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Sudanese university students' Arabic and English request modifiers

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Abstract:

This study has aimed at studying request modifications produced by Sudanese university students in Arabic and English. It has compared and contrasted the pragmatic features in the production of the subjects in the two languages in an attempt to identify the universal and culture-specific ones. It attempted to classify the modifiers used by the subjects. It also tried to find out subjects' preferences of the different modification types and the reasons behind them. The subjects were two hundred students who responded to Arabic and English Discourse Completion Tests (DCTs).

The study showed that the subjects used a shared group of universal modifications that included eleven internal modifiers and six external ones when responding to the two DCTs. It has been found that the subjects preferred to use interrogatives, politeness devices, past tenses, grounders, and checking on availability more than the others. They did not use negations and downtoners in Arabic and used embedded if-clauses, consultative devices, and hedges sparsely. It also revealed other culture-specific types that did not appear in the Cross-Cultural Speech Acts Realization Project (CCSARP) i.e. alternatives, religious appealing markers, and other types of speech acts. The subjects' choices were determined by linguistic, social, cultural, religious, and contextual factors.

Keywords: speech acts, requests, external & internal modifications, Sudanese Colloquial Arabic, Sudanese university students.

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1. Introduction:

Requests are one of the most frequently utilized speech acts (Tan & Farashaiya, 2012). They are learned at the early years of the life of any language speaker as most of the interaction between caregivers and children at that stage is composed mainly of instructions and requests. This speech act is important for different communicative purposes because it is used to seek information from and to secure the cooperation of other members of the in and out social groups. Requests are important in foreign language learning contexts (Hassan & Rangasawmy, 2014).

By its nature, a request is considered a face-threatening speech act that requires to be mitigated and softened to guarantee the compliance of other interactants (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Requesters need to minimize the negative consequences of their utterances by modifying the request proper through the use of internal modifiers and supportive moves. Different types of modifiers are used in requests to render them polite and to decrease or increase their degree of imposition (Alcon et al., 2005: 4). The modifications to requests consist of downgraders and upgraders that mitigate and aggravate the illocutionary force of the speech act (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984).

The present study focuses on the peripheral elements of the request head act. It aims at investigating the different types of modifications and supporting moves used by Sudanese university students when issuing requests in Arabic and English. The study compares and contrasts the different modifiers used by the subjects in the two languages in an attempt to identify the universal as well as culture-specific ones. It tries to present a categorization of the modifiers used by the subjects based on previous studies. It also attempts to highlight preferences made by the subjects in their choice of modifiers and the reasons behind them.

The realization of the modification to the speech act is determined by the culture and language in which it is realized. The difference between the request modifiers in Sudanese Colloquial Arabic and English is an area that is not adequately discussed. This study focused on the modifiers of the

speech act of requesting as it is important for fruitful social interaction. It is a descriptive study that is carried out in the realms of cross-cultural pragmatics that attempts to account for the use of the linguistic devices in Sudanese Colloquial Arabic (SCA) and English as produced by Sudanese university students.

2. Literature Review:

Requests are classified as 'directives' by Searle (1969). The structure of this directive act could be divided into three main elements i.e. alerter, head-act and modifications. Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) conducted a seminal study entitled Cross-Cultural Speech Acts Realization Project (CCSARP) that aimed at comparing and contrasting the realization patterns of requests and apologies of speakers of several languages. The project described the component elements of a request as (1) alerter, (2) head-act, and (3) modifications. Each one of the three serves a specific function in the realization of the speech act.

The alerter, also called the precursor, or attention getter, precedes the head act. The function of the alerter is to draw the attention of the hearer to the oncoming request (Achiba, 2003: 137). The second part is the head act or the request proper. It is the smallest linguistic unit that conveys the illocutionary force of the speech act (Marquez-Reiter, 2000: 36).

The third part is composed of modifications to the requestive act. Modifiers are divided into two types: internal and external. The two types are used to mitigate and soften the force and coerciveness of the speech act. The internal modifications modify and mitigate the head act itself, while the external supportive moves precede or follow the head act. Each sort of these modifications has subcategories that are discussed briefly below.

