

**Request Strategies as Used  
by Advanced Arab Learners  
of English as a Foreign Language**

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### **Abstract**

This study is a socio-linguistic investigation into the request strategies used by advanced Arab learners of English as compared to those strategies used by native speakers of English. The sample involves 20 Arab students enrolled in graduate English courses in four Arabic universities and 20 British students perusing graduate programs in three British universities. A Discourse-Completion-Test is used to generate data related to the request strategies used by each group. The data analysis reveals differences and similarities between the two groups. It is found that the two groups adopt similar strategies when addressing their request to equals or people in higher positions. In such cases, the subjects rely heavily on conventionally indirect strategies. However, when requests are addressed to people in lower positions the Arabic sample shows a marked tendency towards using more direct request strategies in performing their request than the British sample. The investigator attributes this to socio-cultural reasons. A further test of the data reveals some significant differences between the two groups in the way they modify their request strategies. It is found that the native speakers of English use more semantic and syntactic modifiers than their Arabic counterparts and hence their requests sound more polite and tactful. The investigator attributes this to the linguistic superiority of the native speakers group. The study ends up with some theoretical and pedagogical implications. It is demonstrated that Arab students of English, even at advanced levels, may fall back on their cultural background when formulating their requests strategies. On the pedagogical level, it is suggested that Arab learners of English should always be made aware of the pragmatic differences between Arabic and English and that an appropriate Arabic request scheme in a given situation might not be appropriate in English in the same situation.

## إستراتيجيات الطلب كما يستخدمها الطلاب العرب المنقدمون في دراسة اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية

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### ملخص الدراسة:

هذه دراسة لغوية تبحث في إستراتيجيات الطلب التي يستخدمها دارسو اللغة الإنجليزية المتقدمون من الطلاب العرب مقارنة بالاستراتيجيات التي يستخدمها الناطقون الأصليون بالإنجليزية. شملت عينة الدراسة (٢٠) طالباً عربياً مسجلين في برامج دراسات عليا في اللغة الإنجليزية في أربع جامعات عربية ، و(٢٠) طالباً بريطانياً يتابعون دراسات عليا في ثلاث جامعات بريطانية.. استخدم الباحث اختبار تكلمة المحادثة لجميع المعلومات الخاصة بإستراتيجيات الطلب التي يستخدمها كل من أفراد المجموعتين. وتحليل المعلومات فقد أظهرت نتائج هذه الدراسة أوجه شبه وأوجه اختلاف بين المجموعتين . فقد وجد أن العينتين تتبنيان إستراتيجيات طلب متشابهة حينما يوجه الطلب إلى شخص مساوٍ أو شخص أعلى في المرتبة الاجتماعية. ففي كلا الحالتين تتبع العينتان العربية والإنجليزية أساليب الطلب الغير مباشرة. ولكن في حالة توجيه الطلب إلى شخص في مرتبة إجتماعية أقل من مرتبة المتحدث ، فقد أظهرت عينة الطلاب العرب ميلاً واضحاً لاستخدام أساليب طلب أكثر مباشرة من تلك التي يتبعها الناطقون الأصليون باللغة الانجليزية. وقد أرجع الباحث هذا التباين إلى أسباب ثقافية اجتماعية. وبمزيد من التحليل للمعلومات فقد وجد أن المجموعتين تختلفان أيضاً في طريقة تعديل وتلطيف أساليب الطلب ؛ فالعينة البريطانية تستخدم عناصر تعديل وتلطيف أكثر من العينة العربية مما يجعل الطلب لدى المجموعة البريطانية يبدو أكثر تأدباً ولطفاً . وقد أرجع الباحث هذا الأمر إلى التفوق اللغوي لدى الناطقين الأصليين بالإنجليزية مقارنة بدارسياها من المجموعة العربية. وقد خلصت الدراسة إلى مجموعة من المضامين النظرية والتطبيقية والملاحظات المهمة . فقد اتضح مثلاً أن الدارسين العرب للغة الانجليزية حتى في المراحل المتقدمة قد يتبعون أحياناً معايير ثقافتهم العربية في صياغة الطلب، مما يشكل انحرافاً عن معايير اللغة المستهدفة. وعليه فقد اقترح الباحث ضرورة تنبيه هؤلاء الدارسين إلى التعرف على الفروق الثقافية والاجتماعية الكائنة بين

اللغتين وضرورة تبني مفاهيم الثقافة الإنجليزية في الطلب حال استخدامها من قبل هؤلاء الدارسين.

### **Introduction**

During the recent years, the relevance of pragmatics has captured increasing interest of both socio-and applied linguists. This is reflected in the growing literature on communication strategies associated with a considerable number of empirical studies on speech act behaviors. These studies have shown that non-native speakers may fail to communicate in a particular situation in spite of their reasonable command of grammar and vocabulary of the target language ( Rintell, 1981, Blum-Kulka, 1982,1983; El-Shazly, 1993; Al- ammar, 2000, Novick, 2000 , and Bajoudah,2002) .

Olshtain and Cohen (1991) report that languages do not only differ in general linguistic areas such as phonology, syntax and lexicon, but also in the rules of speaking and the patterns of interaction which vary from one speech community to another . Wolfson, (1983) states that unless foreign language learners master these community-specific rules, they will not be able to communicate appropriately and effectively with their counterparts in the target language.

Violation of these community-specific rules is bound to lead to communication break-downs and sometime to serious communication problems. Scollon and Scollon (1983) report that evidence has shown that many language learners come away from an exchange with native speakers (NSs) certain that they have used the 'right words', but their intentions have been misunderstood . Native speakers, as well, may come away from such exchanges with the impression that the non-native (NNSs) are 'rude' or 'slow' or even 'impolite'. This type of thinking, says Al-Ammar (2000), produces or reinforces existing cultural stereotypes, encourages racism and discrimination .

To avoid such miscommunications and their negative impact

on human relations, applied linguists in general and foreign language syllabus designers in particular, are expected to address the issue of appropriate speech act behaviors more carefully and more systematically. It is now widely believed that there could be a short cut to learning appropriate speech rules of the target language – shorter than just mingling in the target culture (Olshtain and Cohen, 1985). Along this line comes this current study as an investigation into the request strategies used by Advanced Arab Learners of English compared to those strategies used by Native Speakers of English under the same social constraints. The investigator will then account for any possible socio-linguistic deviations that may characterize the performance of the Arab Learners. These accounts, however, should be based on solid theoretical and empirical considerations.

### **Theoretical Considerations**

#### *Speech Act Theory ( SAT )*

Speech Act Theory (SAT) was founded by the British philosopher J.L Austin in 1962. He, postulates that many utterances do not communicate information, but are equivalent to actions . These utterances are called speech acts. Austin classifies speech acts into four categories, i.e., verdictives, exercisitives ,expositives and behabitatives. This theory is later modified by Searle (1969) who claims that all speech acts are meaningful and that they are rule-governed . According to him, speech acts are executed through illocutionary force indicating devices and these are created by constitutive rules. The knowledge of these rules is part of what is called “linguistic competence”. Searle (1983) then proposes that speech acts such as “ request” and “apology” are governed by four type of felicity conditions. These are: preparatory conditions, sincerity conditions, propositional content conditions (future act of

hearer) and essential conditions ( attempts to persuade the hearer to do the act ) .

Later on, Brown and Livenson (1987) add the notion of “indirect speech act” in which they claim that some speech acts address the hearer directly, but most of them are indirect . Speakers resort to indirectness to attain some level of politeness.

