

Requesting Speech Acts: A Case Study of Arabic Education Students in Bandung

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ABSTRACT

It is complicated to choose and use the right request sentence strategy and in accordance with the norms and culture that apply in the Arabic language. It will be even more difficult if the sentence is selected and produced by non-native speaker (NNS). This study was aimed at investigating the pragmalinguistics of request sentences in Arabic used by the students. Descriptive qualitative approach was used in this study. The participants in this study were 20 postgraduate students of Arabic language education at one public university in Bandung, consisting of 20 postgraduate students. The participants were selected to fill out a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) consisting of five requests during activities on campus, by adapting Blum-Kulka et al. (1989)'s request strategies. The results of this study showed that Arabic language education students used various request strategies from the predetermined Arabic language standards. However, there were some students who did not use Arabic request sentences correctly. It is due to a lack of pragmatic competence, so that they have difficulty transferring the source language (SL) into the target language (TL). Therefore, to improve the students' pragmatic competence in responding to requests in Arabic, lecturers must teach a lot of pragmatic competencies and develop existing textbooks that can help in improving students' pragmatic competencies.

Keywords: Arabic, pragmatic competence, pragmalinguistics, requesting, speech act.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, Arabic become a language that used as a universal means of communication. Specifically, after technological advances, the Arabic using has brought people from different cultures and countries closer to each other. Success of achieving one's goals in communicating depends on the communicative competence possessed. Deficiencies in communicative competence can sometimes lead to many social problems and misunderstandings (Alzeebaree & Yavuz, 2017; Thomas, 1983).

Successful communication in a foreign language does not only depend on language mastering of sentence structures and grammatical of the language but also requires knowledge of pragmatics and cross-cultural communication (Nugroho, Astuti, & Atmojo, 2021). In other words, successful language learners must master communicative competencies which include ability to use appropriate language in real context of communication (Daskalovska, Ivanovska, Kusevska, & Ulanska, 2016; Nugroho & Rekha, 2020). Therefore, in

the context of Arabic as a foreign language such as in Indonesia, teaching Arabic in a classroom has an important role in developing students' communication competence.

Consider the importance above, so far, the use of Arabic for NNS become an important matter to be studied. Because NNS often find difficulty in choosing and using appropriate Arabic sentence strategies and in accordance with norms and culture that apply in Arabic (Al-Rawafi, 2020). Therefore, the language using by the NNS will be different from native speakers in terms of speech acts, speech act strategies, contextual distribution, linguistic forms to convey illocutionary meaning, and level of politeness (Kasper, 1992).

In this case, the NNS is demanded to have the ability to use correct language in the appropriate context, which is known as pragmatic competence. In other words, pragmatic competence refers to the ability to use two types of knowledge, namely pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic (Al-Rawafi, 2020). In line with this, Leech (1983) emphasizes that pragmalinguistics is the

ability of NNS to use linguistic forms and actions in conveying certain illocutions, while sociopragmatics is the ability of NNSs to adapt forms and actions in certain cultural contexts.

Pragmalinguistic ability is the key in communicative competence. Pragmalinguistic knowledge is needed to know how to make speech acts, especially request sentences in certain languages, and sociopragmatics; knowledge of how to use the speech act in appropriate situations (Kecskes, 2014).

In line with the statement above, Celce-Murcia (2007) asserts that successful communication requires various competencies, namely linguistic competence, discourse competence, sociocultural competence, formulaic competence, interactional competence, and strategic competence, each of which contributes to successful pragmatic performance in the TL. These types of competencies can be combined into one competency, namely: action competency; skills needed to perform speech acts in the NNS language. Therefore, focus of this study is to investigate the pragmalinguistic competence of the request sentences used by NNS in Arabic.

Regarding the request sentence, Searle (1979) and Ellis (1992) have placed it as a directive speech act. According to them, there are four conditions in making a request; 1) the preparatory condition, where speech partner is able to perform given action from a speaker, 2) the sincerity condition, where the speaker wants the speech partner to do something, 3) the propositional content condition, where the speaker predicts the action that will be taken by the speech partner, and 4) essential conditions, where it is considered as the speaker's effort to make the speech partner to do something.

Furthermore, Brown and Levinson (1987) emphasize that request sentences can be classified into three types: direct, conventional indirect requests, and non-conventional indirect requests. The first sub-strategy, direct request, the speaker makes the request clearly, directly, without ambiguity without any corrective action. The second type, namely the conventional indirect request, the speaker asks the speech partner indirectly to perform a certain action by questioning the listener's ability to perform the action. Then the last sub-strategy, non-conventional indirect request, the speaker just give signals and let listeners to interpret it.