2.1. Internal Modifications:

The illocutionary force of a request is modified by two types of internal modifications; these modifications are referred to as upgraders and downgraders. The following is a brief description and examples of each type (examples of different types are taken from the authors'):

A- Upgraders: The upgraders are used to intensify the illocutionary force of requests. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), and Culpeper and Archer (2008) classified the upgraders into intensifiers and expletives. When using intensifiers 'the speaker over-represents the reality'.

e.g. *Clean up this mess, it's disgusting*.

When using the expletives, the addresser expresses 'explicitly a negative emotional attitude'

e.g. *You still haven't cleaned up that bloody mess*!

B- Downgraders are used to reduce the force of a request. They are divided into two subcategories: lexical and syntactical. Cole and Andersen (2001: 3) made a distinction between the two types; they noted that lexical downgraders are "optional additions to soften the force of the request by modifying it through lexical and phrasal choices, e.g. adding 'please' or down toning it: "*Could you possibly give me...*" and the syntactic downgraders are used to mitigate the "force of the request by changing the syntax. e.g., using a past form like "could" instead of "can" or the negative "You couldn't lend me…"

Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) differentiated between the lexical and syntactic downgraders and provided examples for them as follows:

First, the syntactic downgraders are classified into the following:

1. Interrogatives e.g. *could you do the cleaning up?*
2. Negation e.g. *look, excuse me, I wonder if you wouldn't mind dropping me home?*
3. Past tense e.g. *I wanted to ask for a postponement.*
4. Embedded 'if' clause e.g. *I would appreciate it if you left me alone.*

Secondly, the lexical/phrasal downgraders are categorized as:

1. Consultative device: is an utterance in which the speaker seeks to involve the hearer and bids for his/her cooperation. e.g. *Do you think I could borrow your lecture notes from yesterday*?

2. Understater: is an utterance in which the speaker minimizes the required action or object. e.g. *Could you tidy up a bit before I start*?

3. Hedge: is an utterance in which the speaker avoids specification regarding the request. e.g. *It would really help if you did something about the kitchen*.

4. Downtoner: is an utterance in which the speaker modulates the impact of the request by indicating the possibility of non-compliance. e.g. *Will you be able perhaps to drive me?*

5. Politeness devices: are words or phrases such as 'please' e.g. *Can I use your pen for a minute, please?*

2.2. External Modifications:

The supporting moves are described as external additions to the request head-act and are used to mitigate or aggravate it. Edmondson quoted in Eslami-Rasekh (1993: 90) stated that "The speaker may choose to support or aggravate the speech act by external modifications (supportive moves). Supportive moves … indirectly modify illocutionary force."

The supportive moves are classified by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), House and Kasper (1987), Kim (1995: 72), and Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984). The authors described and provided illustrative examples as follows:

1. Getting a pre-commitment: is used by a speaker to check on a potential refusal before making his/her request; a speaker tries to commit his/her hearer before telling him/her what s/he is being requested. e.g. *Could you do me a favor?*

2. Grounder: is a move in which the speaker gives reasons, explanations, or justifications for his/her request, which may precede and/or

follow it; e.g. *I'm trying to study for an exam.*

3. Disarmer: is a move in which the speaker tries to remove any potential objections the hearer might raise upon being confronted with the request. e.g. *I know you don't like this, but…*

4. Promise of reward: is used to increase the likelihood of the hearer's compliance with the speaker's request by offering a reward on the fulfillment of the announced request; e.g. *I'll make it up to you*.

5. Apology: apologies mitigate the request as the speaker acknowledges that s/he is imposing his/her will on the hearer and expresses his/her regret for doing so: e.g. *I am Sorry to bother you, but please could you help me.*

6. Sweetener: is a move in which the speaker expresses exaggerated appreciation of the requestee's abilities, appearance or possessions to lower the imposition involved and increases the chances of the hearer's compliance; e.g. *You have the most beautiful handwriting I have ever seen! Would it be possible to borrow your notes for a few days?*

7. Cost minimizer: is a move in which the speaker indicates consideration of the imposition on the requestee and brings his\her request to the minimum to encourage the hearer's compliance; e.g. *Pardon me, but could you give me a lift, if only you are going my way, as I just missed the bus and there isn't another one for an hour.*

8. Checking on the availability: is a move in which the speaker checks if the pre-conditions necessary for compliance hold true; e.g. *Are you going in the direction of the town? And if so, is it possible to join you?*

Table (1) shows the different types of internal and external modifiers as categorized by the CCSARP and previous studies.