### *Politeness Theory*

Being polite is a complicated business in any language. It is indeed very difficult to learn because it involves understanding not just the language, but also the social and cultural values of the community. In fact, several linguists attempt to characterize aspects of politeness and to account for the rules that govern the use of language in context. One of the basic challenges that faces linguists is due to cultural and idiosyncratic variations ,and different notions of the concept of politeness. The politeness pragmatic, however, can not be separated from the social relationships between the addresser and the hearer . Goffman(1967),Lakoff (1973), Grice(1975), Leech (1983), Brown & Levinson (1987), and Novick (2000), have dealt with various aspects of politeness and proposed some principles for this concept .

But of all of the above researchers, Brown and Levinson (1987) produce the deepest and most comprehensive account of perspectives of politeness in conversation analysis . What they seek are linguistic universals that explain politeness phenomenon across languages, cultures and domains . Once such universals are identified and associated with their conversational implications, they will have enormous value for applied linguists . Brown and Levinson also point out that much of the differences between the nominal meaning and implications of an expression can be explained in the light of the politeness theory.

### Maxims of Politeness

Lakoff (1973) has been very much concerned with the element of clarity in conversation . She believes that clarity is essential for realization of politeness . Thus she considers politeness from a conversational maxim point of view and she proposes two rules of pragmatic competence, these are : (1) be clear, and (2) be polite .

Sometime later, Grice (1975) proposes a theory of conversation that involves principles of cooperation . This theory assumes that as long as participants in a mutual conversation expect each other to adhere to the cooperative principles, meanings that are conveyed without being said follow inferences from a particular maxim . Then Grice associates the cooperative principle with four maxims and sub-maxims . These are :

- 1- Quantity :
  - a. make your contribution as informative as is required
  - b. do not make your contribution more informative than is required .
- 2- Quality: make your contribution one that is true, i.e.,
  - a. do not say what you believe to be false .
  - b. do not say what you lack evidence to support .
- 3- Relations : be relevant .
- 4- Manner perspicuous:
  - a. avoid obscurity of expression
  - b. avoid ambiguity
  - c. avoid unnecessary prolixity
  - d. be orderly

The above maxims will create an atmosphere for ideal exchange if a fifth maxim of “ be polite” is added to them .

Leech (1983) describes politeness in term of costs and benefits for both speaker and hearer. According to him, an utterance that minimizes the hearer’s costs and maximizes his benefits and that

maximizes the speaker's costs and minimizes his benefit, is observed as a very polite utterance. This politeness principle applies to every conversational setting, but more especially to request .

*The communicative Act of Request and Face Wants*

The speech act of request is composed of two parts: the head act and the modifiers. The head act is the main utterance which performs the function of requesting and can be used on its own without any modifiers in order to convey the request. In most cases, however, the head act is preceded and/or followed by modifiers that mitigate or aggravate the impact of the request on the addressee (Reiter,2000).

In English, request can be linguistically realized with imperatives, interrogatives and declaratives. However, Lyons (1968) states that the conversation requirements of politeness usually render it awkward to issue flat imperatives for making request. Leech (1983) explains that imperatives are the least polite constructions since they are tactless in that they jeopardize compliance by the addressee. For this reason indirect means are usually sought to realize illocutionary needs.

In performing a request, the speaker should always adhere to the principles of politeness, no matter what the object of his/her request is because requesting occurs in a situation of inequality. The requester always wants to get an object, which is lacking and the requestee may provide. In request, it is always the requester who directly or indirectly benefits from the act at the cost of the requestee and threatens his "face". The term 'face' means the positive social value every member of the society has. This value presupposes that every one urges to be free from imposition (negative face) and that every one wants to be appreciated and approved of (positive face) (Goffman,1967).

In day-to-day interactions between the members of a community, each action is performed in order to maintain someone's "face" and to avoid losing "face". Since a requester appeals to the requestee's assistance, he/she is potentially threatening the requestee's "negative face."

The intensity of this threat varies with the level of imposition of the requested act and the conditions under which the request is made. For instance, when someone asks another the way to the hospital, the requested "matter" is not likely to threaten the requestee's face very much. Of course, this can not be the case when a request involves greater imposition or restriction on the requestee's freedom, such as lending money or giving a lift.

In the light of these "face" considerations, Brown and Levinson (1987) have developed an explicit model of politeness that they claim to have validity across cultures. The basic idea is to understand various strategies for interaction between the individuals of a certain community. People are engaged in rational behavior to realize certain wants. Wants related to politeness are wants of face, something that involves an emotional dimension that can be lost, maintained or enhanced, but must be constantly adhered to in communication.

House and Kasper (1981) claim that when the relative face-threat increases, a speaker will select a more redressive strategy. A speaker is more likely to choose negative politeness strategies over positive politeness when the relative face-threat is high since negative politeness strategies are more redressive than positive politeness strategies. It is also proposed that a speaker must determine the seriousness or the weightiness of a face threatening act in terms of three independent and culturally - sensitive variables:

- 1- The power differences between the speaker and the addressee (Asking a favor from a friend, for example, is more easily done than asking the same favor of a superior).
- 2- The social distance between the speaker and the addressee (it is easier to perform a face-threatening act with an acquaintance than with a stranger).
- 3- The rate of imposition of a specific face-threatening act. (Showing the way to the hospital is not as difficult as giving a lift to the hospital).

### *Conventions and Indirectness*

Searle (1975) links certain types of indirectness with certain forms of language through the claim of conventionality. According to Searle, certain linguistic forms become conventionally established as standard idiomatic forms for indirect speech acts, while keeping their literal meaning. It is assumed that there are two classes of pragmalinguistic conventions: conventions of means and conventions of forms. Conventions of means decide the kinds of utterances that are normally used as indirect requests. For instance, it is a convention of means that questioning the hearer's ability is a standard way of requesting indirectly. Conventions of forms, on the other hand, determine the exact wording used. The use of "can you" in questioning ability instead of "are you able" is a convention of form (Clark, 1979). It is believed that certain forms become conventionalized in the sense that the hearer becomes aware that a particular speech act is being performed without the need to go through the inferencing steps (Gibb, 1979). Such conventionalized utterances are widely adopted as indirect forms for realizing polite requestive acts. It is generally believed that the more indirect the illocutionary act, the more polite.

### *Universality of Speech Act Theory*

The issue of universality is especially relevant in the context of inter-language studies. Many empirical studies have established that the strategies for performing illocutionary acts are essentially the same across languages . Gordon and Lakoff (1975) say that in checking with a score of speakers of widely divergent languages, they find that the conventional utterances they use are almost universal .

Blum-Kulka (1987), however, casts doubts on the validity of the universality claim . She points out that the most indirect requestive strategy, i.e., hints, is not universally acceptable as the most polite . She also adds that second language speakers might fail to communicate effectively, even when they have an excellent command of grammar and vocabulary of the target language . For her, this failure is traceable to cross-linguistic differences in speech acts realization rules . Blum- Kulka and Olshtain (1984) report that diversity in the realization of speech act in context may stem from at least three different variables: a) intracultural, situational variability b) cross-cultural variability, and c) individual variability . Thus there might be systematic differences in the realization patterns of speech acts, depending on social constraints embedded in the situation . For instance, requests directed to superiors, in a given culture, might be phrased in less direct terms than requests addressed to social juniors, or vice-versa . On another dimension, within the same set of social obligations, members of one culture might express a request more or less directly than their counterparts in another culture . Finally, members in the same society might differ in their speech act realization patterns, depending on personal variables such as sex, age, or even level of education and status.