A study related with speech act of request has been conducted by Blum-kulka & Olshtain (1983). In their research, they were more focused on a comparative study between NNS and Native Speakers (NS) on realization of request speech acts in non-native languages into their mother tongue. This kind of study could be used as a basic framework for further research on the realization of request speech acts by NNS.

Regarding to this, the realization in Iragui's (1996) research, he analyzed the role of linguistic background,

social status, and gender in performing speech acts of request by using English. In addition, among the results of his study showed interesting differences between NS and NNS to expressed request sentences in English. NNS tend to use direct request sentences, while NS tend to use conventional indirect request sentences. NS consider that indirect requests are conventionally more polite than direct strategies which are consider rude and insensitive. Eldin's research (2016) also confirms that social status between the speaker and the speech partner in interaction has an impact on selection of the request sentence strategy.

Based on the results of the researcher's identification, previous research focused on examining the request expressions used by NS and NNS in English. In contrast to the research above, the pragmalinguistics of the research speech act in Arabic by NNS is one of remaining issues and becomes the focus in this research. This study explores how far the Arabic education postgraduate students use accurate pragmalinguistics in realizing a request strategy with Arabic. This study adapted request strategy theory proposed by Blum-kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) known as *Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project* (CCSARP).

2. METHOD

This study was a qualitative study using case study design. This study focused on pragmalinguistic competence of Arabic language education postgraduate students at a public university in Bandung (NNS) in using request sentences in Arabic.

The data collection instrument for this study are the Discourse Completion Task (DCT) which consists of five request situations during campus activities. The informants write down their responses objectively in five real situations using Arabic. The five situations consist of the following themes: borrowing notebook and stationery, discussion activities in class, going to toilet while study, going to library with friends to look for books, and when meeting with a lecturer for academic consultation. Those are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Language situations

Item	Language Situations
1	Borrowing notebook and stationery
2	Discussion activity in class
3	Going to toilet while study
4	Going to library with friends to look for books
5	Meeting with a lecturer for academic consultation

Table 2. *Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP)*

Request Strategies	Types
Direct	1. Mood derivable: where the grammatical mood of the verb in the utterance marks its illocutionary force as a request, e.g.: the imperative. 2. Explicit performative: where illocutionary force of the utterance is explicitly named by the speaker, e.g.: I am asking you to... 3. Hedged performatives: where utterance embedding the naming of illocutionary force, e.g.: I must/have to ask you to... 4. Locution derivable/Obligation statement: where the illocutionary points is directly derivable from semantic meaning of the locution, e.g.: You will have to/should/must/ought to... 5. Want statement: where the utterance expresses the speaker's intentions, desire or feeling vis a vis the fact that the hear do X, e.g.: I would like to...
Conventionally Indirect	6. Suggestory formula: where the sentence contains a suggestion to X, e.g.: how about/why don't you cleaning up the kitchen? 7. Query preparatory: where the utterance contains reference to a preparatory condition such as ability, willingness, or the possibility of the act being performed as conventionalized in a given language, e.g.: Could you clean up the kitchen, please?
Non-conventionally indirect	8. Strong hint: where the utterance contains partial reference to object or to elements needed for the implementation of the act, directly pragmatically implying the act, e.g.: Will you be going home now? (Intent: getting a lift home) 9. Mild hint: where the utterance that make the utterance that make no reference to the request proper or any of its element but is interpretable through the context as request, e.g.: I'm a nun (in response to a persistent hassler)

Adapted from Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989)

Analysis of the data collected based on the request strategy developed by (Blum-kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989) or it known as the *Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project* (CCSARP). This strategy is basis for the analysis in this study. More clearly, it is described in Table 2.

Furthermore, the informant in this study consists of 20 postgraduate students enrolled in the Arabic language education study program at a public university in Bandung. They are assigned to fill out a questionnaire related to the five language situations using Arabic.

In testing the instrument that is formulated to obtain data in this study, expert judgment is used. In this case, after the instrument is constructed about the five situational activities on campus by using Arabic, then these are consulted with the expert (NS) and then to asked for their opinion on the instrument that has been compiled and results of the expression of the request strategy that has been filled through the DCT.