Table (1): Internal and External Modifications / Supportive Moves used by the CCSARP and previous studies

Internal Modifications			External Modifications (Supportive Moves)
Upgraders	Syntactic Downgraders	Lexical Downgraders	
1- Intensifiers. 2- Expletives.	1- Interrogative. 2- Negation. 3-Past tense. 4- Embedded 'if' clause.	1- Consultative devices. 2-Understaters. 3-Hedges. 4-Downtoner. 5-Politeness device.	1- Getting a pre-commitment. 2- Grounder. 3- Disarmer. 4- Promise of a reward. 5- Apology. 6- Sweetener. 7- Cost minimizer. 8- Checking on availability.

3. Methodology:

The subjects of the study were 200 male and female Sudanese university students. They were at their final year in eight Sudanese universities. They were inhabitants of Khartoum State and central parts of Sudan who share the same socio-cultural background and speak the Sudanese Colloquial Arabic (SCA). The subjects studied English as a foreign language for nine years i.e. four years at basic school, three at secondary school, and two at the territory level. During their study, they were introduced to the different types of speech acts including requests. University students were chosen on the assumption that their academic and cultural backgrounds were identical

and would help in eliciting comparable data.

The study used an open-ended test that is known as *Discourse Completion Test* (DCT) to collect its data. The advantages of this instrument are many as it enables researchers to control contextual variables and provide comparable data (Houck & Gass, 1996; Parent, 2002: 150). It also assists in collecting large amounts of data within short periods of time (Kasper & Roever, 2005:327; Beebe & Cummings, 1996:80; Houck & Gass, 1996:46). The DCTs were contested by some researchers because they failed to present "prosodic and nonverbal features of oral interaction" and because they allow subjects to ponder over their answers due to lack of time restraints (Cohen, 1996: 25).

The study used two DCTs, one in English and another in Sudanese Colloquial Arabic (SCA). They were based on the DCT designed by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). The two versions of the test contained the same items (Appendices No. 1 & 2). The two DCTs were reviewed by six experts: two PhD holders, two M.A. holders and the others were B.A. holders. The judges were native speakers of Arabic language who majored in English.

The tests provided a detailed description of nine situations that included information about the interactants involved and the background to the situations. The nine items were designed to cater for the three social factors that affect request production: social distance, power, and degree of imposition (Salgado, 2011). At the end of each item, the subjects were asked to provide appropriate written responses in a blank provided. The nature of the speech act that would be elicited by the DCTs was not identified to the subjects to allow the gathering of a naturalistic data. A hundred subjects did the Arabic version and another one hundred responded to the English one. The subjects were given thirty minutes to complete the tests so as not to deliberate about their answers.

For classification purposes, the study used the modifications coding scheme proposed by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) in the CCSARP as a point of departure. Since the inception of that project, its classification schemes were widely used and continue to be used at present (e.g. Flock, 2016).

The structural and grammatical mistakes and errors in the data collected from the subjects were not addressed because they were out of the scope of the current study.

4. Results and Discussion:

The study showed that the subjects used universal modifications that appeared in the production of speakers of other languages (Blum-Kulka, 1989) and culture-specific ones. They utilized the eleven internal modifiers classified by the CCSARP in their responses to the English and Arabic DCTs. It has been found that they also used the six external modifications highlighted by the project. Moreover, the data showed that they used culture-specific internal and external modifiers in their answers to the Arabic test and others that were not included in previous studies (Table 1).

This part of the study compares and contrasts the frequency of occurrence of the modifications in the English and Arabic data. At the end of each part**,** a discussion of the results is presented. It first presents the different types of internal modifiers followed by the external ones and other moves.

4.1. Internal Modifications:

The results of the English and Arabic tests showed that the subjects used all the eleven types of universal internal modifications which are classified by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984). It reflected that the subjects opted to use almost the same types of modifiers when responding to the two DCTs. Table (2) shows the distribution of the internal modifications in the English and Arabic data gathered from the study subjects.

The study revealed that the respondents used the 'politeness devices' more than any other type. The devices were used 494 times in the English responses and 337 times in the Arabic answers. The data showed that the subjects used the internal modifications of 'negations', 'embedded if clauses', 'consultative devices', 'hedges', 'downtoners', and 'expletives' less than the other types. The 'negation' was used in 19 answers in the English DCT and only once in the Arabic one. The low frequency of the use of the modifier could be attributed to the influence of the subjects' mother

tongue as the structure is not commonly used to issue requests.