### **A selected Review of Empirical Studies on Requests**

Several research works have been conducted in the area of speech act of request. Chief among these studies is the one by House

and Kasper (1981) who investigate request in German and English . They distinguish nine levels of directness in requests, ranging from the most indirect ( mild hints ) to the most direct (imperative).They also identify what is called modality markers differentiating between two kinds of modifiers: “downgraders” and “upgraders”. Through “downgraders”, the speakers soften the impact of particular utterances on the addressees, while through “ upgraders” the speakers increase the force of an utterance on the hearers. They hypothesize that the social norms in phrasing requests will be different in the two communities. This study shows that non-native speakers (the German subjects) tend to choose the direct levels in making requests, while native speakers (the English) tend to be more indirect. Therefore, the German speakers are judged by English natives as being less polite in their requestive acts .

The CCSARP is perhaps the most extensive empirical investigation of cross-cultural pragmatics. CCSARP stands for the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project. It was set to investigate cross-cultural and interlingual variations in speech acts of requests and apologies. This study involves seven languages including English, French, German, Danish and Hebrew.

The instrument used was a “Discourse-Completion-Test(DCT),originally developed for comparing the speech act realization of native and non-native Hebrew speakers (Blum-Kulka,1982). The project’s (DCT) is translated into the seven languages of the project and administered to informants on various campuses. Data are collected from more than a thousand subjects and analyzed by native speakers in respective countries, with a shared analytical framework. The project-coding scheme is based on frames of primary features expected to be manifested in the realization of requests and apologies. Requests are classified into a nine-point scale of mutually exclusive categories ranging from the most direct (almost imperative) to the most indirect (mild hints). The

data analysis also considers the choice of perspective as an important source of variation in requests as well as the internal modifications (downgraders and upgraders). The results of these studies reveal marked cross-cultural differences. For example, Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989) find that, under the same social constraints, speakers of Hebrew tend to be more direct in phrasing their requests than speakers of German, who use more request modifications than speakers of other languages. It is also found that the cultural factors interact strongly with situational ones.

Differences in requesting strategies in English and Polish are studied by Wierzbicka (1985). This study is based on the assumption that differences between these two languages in requesting strategies are due to differences in the cultural norms existing between the two communities: English requesting strategies depend heavily on the use of interrogative, and avoid the use of bare imperatives to a great extent. Polish, on the other hand, would rarely use interrogatives to convey request. Interrogative in Polish is largely associated with hostility and alienation. It is also revealed that inquiring about the addressee's desires to do something as "would you like to..?" or "do you want to..?" is very awkward in Polish. While the English see these formulas as polite social devices that allow options for the addressee to decline or to comply, Polish view them as very odd as request making strategies.

Kim (1995) studies requests as performed by Korean non-native speakers of English. The main hypothesis in this study is that erroneous use of request strategies is due to negative transfer of mother-tongue pragmatic rules. "Oral-Discourse- Completion-Test" is used as an instrument to collect data for this study. The sample of the study is composed of native Americans, non-native Koreans, and native Korean respondents. The results indicate that the socio-pragmatic features of the situational context of the three language groups determine directness levels and supportive moves in request.

However, the non-native speakers' deviation from the norms of native speakers of English is due to Koreans' transfer of their pragmatic rules.

Blum-Kulka (1983) studies the domain of pragmatic failure by comparing request realizations of native and non-native speakers in terms of length of utterance. They use the Hebrew and English native and non-native CCSARP data concerning request situations. Data analysis reveals that there is a systematic difference between native and non-native speakers of English in terms of the length of verbal utterances. It is found that Hebrew speakers use more words when making a request than do native English speakers. The investigators interpret this conflict in cultural norms of conversational interaction as a source of pragmatic failure, which causes native English speakers to react with irritation to the Hebrews verbosity.

Fukushima (1996) studies request strategies of British and Japanese speakers. The following questions form the guidelines for this study: (1) Do British subjects use similar or different request strategies compared to those used by Japanese subjects? And if so, (2) What are the similarities or differences? Fukushima hypothesizes that situations with higher degree of imposition require more politeness strategies, both in English and Japanese. The subjects for this study are sixteen undergraduate British and fifteen undergraduate Japanese speakers. The subjects are given situations that elicit requests in their native languages. The results confirm the hypotheses that higher degree of imposition requires more politeness strategies in both languages. Both groups seem to be influenced by the degree of imposition, social distance and relative power between the speaker and the hearer, yet there are differences in terms of strategies. While the British tend to use conventional indirect forms, the Japanese seem to prefer more direct ones.

There are a few empirical studies on speech act behavior involving the Arabic language or even native speakers of Arabic.

From these studies is the one by El-Shazly (1993). She studies the request strategies in American English, Egyptian Arabic, and English as spoken by Egyptian second language learners. The results of this study have indicated that there are differences in the requesting strategies used by these groups. The Arab speakers of English demonstrate a high tendency towards using conventional indirectness which depend on the use of interrogatives. Modifiers are also examined among the groups. No differences are found with respect to use of "upgraders". "Downgraders", however, are found to be more frequently used by native Arabic speakers. They display a noticeable tendency to use more than one downgrader in a single utterance. This group is also found to be unique in using religious expressions as downgraders .

Al-Shalawi (1997) studies the semantic formulas used by Saudi and American male undergraduate students in the speech act of refusal. The findings of this study show that Americans and Saudis use similar formulas in rejecting offers, invitations, requests and suggestions except in the use of direct "no". However, the two groups differ in the content of their explanations of their refusals. Saudis and Americans also differ in the use of semantic formulas in the content of their refusals; Saudis are found to use avoidance strategies (e.g. postponement and hedge) or they give unspecified answers. They also tend to be less direct in their refusals and use explanation other than their own inclinations and desire in refusing. Americans, on the other hand, give more direct refusals. They often mention their desires and inclinations as reasons for their refusal. The study concludes that the Saudis demonstrate the traits of a collective culture whereas the Americans reflect the spirit of an individualistic culture in their speech acts of refusal.

Quite recently Al-Ammar (2000) has studied the linguistic strategies and realizations of request behavior in spoken English and

Arabic among a number of Saudi female English majors at Riyadh College of Arts. The subjects used in this study are forty-five Saudi female students enrolled in the English department at the faculty of Arts. The instrument used for data collection is the "Discourse-Completion-Test". The result reveals that the subjects vary their requestive behavior according to the social situations. Directness increases with decreases in social distance and power. The findings also indicate that English shares with Arabic a rich set of requesting strategies, which is fully exploited in actual use. This finding lends support to the issue of universality in speech act behavior.

The above survey of literature highlights the significance of politeness in speech act behavior. It is demonstrated that speech acts are governed by a systematic set of community-specific rules. Violation or ignorance of these rules is bound to create some serious communication problems and widen the social gaps between the interacting individuals and groups. Miscommunication may have negative impact on human relation. It defeats the purpose of foreign language learning, reinforces racism, discrimination and hatred between nations.

To avoid such misgivings, it is felt necessary to analyse second language learners socio-cultural communicative competence to see to what extent they adhere to the rules of politeness in the target language community. This can be done by comparing their speech act behavior to that of their native counterparts. Socio- and applied linguists, then, may be able to account for any deviations in the speech of L2 learners and to identify the most salient rules of polite communication to incorporate them in target language syllabuses. Along this line comes this current study to deal with the speech act of request of Arab learners of English.

### Questions of the Study

This investigation, being a socio-linguistic study of the speech act of request as performed by advanced Arab learners of English is intended to address the following questions:

- 1- When advanced Arab learners of English perform the speech act of request, do their request strategies differ from those used by native speakers of English?
- 2- Does pragmatic transfer exist in the choice of the request strategy, the lexical items and the content of the semantic formulas used by the Advanced Arab learners of English?.

### Method

#### *The Sample*

The sample of this study consists of forty subjects. Twenty of them are post-graduate Arab students majoring in English and linguistics. The other twenty are native speakers of English pursuing graduate courses in humanities in Britain. The first group is composed of five Sudanese, five Saudis, five Egyptians and five Bahraini students chosen from the University of Khartoum, King Abdul-Aziz University, Cairo University and the University of Bahrain respectively. This group includes fourteen male subjects and six females. Their ages range between twenty-five and thirty-six.