This coding scheme provides a suitable framework for this research and will be used to classify the request strategies based on the subjects.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Distribution of Frequency and Percentage of the Requests Strategies in Arabic

To explore the requests pragmalinguistics used by NNS in Arabic, the researcher begins by analyzing and classifying the expressions of requests based on the CCSARP theory of Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989).

The data in form of request expressions in five real situations on campus realized by 20 Arabic language education students through DCT was varied and consisted of all request strategies, namely direct, indirect conventional, and indirect non-conventional. From the 40 realizations of requests obtained from DCT, the researchers found that students used the direct request strategy as much as 25% which consisted of 10% mood derivatives, 2.5% explicit performatives, 7.5% hedged performatives, 2.5% obligation statements, 2.5% want statements. Then, students also used the conventional indirect request strategy as much as 62.5% consisted of suggestory formula 2% and preparatory query 23%. Then for the last, the 12.5% indirect category requests strategy used by students showed 12.5% consisted of 10% strong hint and 2.5% mild hint. These are described in the following tables and diagrams.

Table 3. Distribution of frequency and percentage of the requests strategies in Arabic

Request Strategies	N	Percentage (%)
Direct	10	25
Mood derivable	4	10
Explicit performatives	1	2.5
Hedged performatives	3	7.5
Obligation statement	1	2.5
Want Statement	1	2.5
Conventionally indirect	25	62.5
Suggestory formula	2	5
Query preparatory	23	57.5
Non-conventionally indirect	5	12.5
Strong hint	4	10
Mild hint	1	2.5
Total	40	100

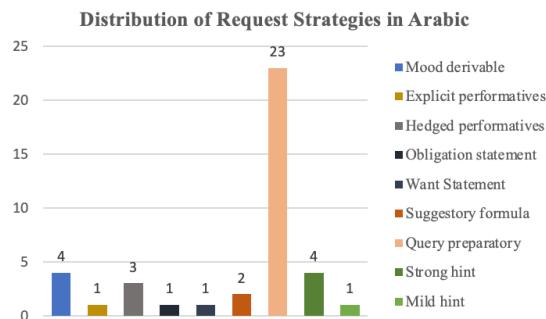


Figure 1 Distribution of request strategies in Arabic.

Table 3 and Figure 1 show that the Arabic language request strategy with the most (highest) category used by NNS in five activity situations on campus is conventionally indirect with a preparatory query sub-strategy of 57.5%. While the application strategy in Arabic that is the least used is non-conventionally indirect with the type of Mild hint by 2.5%. Thus, conventionally indirect with preparatory query sub-strategy become the most widely used request strategy by Arabic students during activities on campus.

3.2. Direct request in Arabic

This is the second most widely used strategy by NNS (students). This strategy using reaches 25%. Each student used this strategy 10 times. The students used the direct request strategy with mood derivable sub-strategies four times, explicit performatives once, hedged performatives three times, obligation statement once, and want statement once. Thus, the direct request sub strategy that is often used by NNS is mood derivative (imperative). In line with this, the results of research by Al-Marrani and Sazalie (2010) that the request strategy using in Arabic used by NS uses a lot of direct requests with mood derivable (imperative) sub-strategies.

Based on the statement above, the using of mood derivable sub-strategies used by NS and NNS have similarities. In other words, the using of mood derivable is often used in request situations. In addition, based on the results of documentation study, the mood derivable using is often occurred on discussions in class with friends (situation 2).

- (1) *Arfae sawtak qalila, lam 'asmae ma taqul*
Raise your voice! I cannot hear what you said
- (2) *Min fadlik arfae sawtak*
Louder please!

These expressions use a hedged performatives direct sub-strategy. The expressions above are spoken by the speaker and the speech partner, where both are peer and classmate. In this case, the speaker asks the speech partner to raise his voice in a presentation. Because as long as he (the partner) is presenting his voice cannot be heard by the others.

In addition, the expressions above showed the speaker believes that the speech partner will follow what the speaker says. This happens because it is inseparable from social power. This is in line with the results of research conducted by Ervin-Tripp (1979) that requests between family and friends tend to be more direct than between strangers. Thus, the researcher shows that the using of direct request strategy by NNS is motivated by interaction between social power and social status without consider level of imposition.