The 'embedded if clauses' occurred 23 times in English and only twice in Arabic. The 'consultative devices' were used 5 times in English and twice in Arabic. 'Hedges' occurred 7 times in English and 4 in Arabic. 'Downtoners' were used 4 times in English and were not used at all in the Arabic data. The 'expletives' were used once in English and 7 times in Arabic.

Table (2): The distribution of internal modifications in the students' responses to the English and Arabic DCTs

No.	Type	English DCT	Arabic DCT
		Frequency	
1	Politeness Devices	494	337
2	Interrogative	448	176
3	Past Tense	180	263
4	Understaters	80	178
5	Intensifiers	91	56
6	Negation	19	1
7	Embedded 'if' Clause	23	2
8	Consultative Device	5	2
9	Hedges	7	4
10	Downtoners	4	0
11	Expletives	1	7

The high frequency of the use of 'politeness devices' by the subjects could be attributed to several different reasons. First, the subjects may have wanted to issue polite requests, and they believed that the use of politeness markers helps them to soften and mitigate the force of their requests.

The use of politeness devices decreases the imposition of a request and increases the chances of requestees' compliance with it. The threat posed by requesting to both requesters and requstees' faces is largely diminished by the use of such markers.

Secondly, the use of politeness devices is conventional as they are closely associated with requesting. Using such devices helps hearers to interpret the speech act of requesting easily. The markers could be easily fitted into a request set. The use of politeness markers is simple because it requires no syntactic changes to the structure of a sentence. Politeness devices could be inserted into different positions of a request without affecting its structure. It could occur in initial, medial, or final positions in a request without any syntactic or structural changes.

Thirdly, the subjects' mother tongue may have influenced their performance and led to their intensive use of the modifier. The study data showed that the English responses contained the marker 'please' more than any other politeness device, while the Arabic made use of six devices that have the same meaning and pragmatic effect. Those six politeness devices used by the subjects in the Arabic data were:

1- idhā samaḥta	*2- arjūk*	*3- lau takarmata*
4- min faḍlāk	*5- lau tasmiḥ*	*6- lau samaḥta*

The gathered data showed that the subjects tended to use a single politeness marker in their Arabic responses while many of them utilized 'please' more than once in different positions in their English replies. The rich repertoire of politeness devices in the Arabic language may have influenced the subjects' performance in English. The diversity and richness of devices in Arabic resulted in the subjects' uncertainty when using a single marker in the target language and thus led to their intensive use of the device. The following examples are taken from the subjects' responses to the English DCT:

1. Please shut your mobile phone please.
2. Please I can't study with this loud noise, will you please turn the noise off?
3. Please please can you turn down the music.

Such intensive use of the marker may indicate that the subjects opted for playing it safe strategy or that they were not confident that their requests were appropriate and were trying to reduce its force by repeatedly using 'please' wherever they felt adequate.

It has been found that the politeness device 'please' has been used by the subjects with any linguistic structure as a sufficient marker that the structure was meant to be a request. The device was used to function as an indicator of the speaker's intentions that s/he is making a request. It seemed that some respondents believed that if they inserted 'please' with any speech act then it would give it the force of a request. For example, the following utterance was made as a complaint of a lecturer's low voice but 'please' was added at the beginning to change its interpretation to that of a request:

-Please Prof. we can't hear your voice.

The low number of 'negations' in the data could be attributed to the influence of the subjects' mother tongue as the feature is not normally used in the Arabic language to issue requests. In Arabic, the structure is used only to find out information about the possibility of requestee's compliance with a request. Negation is used to form questions about whether the requestee will carry out the desired task or not. For example, *mafi ṭariqah ast'amal talafunak?* which means "Isn't there any way that I can use your phone?" is used to find out whether the requestee will let the speaker use his/her phone or not. The structure does not have the force of an explicit request, so the subjects did not prefer to use it in their responses. The subjects' tendency for clarity led them to choose other types of modifications.