The other group is composed of twelve male and eight female British subjects\*. They are sought at three British universities. Namely: the University of Wales, the University of Manchester and the University of Birmingham. Their ages range between twenty-five and thirty-three.

#### *Data Collection Procedure*

Data for this study is elicited from the sample through the Discourse Completion Test (DCT). The (DCT) is a form of questionnaire depicting some natural situations to which the respondents are expected to react making requests. This test was originally designed by Blum-Kulka in 1982 and has been widely used since then in collecting data on speech acts realization both within and across language groups. The researcher adopts the (DCT) format, but not its contents, for its high level of practicality and validity.

The questionnaire used in this investigation involves nine written dialogues that denote nine different situations. In each situation there is a brief description that illustrates the relations between the participants (acquaintance or stranger) and their dominance over each other (high, equal or low). Participants in each group are then asked to complete each dialogue by writing a suitable request in English.

Before conducting the questionnaire in its final form, it is piloted on a small group (3 Arab and 3 British subjects). Some minor amendments and modifications are done in the light of this pilot study. Items are also rearranged in special order to ease data analysis in later stages.

The questionnaire in its final form is administered to participants on voluntary basis. Three colleagues assist in administering the questionnaires to the Arabic sample. As for the British sample, the researcher conducts the questionnaire by himself.

### ***Data Analysis***

The data collected through the Discourse-Completion-Test is analyzed. This analysis is based on an independent examination of each response. All responses are classified into three categories depicting the relative social power between the interlocutors. These

responses are then tested twice, being given by two groups representing Advanced Arab Learners of English (AALE) and British Native Speakers of English (BNSE). The different situations may elicit nine different request strategies listed in order of directness with the first one being the most direct and the ninth being the most indirect, as follows:

- 1- mood derivable: utterances in which the grammatical mood of the verb indicates illocutionary force. (*Clean up the mess.*)
- 2- performatives: utterances in which the illocutionary force is clearly mentioned (*I am asking you to close the window.*)
- 3- hedge performatives: utterances in which the statement of the illocutionary force is modified by hedging expressions (*I would like to ask you to prepare my bill.*)
- 4- Obligation statements: utterances which state the hearer's obligation to perform the act (*You have to clean the mess.*)
- 5- want statements: utterances which indicate the speakers desire that the hearer performs the tasks (*I really wish you'd stop smoking*)
- 6- suggestory formulas: utterances which include a suggestion to do something (*How about lending me some money!*).
- 7- query preparatories: utterances containing reference to preparatory conditions (e.g. ability, willingness) as conventionalized in different languages (*Could you lend me five pounds, please? Would you mind closing the door behind you?*).
- 8- strong hints: utterances containing partial reference to an element needed for the performance of the act (*You have left the kitchen in a terrible mess.*)

- 9- mild hints: utterances that make no reference to the request proper, but can be interpreted as requests by context (*I am a nun*) in response to a persistent hassler. (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989).

In the first stage, data is analysed to identify the request strategies chosen by each group and point out similarities and differences in strategy selection. The next stage deals with syntactic modifications used by each group, to mitigate or aggravate the impact of request on the requestee. The final stage of data analysis involves the lexical and phrasal modifications adopted by each group and once more point out similarities and differences in the pragmalinguistic strategies between the two groups.

Frequencies and percentages are used to quantify pragmatic strategies to perform the function of request. This will also serve the purpose of comparisons between the two groups.

Generally speaking, request strategies are expected to be influenced by the relation between interlocutors, i.e., the requester and requestee and their relative dominance over each other. (Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper, 1989). These relations can be classified into three categories: higher-ranking to lower-ranking, equal to equal and lower- ranking to higher-ranking. These relations will constitute the major variables along which data analysis will be categorized.

### **Request Strategies Used by Category One**

High-Ranking to Lower-Ranking Request strategies chosen by higher-ranking to lower ranking can be tested using the data generated by Situations One, Two and Three.

Situation One states (*You have a nice meal in a public restaurant; and now it is time to ask the waiter to prepare your bill. What would you say?*)

Situation Two states, *(You want your younger brother to fetch some bread from the near-by bakery. What would you say to him?).*

Situation Three: *(You are taking a taxi to the city center. Then suddenly you observe that the taxi driver is over-speeding and driving rather recklessly. What would you say to him?)*

Data generated by these three situations which represent higher to lower-ranking relation is summarized in tables and graphs. But before this, here are some examples of the responses given by the subjects to the above three situations.

**Sample responses given by Advanced Arab Learners of English (AALE) to the above three situations**

Situation One (asking the waiter for the bill)

1. *Can I have the bill right now please?*
2. *Could you get me my bill?*
3. *Where is my bill, friend?*

Situation Two (asking your younger brother to fetch bread from the bakery)

1. *Hey! Go and get us some bread.*
2. *It is dinner time and you have to get the bread.*
3. *You know there is no bread, so you have to get us some from the bakery. Make sure it is hot.*

Situation Three: (Asking the taxi driver to drive carefully)

1. *Stop driving like this or drop me here please.*
2. *Would you mind driving more carefully. Your driving is rather dangerous.*
3. *We are not running to save someone's life. Are we?*

**Sample responses given by British Native Speakers of English (BNSE):**

Situation One: (Asking the waiter for a bill)

1. *Excuse me, Is my bill ready?*
2. *May I have my bill, please?*
3. *Is my bill ready?*

Situation Two:(Asking your younger brother to fetch some bread from the bakery near by).

1. *We are short of bread! would you mind bringing us some from the bakery?*
2. *Do you think you can make it? But we need some bread for the dinner.*
3. *Oh dear! We don't have any bread at the moment.*

Situation Three: (Asking the taxi driver to drive carefully)

1. *Would you mind driving more carefully, please?*
2. *If you can drive a bit more carefully?*
3. *You are driving too fast, I guess. This is rather dangerous.*

The complete set of responses given by AALE and BNSE is presented in tables and graphs 1 and 2 below:

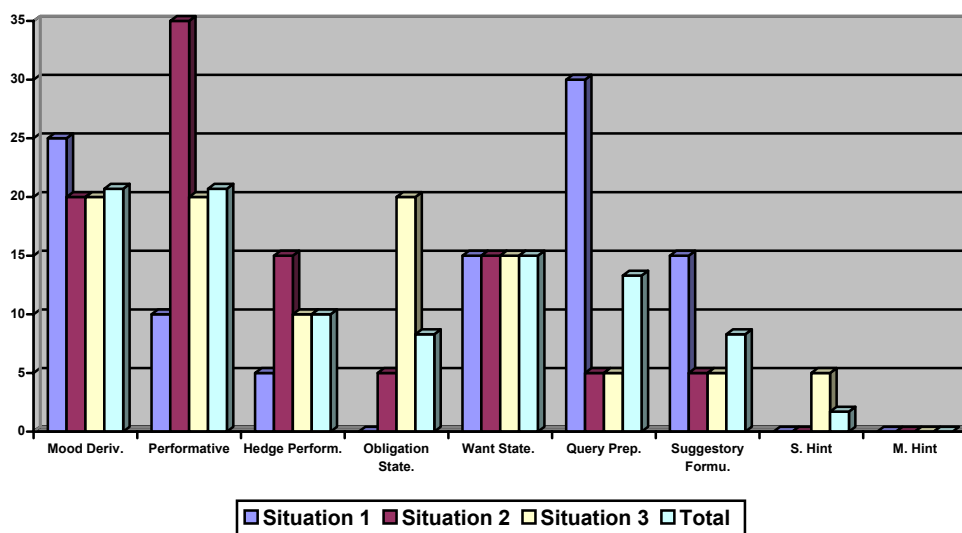
**Table I:** Request Strategies Used by AALE for the First Three Situations

