatics* 36: 1673-1704.
- Chen, S.& Chen, . E. (2007). Inter-language requests: a cross-cultural study of english and chinese, *the Linguistics Journal* 2: 33-52.
- Economidou- Kogetsidis,M. (2002) Requesting strategies in english and greek: observations from on airline's call centre, *Nottingham Linguistic Circular* 17. Available from: www.nottingham.ac.uk/english/nic/economidou.pdf.
- Félix-Brasdefer, J.. (2005). Indirectness and politeness in mexican requests. In *Selected Proceedings of the7th Hispanic Linguistics Symposium*, ed. David Eddington, 66-78. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project.
- Jalilifar, A. (2009) Request Strategies: Cross-Sectional Study of Iranian EFL Learners and Australian Native Speakers. *English language teaching* 2(1): 46-61
- Lanteigne, B.(2007) A different culture or just plain rude? *English Teaching: Practice and Critique* 6 (2):89-98
- Lin, H. (2005) Contextualizing Linguistic Politeness in Chinese- A socio-pragmatic Approach with Examples from Persuasive Sales Talking in Taiwan Mandarin. Published Ph.D thesis. The Ohio State University. Ohio, USA.
<http://etd.ohiolink.edu/etd/send-pdf.cgi>

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

10 : 7 July 2010

Yahya Mohammed Ali Al-Marrani, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate

Azimah Binti Sazalie, Ph.D.

Polite Request Strategies as Produced by Yemeni EFL Learners

- Lin, Y. (2009) Query preparatory modals: Cross-linguistic and cross-situational variations in request modification. *Journal of Pragmatics* 41: 1636–1656
- Marti,L. (2006). Indirectness and politeness in turkish–german bilingual and Turkish monolingual requests. *Journal of Pragmatics* 38:1836-1869.
- Olishtain, E. & Cohen, A. (1983) *Apology: a speech act sets in socio linguistics and language aAcquisition*. N. Wolfson and E. Judd (eds) 18-35. Mass: Olishtain, E. & Cohen, Andrew (1991)
- Olishtain, E. & Cohen, A. (1983) Developing a measure of sociocultural competence: the case of apology. *Language learning* 31(1):113-134.
- Reiter, R. M. (2000) *Linguistic politeness in britain and uruguay: contrastive study of requests and apologies*. Amsterdam/ Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Searle, John. (1969). *Speech acts*. London. Cambridge University Press
- Searle, John. (1975). *Indirect speech acts. syntax and semantics*, ed., by Peter Cole and Jerry L. Morgan, 59-82. New York: NY: Academic Press.
- Searle, John. 1976. A classification of illocutionary acts. *Language in Society* 5:1-23.
- Warren-Rothlin, A. (2007) Politeness Strategies in Biblical Hebrew and West African Languages. *Journal of Translation*, 3(1):55-71

Discourse Completion Test (DCT)

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

10 : 7 July 2010

Yahya Mohammed Ali Al-Marrani, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate

Azimah Binti Sazalie, Ph.D.

Polite Request Strategies as Produced by Yemeni EFL Learners

Dear Respondent

You are kindly requested to complete this questionnaire which contains situations in which you might find yourself. This discourse completion test (DCT) will help in analyzing polite request strategies as produced by Yemeni EFL learners which expected to yield fruitful results. Your responses will be dealt with in purely academic manner and will never be used for any other purposes than for this research. I would like appreciate it if you could complete this questionnaire as soon as possible. Thanking you for your help and co-operate.

<p>First, please fill in the following form information about yourself</p> <p>Age:</p> <p>Male/Female:</p> <p>Major:</p> <p>Level:</p>

Please read the following short description of situations in which you may find yourself. Think of what you might say in responses. Write your response in the space provided. Respond as if you were in an actual and real situation.

1. You have a delicious meal in a college's restaurant and now it is time to ask the waiter to prepare your bill. What would you say?
.....
.....
2. You want your younger brother to bring some vegetable from the near-by grocery. What would you say?
.....
.....
3. You are university student and you want to request professor who teaches you teaching methods to lend you his book to do your assignment. What would you say?
.....
.....

4. You are an employee in a company .You want to request the manager of your company to let you leave work early because you have an appointment with dentist. What would you say?
.....
.....
5. You have missed an important class and you want to borrow your friend’s note. What would you say?
.....
.....
6. You want your neighbor to drive you to city mart. You want to buy some fruit for your family. What would you say?
.....
.....

Thank You

Yahya Mohammed Ali Al-Marrani, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate
English Department, Sana’a University, Yemen, and
Department of English Language studies
Universiti Sains Malaysia
Pinang, Malaysia
almarrani99@yahoo.com

Azimah Binti Sazalie, Ph.D.
Department of English Language Studies
Universiti Sains Malaysia
Pinang, Malaysia
azimah@usm.my