The 'embedded 'if' clauses' were one of the least used internal modifiers by the subjects, which could be ascribed to the influence of their native culture. The Arabic culture has a tendency to avoid the use of the conjunction *lau* that means "if". A Hadith narrated by prophet Mohammed (PBUH) warned Muslims against the use of the device as it leads to the evil deeds of Satan. The subjects tended to use this type of modification sparsely as it is discouraged by their culture.

Another reason may have been that the conditional structure is relatively complex and the students encountered problems in choosing the appropriate tenses for its clauses. The structure requires verb agreement between its two parts which adds difficulty to performing the task. The subjects may have preferred to use simple structures in their requests instead of the relatively complicated conditional clauses.

Also, the level of directness and explicitness preferred to be achieved by the subjects may have led to the negligence of the use of 'if' clauses. The students may have conceived that the clarity of requests may be negatively affected by the circumlocution of the structure.

The 'consultative devices' were not used much by the respondents due to the influence of their native language. The literal translation of the sentence 'why don't you do x?' in the Arabic language would be interpreted as a question, a suggestion, or a criticism. Such structure could be used to find out the reasons why the addressee preferred not to do (x) or to suggest doing (x). Also, it could be interpreted as a criticism to an unreasonable choice made by the hearer. Unlike English, the Arabic equivalent is not used normally to issue requests.

The other structure of 'what about doing x?' is not used in the Arabic language to make requests. Such a device is normally used to find out the opinion of the addressee concerning a certain task. In addition to that, the structure is used widely in the Arabic language to make suggestions about a preferred action to be carried out by an addressee.

Hedges were not widely used in the responses of the subjects, the thing that could be attributed to the nature of the modifier itself. When using a

hedge, the speaker avoids specifying the object or action being requested. A hedge is considered a mystifying modifier as it tends to conceal the specific purpose of a request. Results of many studies showed that members of collectivist cultures preferred to employ direct request strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The Sudanese is a collectivist culture and the subjects may have avoided the use of 'hedges' due to their mystifying nature. Brown and Levinson's (1987) findings may justify the subjects' tendency for clarity as they opted for more explicit request forms. Hedges were not used much as they exert a negative influence on the clarity of the request aspired to be realized by the subjects.

The nature of downtoners could be the reason behind their absence in the Arabic data and their low frequency in English. When a speaker is using a downtoner s/he is mitigating the impact of the request by signaling the possibility of the requestee's non-compliance with the request. The use of the modifier diminishes the clarity and explicitness sought by subjects so they tended to opt for more directness in their requests. Downtoners also make the requester appear hesitant and thus reducing the chances of requestee's consent to perform the requested act.

The data showed that the subjects used expletives once in Arabic and seven in English. Several reasons might lie behind the few number of expletives used by study subjects in both DCTs. The expletives were not used much for upgrading requests as the contextual factors governing the situations restricted the encounters to the immediate academic and social circles of the students. Within close social circles and at academic institutions, expletive use is discouraged and usually not common. Sudanese values restrict the use of this linguistic phenomenon with extended family members, relatives, neighbors, and even with strangers. Expletives are forbidden and narrowly used among peers. The Sudanese respect for education, knowledge, and science is reflected in the marginal use of expletives among university students.

The use of expletives was avoided because it may endanger the chances of requestee compliance with the request. Denial of a request is the thing that is greatly avoided by speakers. The use of expletives may result in requestee's defiance to the authority of the requester and his/her right to issue a request and thus leads to non-compliance.

The use of expletives may result in more serious consequences as it may damage or negatively influence the personal image of the speaker in his/her social circles and thus affecting his/her need to be accepted and liked by others. The speaker may suffer social sanctions or penalties imposed on him/her by other members of his/her society. The negative outcomes of expletives use might affect the cooperation of hearers with the subject in the future.

4.2. External Modifications:

It has been found that the subjects preferred to use the same types of universal an external modification when they responded to the two DCTs. Table number (3) presents the total number of external modifiers in the subjects' responses to the English and Arabic DCTs. The results revealed a tendency among the subjects to use 'grounders' and 'checking on availability' more than the other moves. The English data contained 395 'grounders', while the Arabic data had 437. The subjects preferred to use the move more than the others in their responses to the two DCTs. The results showed that the two tests used the type of 'checking on availability' second to 'grounders'. The supportive move was used 381 times in the English responses and occurred 179 in the Arabic. The frequencies of use of the other four modifiers were insignificant as the subjects used them less than the former two moves. Table (3) shows congruent results in the choice of external modifications made by the two language groups.