	Strategy	Situation One		Situation Two		Situation Three		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Mood Derivable	5	25	4	20	4	20	13	21.7
2	Performative	2	10	7	35	4	20	13	21.7
3	Hedge Performative	1	5	3	15	2	10	6	10
4	Obligation Statement	0	0	1	5	4	20	5	8.3

### Request Strategies as Used by Advanced Arab Learners

	Strategy	Situation One		Situation Two		Situation Three		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
5	Want Statement	3	15	3	15	3	15	9	15
6	Query Preparatory	6	30	1	5	1	5	8	13.3
7	Suggestory Formula	3	15	1	5	1	5	5	8.3
8	Strong Hint	0	0	0	0	1	5	1	1.7
9	Mild Hint	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>		20	100	20	100	20	100	60	100

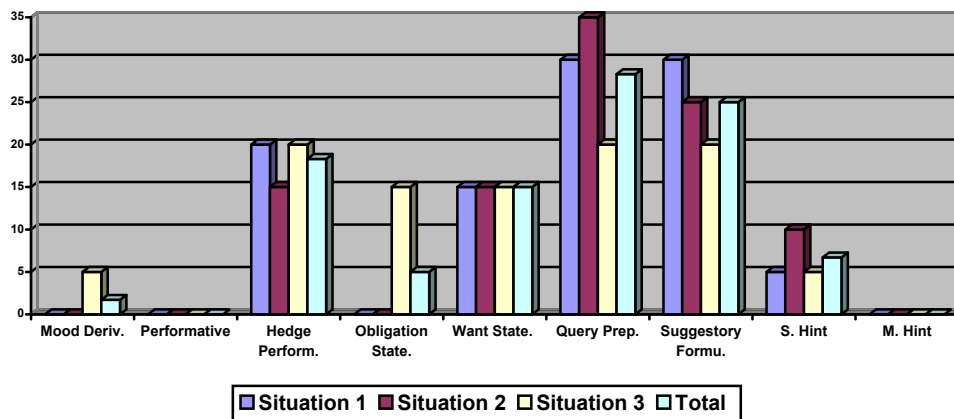
**Graph I: Request Strategies Used by AALE for the First Three Situations**



**Table 2: Request Strategies Used by BNSE for the First Three Situations**

	Strategy	Situation One		Situation Two		Situation Three		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Mood Derivables	0	0	0	0	1	5	1	1.7
2	Performatives	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	Hedge Performatives	4	20	3	15	4	20	11	18.3
4	Obligation Statement	0	0	0	0	3	15	3	5
5	Want Statement	3	15	3	15	3	15	9	15
6	Query Preparatory	6	30	7	35	4	20	17	28.3
7	Suggestory Formula	6	30	5	25	4	20	15	25
8	Strong Hint	1	5	2	10	1	5	4	6.7
9	Mild Hint	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	20	100	20	100	20	100	60	100

Graph 2: Request Strategies Used by AALE for the First Three Situations



From Tables 1 and 2 above, it is noticed that the Advanced Arab Learners of English tend to use more direct strategies in addressing their younger brothers, the waiter and taxi driver in descending order than their native English speakers counterparts. The Advanced Arab Learners of English use the most direct strategies, i.e., “mood derivable” and “performative” eleven times in

requesting their younger brothers to fetch bread. That is approximately 55% of the total number of strategies used in this situation. In requesting the taxi driver to drive more carefully and the waiter to prepare the bill, such direct strategies are also found to be used with a high level of frequency by the AALE. Their use reaches 40% and 35% of the total use of other strategies in the two situations respectively. On the other hand, The English native speakers are rarely found to resort to these direct request strategies. "mood drivable", for instance, is used only once in requesting the taxi driver to drive more carefully. Its use does not exceed (1.7%) of all other strategies used in the situation.

From the other strategies used differently by the two groups is "suggestory formula". This is found to be used more frequently by the English Native Speakers than the Arab Learners of English. The English Native Speakers sample uses it fifteen times, (i.e., 25%) in the three situations together, while the Arabic Sample uses this strategy only five times (i.e., 8.3%). However, the two groups use "query preparatory" and "want statement" strategies with similar level of frequency in making requests for Situations One and Two. It is also observed that "hints", both "strong" or "mild", are the least used strategies by any of the two groups. Yet the English group uses comparatively more "hints" in request than their Arab counterparts with (6.7%) for the English sample and only (1.7%) for the Arab learners sample.

A general look at Graphs 1 and 2 shows that there are some differences in the strategies adopted by the two groups to realize requests and some similarities. The Advanced Arab Learners of English tend to use more direct strategies such as "mood drivable" and "performatives" when requesting people in lower position than their English counterparts. But some strategies such as "query preparatory" and "want statement" are used with the same level of

frequency by the two groups. Hints are the least preferred strategies by both groups in such cases.

### **Syntactic and Semantic Modifications of Request Strategies for Category One**

Further test of the above data for syntactic and semantic modifications of the requests used by the two groups reveals some interesting results. In considering Situation One (Requesting the waiter for the bill), it is found that both groups do not use address terms, though "starters" appear more often. Both groups use "excuse me" "please" or a combination of both as polite markers quite often.

In Situation Two (Requesting a younger brother to fetch bread), it is revealed that the Arabic group refrain completely from using any address terms; however, expressions such as "excuse me" or "please" or even "Hey!" are sometimes used. The English Native Speakers Sample, on the other hand, tends to use different linguistic devices to mitigate the effect of their request. "consultative devices", "preparators" together with "interrogatives" are extensively used in requesting (younger brothers to fetch bread) by the NES.

For Situation Three (Asking the taxi driver to drive more carefully) the subjects use different types of modifiers. The Arab Advanced Learners of English, for example, use 'intensifiers' (five times), 'forewarn' (four times) and 'negative imperative' (four times), excuse me (four times) and advice (two times).

The English sample uses "advice" (six times), "excuse me" (six times), "intensifiers" (four times) and "questioning ability" (three times). Again, it could be seen from the above data that the two groups use different modifiers to mitigate or upgrade the effect of their requestive acts. These differences are seen more clearly in Situations One and Three. The English Native Speakers use more

downgraders than the Arab learners of English. "Excuse me" is used more often by Native Speakers of English as a starter.

### **Request Strategies Used by Category Two: Equal to Equal**

Equal to equal relation is denoted by Situations Four, Five and Six.

Situation Four states: (You missed an important lecture yesterday, and you want to borrow your friend Ali's or Alan's notebook for a day so as to copy what you have missed. What would you say?)

In response to this situation the Advanced Arab Learners of English give a variety of responses. Some of which are presented below:

#### **Examples of Responses Given by the AALE to Situation Four**

- 1. May I borrow your notebook please?*
- 2. Please, lend me your notebook for a day Ali? I want to copy yesterday's lecture. I missed it.*
- 3. I missed yesterday's lecture and I want to borrow your notebook if possible.*

#### **Examples of Responses Given by BNSE to Situation Four**

- 1. Would you mind lending me your notebook, Alan? I missed yesterday's lecture.*
- 2. Would you do me a favor? I want to borrow your notebook for a day.*
- 3. May I just borrow your notebook for a day, please?*

Situation Five states: (You want your neighbor to give you a lift to the hospital. You want to visit another neighbor who has been in hospital for a while. What would you say?)