3.3. Conventionally indirect in Arabic

This is the first strategy most widely used by NNS (students). The strategy using reaches 62.5%. Each NNS used this strategy 25 times. The conventionally indirect request strategy consists of two parts, namely the suggestion formula and the preparatory query. The conventionally indirect request strategy with sub suggestion formula is used by NNS twice. Meanwhile, the preparatory query sub strategy was used by NNS 23 times. Thus, from the two sub strategies above, NNS often uses a preparatory query sub strategy rather than a suggestion formula. Furthermore, based on study of documentation, the researcher finds that expressing requests with preparatory sub-queries is mostly used in situations of borrowing notebook and stationery (situation 1) and going to the library with friends to look for books (situation 4). Among this, is expressed in the following expression.

- (3) *Hal taeiruni hadha alkitab liqarayatih?*
Would you like to lend me a book to read?
- (4) *Hal tuhibu 'an turafiqani 'ilaa almaktabati, la 'urid aldhahab bimufradi?*
Would you like to accompany me to go to library? I do not want to go alone

Based on the examples, sentence (3) illustrates the expression of request in a situation of borrowing a book. In other words, the speaker talks to the speech partner to lend him/her a book, because he/she is absent during previous class. While sentence (4) illustrates the expression of request in a situation of going to library with friends to look for books.

The two expressions of request above are spoken by speakers and speech partners where they are peers and are in the same class. Although the speaker and the speech partner have equal social power in both language situations, however the speaker realizes that if he uses a direct request to the speech partner, it will cause a *face threatening act* in communication. Because Trosborg (1995) assert that a request is an act that causes a *face threatening act* to the speaker. Therefore, in avoiding this, NNS realizes that by using a preparatory sub query to avoid *face threatening acts*.

3.4. Non-conventionally indirect

This strategy is the least used strategy by NNS. The use of this strategy reaches 5%. Each NNS used this strategy five times. The non-conventional indirect request strategy consists of two parts, namely the strong hint and the mild hint. The non-conventional indirect request strategy with sub strong hint is used by NNS four times. Meanwhile, the mild hint sub strategy is used by NNS once. Thus, from the two sub-strategies above, NNS often uses the strong hint sub strategy rather than the mild hint. Furthermore, based on the documentation study, the researcher found that expressing requests with strong hints was widely used in situations where requests are made to go to toilet while learning is taking place. NNS often uses the word "behind" in this request situation. In other words, NNS does not directly state the intent and purpose of "go to toilet". In addition, NNS often uses non-conventionally indirect expressions of request in situations of borrowing notebook and stationery. Among this, is expressed in the following expression.

- (5) *Eafwan 'ustadh, mumkin 'adhab 'ilaa alwara' lahzatan.*
Excuse me sir, can I go to the toilet.
(6) *Hal ladyak alqalamu?*
Do you have a pen?

Based on the examples, sentence (5) illustrates the expression of request in the situation of willing to go to the toilet. In other words, the speaker talks to the speech partner (lecturer) to allow himself to go to the toilet. In this case the speaker uses '*'ilaa alwara'*' which means behind. The speaker does not say the intent and purpose directly that he wants to go to the toilet to urinate. While sentence (6) illustrates the expression of request in a situation of borrowing notebook and stationery. The expression in sentence (6) also does not directly express the intent and purpose of wanting to borrow a pen from the speech partner.

The two examples above have the same imposition. This is done because they do not want to hurt the negative face of the speech partner and lose their own face because the situation has used high-ranking impositions. This is in line with Brown and Levinson's (1987) face saving with the "off-record" theory, in which the speaker sends "hints" to the speech partner because the risk of losing face and hurting the listener's face is high and thus, he allows the listener to interpret it.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, it could be concluded that request strategy in Arabic widely used by NNS was conventionally indirect strategy with preparatory type of 57.5%. Request expressions using query preparatory type were widely used in situations 1 and 4.

In addition, the results of this study showed that the postgraduate students of Arabic language education program mostly used conventionally indirect strategy in making request for certain purposes. Another finding illustrates that culture, the level of politeness, and social distance greatly influence the selection of student demand strategies. These findings provide practical contributions to develop students' pragmatic awareness as NNS and cross-cultural competencies. The researcher hopes that the results of this study will also have many advantages for learning Arabic in universities and future researchers in studying similar topic.

Apart from this, because this study focuses on learning Arabic at one public university in Bandung, the application strategy in Arabic used by students does not represent the population of Arabic language education students in Indonesia in general. Therefore, future researchers are expected to examine more participants who have different cultural and educational backgrounds to test the pragmatic competence of Arabic language education students. In addition, further researchers are also expected to examine the factors that influence selection of requests strategies in Arabic such as family background, socioeconomic background, Arabic proficiency level, and so on.

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