Table (3): the distribution of external modifications in the subjects' responses to the English and Arabic DCTs

No.	Type	English	Arabic
		Frequency	
1	Grounder	395	437
2	Checking on Availability	381	179
3	Getting A precommitment	27	3
4	Sweetener	26	16
5	Disarmer	25	25
6	Cost Minimizer	7	65

The subjects' use of a high number of 'grounders' could be ascribed to many reasons. The modifier use is simple and spontaneous as it utilizes information already provided by the two tests. Grounders are used to explain, justify, or give reasons to why the request is made. They provide reasons and explanations that compel one to make a request and thus present the request as not as a result of the requester's egocentrism.

Also, grounders are used as politeness strategies. The requester softens the force of his/her request by offering the reasons that made him/her produce the speech act. The mitigation force of the 'grounders' is obvious and they are considered an efficient means to reduce the threat to the requestee's negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The supportive move expresses the speaker's acknowledgment that by making the request, s/he is imposing on the requestee. The modifier is used to indicate that in the normal course of events the requester will not impose on the addressee, but some circumstantial reasons led him/her to do so and thus render the request as polite.

Moreover, the detailed description of the DCT situations contained explanations, justifications, and reasons for making requests, the thing that provided clues to the subjects to use grounders with ease. The high frequency of the occurrence of the modifier in the current study is in line with the findings of a lot of studies that discussed requests (Flock, 2016: 138).

When using external modification of the type of 'checking on availability' the requester was seeking information about whether the precondition necessary for the requestee's compliance was feasible. The move enhanced the clarity and directness of the requestive goal that followed it. The modifier set the ground for the request to be interpreted correctly as intended by the requester. Students' preference for directness, clarity, and explicitness in performing requests could be the reason for the high frequency of this type of external modification.

Also, the simple syntactic structures which were used to find out such information could be another reason. The linguistic resources of the subjects might have enabled them to devise the move with ease. Usually, 'checking on availability' contains a direct reference to the requestive goal which is included in the description of the different situations provided in the DCTs. The descriptions of different situations provided in the DCTs contained clues that could be easily used in forming questions. Having such clues may have encouraged the subjects to use the modifier intensively in their answers.

4.3. Other Types of Modifications:

The data collected from the subjects revealed they utilized some pragmatic features that were not widely addressed in previous studies (Blum-Kulka, 1989; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). The results showed the existence of a shared group of modifications used by the two language groups in addition to a culture-specific set used exclusively by the SCA group. The subjects used alternatives, other types of speech acts, religious appealing markers, and seeking others' agreement to modify their requests.

Firstly, the responses to the two DCTs showed that the subjects used several modifications that were not included in the model of analysis used by the CCSARP. The data showed excessive use of request 'alternatives' and other types of speech acts as modifiers in both languages.

Many subjects resorted to using alternatives as internal modifiers in their requests. Alternatives were used to modify the head act. Respondents tended to give two options to their addressees instead of asking for one

thing. The requestee is asked to conform to one of two options provided in the form of 'do (x) or (y)' or 'can you do (x) or (y)'. The following are some examples taken from the subjects' responses:

A\ English data:

1. Can you move your car or give me the key to move it?
2. Either you turn it off or go and answer the call outside.
3. Can you turn it off or make it low?

B\ Arabic data:

1. *mumkin tarfa' ṣawṭak aw tist'mal al-makrafun.*

Can you raise your voice or use the loudspeaker?

2. *ma taqfil al-talafun aw ta'malu ṣamit.*

Turn off the phone or silence it.

3. *'arabitak qaflah al- ṭariq qūwm ziḥaha ya adīni al-muftaḥ alnaziḥaha.*

Your car is blocking the entrance move it or give me the key to move it.

The use of alternatives is a politeness strategy that is used to minimize the imposition of a request by giving the requestee some kind of freedom in choosing an action that suits him/her (Felix-Brasdefer, 2005). The addressee is given the freedom to comply with the least imposing request from the two provided. The strategy could be considered as a cooperation builder because it allows the hearer to participate in the formation of the running course of events.