The two groups, i.e., The Advanced Arab learners of English and The English Native Speakers give different responses. Some of which are exemplified below:

**Sample Responses Given by the AALE to Situation Five:**

1. *Are you going to visit our neighbor in hospital?*
2. *How about visiting our neighbor in hospital tonight?*
3. *Have you heard about our neighbor? He has been in hospital for a while. If you give me a lift, we may visit him together.*

**Sample Responses Given by the BNSE to Situation Five:**

1. *You haven't visited our friend in hospital. Have you?*
2. *Could you give me a lift to the hospital please? Our neighbor is not very well as you know.*
3. *If you plan to visit our neighbor in hospital, please let me know. I want to visit him as well. I think it would do him good!*

**Situation Six states:** (You urgently need some money to buy a very important reference book. You want to borrow this money from a friend. What would you say?)

The two groups give a variety of responses to this situation. These are exemplified below:

**Sample Responses Given by the AALE to Situation Six:**

1. *Could you lend me some money? I want to buy a very important book.*
2. *If you have some extra money, I would like to borrow some. I am buying an important book.*
3. *I need to buy a very important book and I don't have enough money on me.*

**Sample responses Given by the BNSE to Situation Six:**

1. *Would you mind lending me some money? I will pay it back to you the moment get my bursary.*
2. *If it is possible, I would like to borrow some money from you. I am buying an important book.*
3. *Would you do me a favor please? I need some money to purchase a book. I will pay it back to you soon.*

### Request Strategies as Used by Advanced Arab Learners

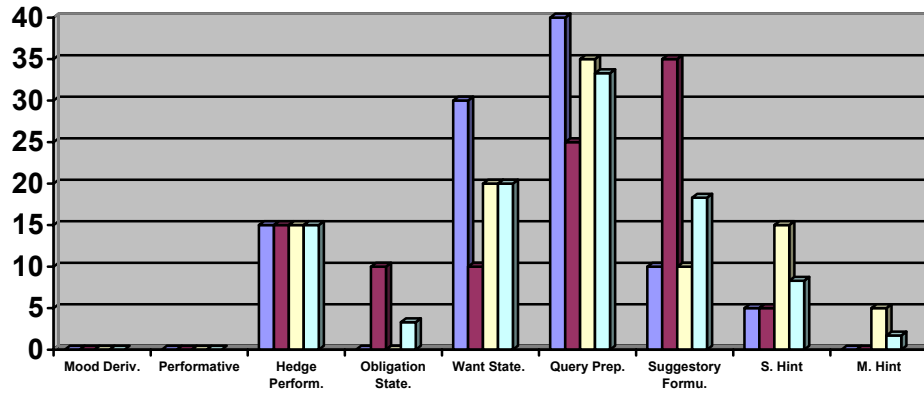
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The complete set of responses given to these Three Situations by the two groups is summarized in Tables and graphs 3 and 4 below. These figures indicate frequencies and percentages of request strategies used by each group.

**Table 3: Request Strategies Used by the AALE for Situations Four, Five and Six**

	Strategy	Situation Four		Situation Five		Situation Six		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Mood Derivables	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	Performatives	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	Hedge Performatives	3	15	3	15	3	15	9	15
4	Obligation Statement	0	0	2	10	0	0	2	3.3
5	Want Statement	6	30	2	10	4	20	12	20
6	Query Preparatory	8	40	5	25	7	35	20	33.3
7	Suggestory Formula	2	10	7	35	2	10	11	18.3
8	Strong Hint	1	5	1	5	3	15	5	8.3
9	Mild Hint	0	0	0	0	1	5	1	1.7
<b>Total</b>		20	100	20	100	20	100	60	100

**Graph 3: Request Strategies Used by AALE for the First Three Situations**

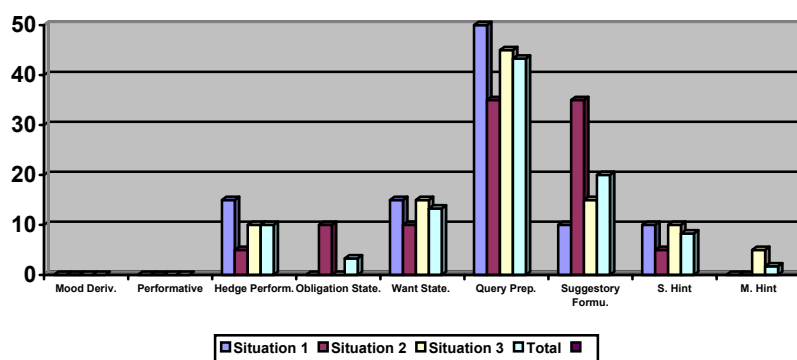


**Table 4:** Request Strategies Used by the BNSE for Situations Four, Five and Six

	Strategy	Situation Four		Situation Five		Situation Six		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Mood Derivables	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	Performatives	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	Hedge Performatives	3	15	1	5	2	10	6	10
4	Obligation Statement	0	0	2	10	0	0	2	3.3
5	Want Statement	3	15	2	10	3	15	8	13.3
6	Query Preparatory	10	50	7	35	9	45	26	43.3
7	Suggestory Formula	2	10	7	35	3	15	12	20
8	Strong Hint	2	10	1	5	2	10	5	8.3
9	Mild Hint	0	0	0	0	1	5	1	1.7
	<b>Total</b>	20	100	20	100	20	100	60	100

## Request Strategies as Used by Advanced Arab Learners

Graph 4: Request Strategies Used by AALE for the First Three Situations



From Tables 3 and 4 above, it is observed that both groups, The Arab Learners of English and The Native Speakers of English avoid using the most direct strategies completely. For example none of them uses “mood derivables” or “performatives” in request for any of the three situations. However, “query preparatory” is used more often by the two groups. This strategy is used (twenty times) i.e. (33.3%) of all strategies used in the three situations by the Arabic group and (twenty-six times), i.e., (43.3%) by the English group.

The second strategy most widely used by the two samples is “suggestory formula”. It is used (eleven times) by the Arabic group and (thirteen times) by the English group. In fact, this strategy is used more frequently in Situation Five (asking for a lift to visit a hospitalized neighbor). Both Advanced Arab Learners and Native Speakers of English use it seven times each. “Hints” both strong and mild are found to be used a bit more frequently by the two groups when addressing request to equals. From the data above, it can be observed that there are greater similarities than differences between the strategies chosen by the two groups to realize their request acts. This is particularly true when request is direct to an equal. Both groups seem to rely heavily on conventional indirect request strategies such as “query preparatory” and “suggestive formula”. Hints are also used by the two groups

with the same level of frequency. The use of hints constitutes (10%) of the total strategies chosen by each group.

### **Syntactic and Semantic Modification of Request Strategies for Category Two**

The subjects in the two groups use different sets of syntactic and semantic modifiers to mitigate or intensify the effect of their requestive strategies. For example, in Situation Four, (borrowing a notebook), it is observed that "address terms" are used quite often by the two groups; however, they use "first names" for that purpose. Furthermore, it is found that the Advanced Arab Learners of English use "interrogative" (six times), "preparators" (five times) and "consultative devices" (three times). On the other hand, the English Native Speakers use "preparators" (seven times) "consultative devices" (six times) and "interrogatives" (four times).

As for Situation Five, (asking for a lift to visit a hospitalized neighbor), The AALE use "preparators" (five times), "intensifiers" (four times) and conditional clauses (three times). The English group uses "interrogatives" (five times), "conditional clauses" (three times) and "consultative devices" (three times).

In Situation Six (asking a colleague to lend you some money), The Arab Learners of English use "preparators" (seven times), "interrogative" (five times) and "intensifiers" (four times). They also use "promise" to return money (four times). On the other hand, The Native Speakers of English use a variety of syntactic and semantic modifiers. For instance, they use "consultative device" (eight times), "preparators" (seven times) and "intensifier" (upgraders) (three times). It is noticed that they use "apology" and "hedges" together with "please" and "excuse me" (eight times), but none of the Arab learners is found to resort to this type of lexical modification.

### **Request Strategies Used by Category Three: Lower-Ranking to Higher-Ranking**

Lower-ranking to higher-ranking is represented in Situation Seven, Situation Eight and Situation Nine.

Situation Seven states: (You want to request Professor Adams who teaches you research methodology to spend the next session reviewing for the exam because you and your classmates have some specific points that need explanation. What would you say to the Professor?)

In response to this situation, the subjects from both groups use a range of request strategies. Below are some examples given by each group.

#### **Sample Responses Given by AALE to Situation Seven**

1. *Professor Adams,. Is it ever possible to have a review session before the exam?*
2. *If possible sir, we would like to have a review class. We have some questions to ask.*
3. *How about spending the next session reviewing for the exam, sir?*

#### **Sample Responses Given by the BNSE for Situation Seven**

1. *Excuse me, Professor Adams. I would like to ask if there is any possibility of having a review session before the exams.*
2. *I wonder if we could have a review session before taking the exam. We do have some important questions to ask, sir.*
3. *Excuse me, Professor. If possible, we would like to have a review session before the exam, please.*

Situation Eight states: (You want to ask the director of your graduate program to write you a recommendation letter. How would you approach him?)

Subjects in the two groups give different responses:

### **Sample Responses Given by the AALE to Situation Eight**

1. *Would you mind writing me a recommendation letter?*
2. *I need a recommendation letter. I think it will help me to get a chance to pursue my graduate work.*
3. *If someone gets a recommendation from you, it makes things easy for me, sir.*

### **Sample Responses Given by the BSNE for Situation Eight**

1. *I wonder if you can give me a recommendation letter. I will really appreciate it.*
2. *Excuse me, Professor. I really need a recommendation letter, sir. It will help a great deal.*
3. *Would you mind, Professor, giving me a recommendation letter. It would be a great asset for me.*

Situation Nine states: (You want to request the head of your department to let you leave work early because you have an appointment with your family doctor. What would you say to him/her?).

In reaction to the above question, the subjects give a variety of responses.

### **Sample Responses Given by the AALE to Situation Nine**

1. *May I have an early break today, please? I am seeing my doctor.*
2. *I want to have an early break today, sir. I have an appointment with a doctor.*
3. *I don't feel well, and I want to see my doctor, sir. I want your permission for an early break.*

### **Sample Responses Given by the BNSE to Situation Nine**

### Request Strategies as Used by Advanced Arab Learners

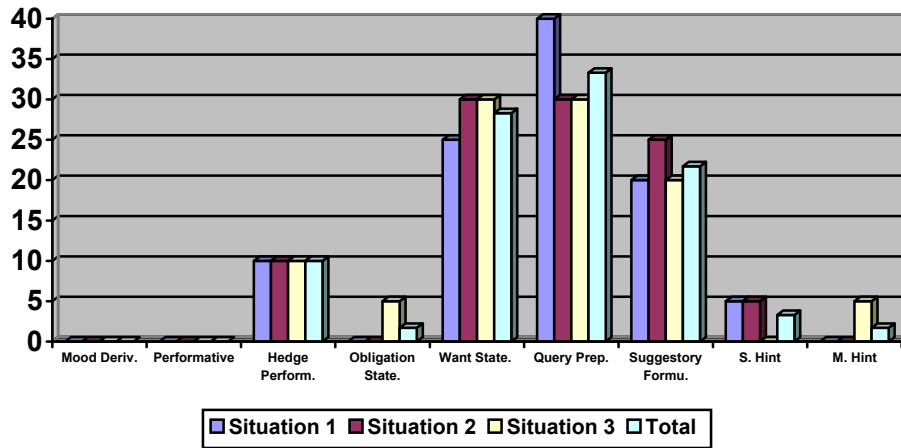
1. *I wonder if I can have an early break today. I have an appointment with my G.P.*
2. *If there is no important work to be done today, I would really like to take permission for an early break to see my family doctor.*
3. *Would you mind if I leave early today, sir?. I am seeing my family doctor. It might be rather difficult for me to get another appointment if I missed this one.*

The complete set of strategies used by the two groups to realize request in the above three situations is summarized in Tables and Graphs 5 and 6 below:

**Table 5** Request Strategies Used by the AALE for Situation Seven, Eight and Nine

	Strategy	Situation Seven		Situation Eight		Situation Nine		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Mood Derivables	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	Performatives	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	Hedge Performatives	2	10	2	10	2	10	6	10
4	Obligation Statement	0	0	0	0	1	5	1	1.7
5	Want Statement	5	25	6	30	6	30	17	28.3
6	Query Preparatory	8	40	6	30	6	30	20	33.3
7	Suggestory Formula	4	20	5	25	4	20	13	21.7
8	Strong Hint	1	5	1	5	0	0	2	3.3
9	Mild Hint	0	0	0	0	1	5	1	1.7
	<b>Total</b>	20	100	20	100	20	100	60	100

**Graph 5:** Request Strategies Used by AALE for the First Three Situations



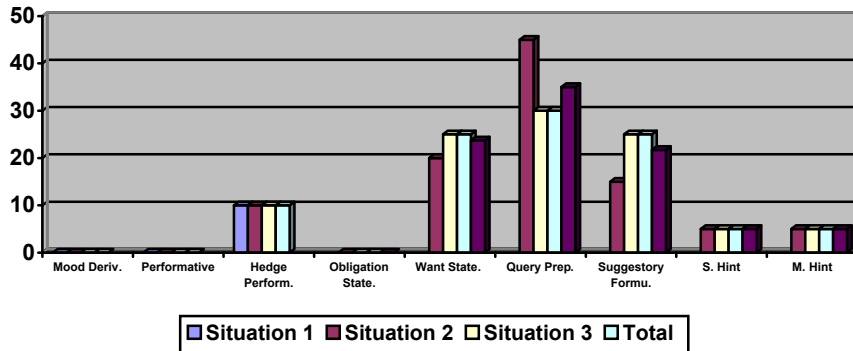
**Table 6** Request Strategies Used by the BNSE for Situations Seven ,Eight & Nine

	Strategy	Situation Seven		Situation Eight		Situation Nine		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Mood Derivable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	Performative	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	Hedge Performative	2	10	2	10	2	10	6	10
4	Obligation Statement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	Want Statement	4	20	5	25	5	25	14	23.7
6	Query Preparatory	9	45	6	30	6	30	21	35
7	Suggestory Formula	3	15	5	25	5	25	13	21.7
8	Strong Hint	1	5	1	5	1	5	3	5
9	Mild Hint	1	5	1	5	1	5	3	5
	<b>Total</b>	20	100	20	100	20	100	60	100

## Request Strategies as Used by Advanced Arab Learners

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Graph 6: Request Strategies Used by AALE for the First Three Situations



From tables 5 and 6 above it can be observed that subjects in both groups adopt similar strategies in making request to their superiors. More indirect request strategies are preferred by both groups. In this category, “query preparatory” as an indirect form of request is used (20 times) by the Arab group and (21 times) by the English sample. Its use constitutes (33.3%) for Situation Six and (25%) from the total strategies adopted by The Arab Learners of English to express request for Situation Seven (Requesting Professor Adams for review session) and (45%) from the total strategies used by the English Native Speakers to express request for the same situation. The two groups avoid the use of any direct strategies such as “mood derivable”, “performatives” or even “obligation statement”. Instead, they express their requests rather indirectly using “query preparatories” and “suggestive formulas”. Even “hints” are sometimes adopted to address higher rankers. It is interesting to note that these patterns of request strategies are used with very similar frequency by the two groups. However, the two groups adopt different patterns of semantic and syntactic modifiers to mitigate the influence of their requests.