Another type of alternatives was made in responses to situation number (7) in which the subjects were required to ask their dean to move his/her car. Realizing the great imposition put on the requestee and the high power s/he enjoys, the subjects preferred to reduce the imposition by asking for the keys to his/her car. Subjects chose to offer to move the car themselves

rather than asking the dean to carry out the job. Many subjects did not use the form 'do (x)' or 'can you do (x)' and instead they resorted to the form 'do (y)' or 'can you do (y)' where (y) is a less imposing action and achieves the requestive goal under question. The following requests are taken from the subjects' answers to the two DCTs:

A\ English data:

1. Your car is closing the entrance if you don't mind I will park it and you can enjoy the party.

2. Your car stops in front of the gate please give me the key.

B\ Arabic data:

1. ya ūstadh 'arabitak waqfah fi al-madkhal adīni muftaḥak aḥarika wa ajību laik.

Teacher! your car is blocking the entrance, give me your key to move it and then I will bring it back.

2. mumkin bas muftaḥ al-'arabiah 'ashan al-mawkib yidkhul.

Can you give me the keys to your car so as to let the procession in?

Secondly, the data showed the use of other types of speech acts as external modifiers inside the request set. The subjects used the speech acts of apologies, thanking, complaints, threats, assertion of commands, pieces of advice, and suggestions to mitigate or aggravate the force of the requests. The pragmatic phenomenon was not discussed in the CCSARP. The subjects used this group of speech acts as supportive moves to soften or increase the illocutionary force of the requests made based on their judgements of the situations presented in DCTs. The following are examples of the subjects' use of the different speech acts as external modifiers in the two DCTs:

1- Apologies:

A\ English data:

1. We are sorry but it seems like your car is closing the entrance.
2. Sorry for the noise my teacher, please move your car.
3. If it doesn't disturb you your car is blocking the entrance (…) sorry for bothering you.

B\ Arabic data:

1. *ya shabāb bas ma'alish ya'ni mumkin tawṭu al-ṣawt shiwiah.*

Guys, I am sorry but can you turn down the volume?

2. *al-mawkib daiyr yidkhul min al-baūabah di wa inta mūqif 'arabitak hina, fya rait taḥawila min makanha shiwia 'ashan yedxulu, ma'alish az'jnak shiwiah.*

The procession is ready to enter through this gate and you parked your car in their way, please move it a little to make way for them. Sorry for the interruption.

3. *ma'alish ya ūstadh 'ala al-muqaṭ'ah lakin niḥna ma qadrīn nasm' kiwais.*

Teacher, sorry for interrupting you, but we can't hear you well.

2- Thanking:

A\ English data:

1. Please bring me the blood test result with many thanks.
2. Can you write it for me? Thank you very much.
3. Would you turn down the music a little? Thanks.
4. Can you turn it off or make it low please, and I thank you very much.

B\ Arabic data:

1. *lau samḥata ya ūstadh ya rait taziḥ lina al-'arabiah shiwiah min janb al-baūabah 'ashan mawkib al-khirijīn yidkhul wa shukran laik.*

Please teacher move your car a bit from the gate so as to make way for graduates' procession and thank you.

2. *adīni talafunak laḥẓa wa takūn mashkūr.*

Give me your phone for a short period of time and I'll be thankful.

3. *ṣawṭ al-musajil muz' jini shiwia mumkin takhfidihu shiwia ' ashan aqdar azakir, ṭaiyb, shukran laik.*

Your music is distracting me; can you turn it down a little bit because I want to study? Thank you. (addressed to a female)

3- Complaints:

A\ English data:

1. The hall is very crowded; we can't hear you well.
2. Your music is loud; I can't concentrate.

B\ Arabic data:

1. *ma sam'īn.*

We can't hear you.

2. *ṣawṭ musajilak 'amil iz'aj wa ma qadarah aqrā.*

Your music is loud and I can't study. (the speaker is a female)

3. *ṣawṭ al-musajil muz'ij.*

The music is noisy.

4- Threats:

A\ English data:

1. Everyone whose mobile rings in the class will go out immediately.
2. Everyone should close his mobile or he will be out.
3. Close it quickly or it will be along long day for you.

B\ Arabic data:

1. *lau 'awiz titkalam fi al-talfun tatla' lina barah wa ma taji tani.*

If you want to answer the phone get out and don't come again.