### **Syntactic and Semantic Modification of Request Strategies for Category Three**

The subjects in both groups use a variety of linguistic devices to mitigate the effect of their requests on their requestees who happen to be of higher ranks than themselves. The most common syntactic formulas used by the two groups are the "interrogatives", "conditional" and "preparators". "Consultative devices" as well as "intensifiers" are also commonly used. The Arab Learners of English use "interrogative" (seventeen times), "conditional clauses" (thirteen times) in the last Three Situations. Politeness makers such as "please" is used (sixteen times), 'address terms" (fifteen times) "preparators" (ten times) and "consultative devices" (seven times).

Subjects of the English group, on the other hand, are found to modify their request strategies both syntactically and semantically. This group uses "interrogatives" (nineteen times), "conditional clauses" (sixteen times) and "consultative devices" (twelve times). As for the lexical modifiers this group uses "address terms" (nineteen times), politeness makers, "please", (eighteen times), "excuse me" (seventeen times) and "consultative devices" (twelve times).

In comparing the syntactic and semantic modifiers used by each group it looks obvious that the latter, i.e., the English Native Speakers use more modifiers than their Arab counterparts.

### **Discussions of Results**

The above data generated by the (DCT) from two different groups namely the AALE and the ENS, reveal some interesting results about the strategies used by each group to realize their requestive acts. First of all, it is found that the two groups choose similar strategies in performing requests. These similarities are noticeable when the subjects address their request to equals or higher rankers. Secondly, it is found that subjects in the two groups modify their request strategies according to the total ranking of the imposition, of the social power and the social distance found

between the interlocutors. Members in each group use more direct request strategies with addressees in positions lower or equal to theirs, but subjects are found to choose more indirect request strategies when addressing their requests to their seniors.

The analysis of data, however, reveals that there is a general tendency among the native speakers of English for higher levels of indirectness in their requestive behavior than the Arabic Sample. The Arab learners of English on the other hand, use higher levels of impositives than their British counterparts in situations when the social distance between the interlocutors is relatively close.

The Arabic culture may permit a more direct level of interaction between close people, i.e., brothers, sons, daughters, sisters and even close friends.

A more detailed consideration of the data shows that both groups i.e., the AALE and NSE maintain some level of politeness even when requesting people in lower positions, i.e., the waiter, and the taxi driver. The only case one can take exception to is the Second Situation when (an Arab senior brother requests his younger brother to fetch bread). In this case the Arab subjects tend to use the most direct strategies of request, i.e., the "mood derivable" and the "performative" and refrain completely from using address terms. The intimate relations between brothers in Arab communities reduces the need for such formalities.

This case can easily be given as an evidence of transfer, i.e., the Arab learners resort directly to their Arabic cultural norms in formulating some of their requestive strategies. This incidence can also be cited to cast doubt upon the concept of universality in politeness.

In directing requests to equals, both the Arabic and the English sample are found to maintain a reasonable level of politeness. In Situation Six (asking a colleague to lend some money),

for instance, both groups tend to modify their requests radically perhaps to avoid face threatening consequences. Borrowing money is a sensitive issue which forces a person to use a variety of syntactic and semantic modifiers to guarantee the success of their request and secure the "face" of both: the requester and the requestee. To that end, "intensifiers" are frequently employed. The English sample goes to the extent to coat their requests for money by "apologies", "hedges", and polite words like 'please' and "excuse me". Promise of immediate repay is also used by the English sample, but none of the Arab learners of English uses these lexical modifications. Once more, this can be traceable to cultural influence. The Arabic culture may not allow such plea and sees it as unnecessary self-humiliation.

As with regard to the last three situations where the requester is addressing his/her request to someone who is in a higher position, it is found that both groups tend to adopt more polite request strategies. The social power of the requestee together with his/her minimum obligation to comply with the requesters demands, seem to influence the requestive behavior to the maximum. Requestees in both groups are, therefore, intrigued to choose their requestive strategies very carefully so as to look more polite. Indirect strategies are preferred by both groups with one major difference that for the English sample, indirect requests are characterized with marked elaborations and explanations. On the other hand, the Arabic sample requests are found to be rather short and less tactful. This phenomenon can also be interpreted on cultural background, but the investigator attributes this to linguistic reasons. The British sample being native speakers of English with perfect command over their language are in a position to utilize a more varied set of linguistic modifications. Their requests appear more polite, more tactful and perhaps more convincing than these used by their Arabic counterparts. It is obvious that the Arabic sample does not use all the expected semantic and syntactic formulas, either because of the influence of cultural background or because of lack of proficiency in

the target language, i.e., English.

### **Conclusions**

An overall view of the request data made available by the two groups reveals that conventional indirectness is the strategy widely chosen by both groups in almost all situations. In fact, both groups employ conventional indirectness in more than sixty percent of all the situations. These results come in line with the CCSARP findings that reveal that English, German, French, Hebrew and Spanish show a marked preference for this strategy over non-conventional indirectness and impositives. Other studies such as that conducted by Vazquez-Orta (1996) and Garacia (1996), have also revealed higher tendency among their subjects to use conventional indirectness over other requestive strategies. The preference for this strategy, says Reiter (2000), *“could be explained by the fact that in uttering a conventionally indirect request the speaker is balancing clarity and non-coerciveness, hence ensuring that his/her utterance will have the correct interpretation and the right impact, thus leading to success”* (p.173)

### **Implications of the Study**

This study may have some important theoretical and pedagogical implications. Theoretically, this study together with the few investigations involving Arabic samples provide salient data on the requestive behavior of Arab learners of English. It is demonstrated that the Arabic sample may, sometimes, fall back on their cultural back-ground when formulating their requestive strategies. In other words, it is not always the norms of the target language that determine the choice of the requestive strategy.

A related point that should be highlighted here is that different cultures view politeness from different perspectives, and hence express it with different strategies. People in the Arab world may deem directness as appropriate when requesting a close person.

So directness may be assumed to express intimacy and closeness rather than rudeness or impoliteness.

Of course, it would not be fair to adopt the English cultural norms of politeness as standard for all other cultures, but when using English as a means of interaction, the English norms of politeness should be adhered to.

On the pedagogical level, the results of this study support the importance of the cultural dimension of communicative competence. Foreign language syllabus designers as well as teachers should sensitize their students to issues of cultural differences. More specifically, Arab learners of English should be made aware of the pragmatic differences between Arabic and English. An appropriate Arabic requestive scheme in a given situation might not be appropriate in English in the same situation. This awareness can only be attained through a variety of classroom drills and exercises that involve realization of the speech act of request in different situations. Learners should be given enough chance to practice these drills of pragmatic competence until they become part of their linguistic repertoire. Role play may be recommended as a class room procedure to enhance linguistic and cultural appropriateness of different speech acts. In the same time, students should be implicitly and explicitly instructed to observe the role of social distance and social power in performing request. Learners of English should also be taught the proper syntactic and semantic techniques to modify their requestive acts.

### **Implications for Further Research**

The results of this study reveal that there are some differences and similarities between the Arab Learners and the Native Speakers of English in their selection of strategies to realize request.

Differences are shown at the levels of head words as well as the syntactic and semantic modifiers used by each group to mitigate the impact of the impositive act of request. Further research is therefore needed to see if these differences hold true between the two groups in other speech act realization patterns such as apologizing, thanking and taking permissions.

This study has concentrated on a very limited number of variables that may affect the subject's choice of request strategies, i.e., the social distance and the social power. Other variables such as sex differences, ages, the mood of request and degree of imposition involved should all be systemically studied in further research to determine their effect on requestive behavior.

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## Request Strategies as Used by Advanced Arab Learners

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