2. *āqfil al-mobail wa al-mārah aljaiah lau rana hatli'ak barah alfaṣil.*

Turn off the phone, if it rings again I will send you out of the class.

5- Assertion of commands:

A\ English data:

1. Please the mobile isn't allowed.
2. Whenever you enter this room make sure your mobile is off.
3. Mobiles are not allowed in the classroom.

B\ Arabic data:

1. *īstikhdam al-mobaiyl mamnu' dakhil al-faṣil.*

Mobile phone use is prohibited inside the class.

2. *aiy waḥid yiqifil al-mobaiyl bita'u fi al-hiṣaṣ.*

Everybody should turn off his phone during classes.

3. *al-talafun dakhil al-faṣil bīkūn maqfūl.*

Inside the class phones should be off.

6- Tips (pieces of advice):

A\ English data:

1. To have a nice time with each other, would you please turn off your phones?
2. Please turn off your mobile phone (…) because the ring tone is noisy, and this will confuse the students.

B\ Arabic data:

1. al-ṣwaṭ bita'ak da'īf shiwia haqo tarf 'au shiwiah.

Your voice is low it is better to raise it a bit.

2. āqfil talafunak 'ashan naqdar nārakiz.

Shut down your phone so we can concentrate.

3. āqfilu talafunatkum, alkalam dah fi maṣlahatkum wa 'ashan ma tinzaju wa taqdaru tarakizu.

For your benefit turn off all your phones so as to be able to concentrate.

7- Suggestions:

A\ English data:

1. Either you turn it off or go and answer the call outside.

B\ Arabic data:

1. ma tarasil lai raṣīd.

Why don't you transfer some calls' credit to me?

2. ma tamshi tajīb lai al-kitab min ūstadh filan.

Why don't you go and bring me the book from ustaz (x)?

Thirdly, the present study showed that the Sudanese university students used four types of religious appealing markers as internal and external modifications in their responses to the Arabic DCT. The religious appealing devices were employed to upgrade the force of the request because they are used to increase the likelihood of the requestee's compliance. Islam has a deep impact on the lives of the Sudanese, and it is deeply ingrained in their culture. Religious markers permeate all levels and types of discourse especially the area of speech acts. The devices are used to appeal to the religious drive of listeners to guarantee their cooperation.

These types of modification were manifested in two categories: internal and external moves. The first group consisted mainly of two devices that were used to appeal to the requestee's religious commitment to cooperate with the requester. This group of internal modifiers included the expressions *'alaik Allāh* and *billāhi* which mean 'I ask you in the name of Allah' or 'For God's sake'. For example:

1. *'alaik Allāh adīni daftarak.*

   I ask you in the name of Allah to (or 'For God's sake') give me your notebook.

2. *billāhi adīni talafunak laḥẓa.*

   I ask you in the name of Allah to (or 'For God's sake') give me your phone for a while.

The second group was more diversified than the first and it worked as external modifications. It included supplications made to Allah to protect the addressee, swearing markers, and Prophet Mohammed's sayings. The subjects produced some prayers at the end of request sets so as to encourage the addressee to carry out the desired task. Making supplications is common in the daily interactions of Sudanese society. The Islamic religion advises its followers to make prayers for beloved ones and other Muslims. The prayers are made to Allah to bestow good health on and to grant good reward for the requsetee. For example, some subjects responded to the Arabic test with the following responses:

1. *‘awiz minik tazkiyah lanha ḍaruriah wa jazak allāhu khairan.*

   I want you to write me a recommendation letter because it is necessary. May Allah bestow His blessings on you. (addressed to a female)

2. *‘aizik tasa‘dni wa rabna yikhalik lina wa yidik al-‘afiah.*

   I want you to help me, may Allah keeps you away from harm’s way and gives you good health. (addressed to a female)

The third type of religious appealers used as external modifiers was the swearing marker *wa allāhi* which could be translated as ‘I swear by the name of Allah’. The marker was used to emphasize the sincerity of claims made by the requester. It was used to make the requestee believe that the speaker was sincere and s/he was forced to perform the speech act because of reasons out of his/her control. The swearing marker was manifested in initial, medial and final positions in the subjects’ answers. The following examples are taken from the subjects’ answers to the Arabic DCT:

1. *ya ūstadh wa allāhi ‘indna īmtihanat.*

   Teacher, I swear by the name of Allah that we have examinations.

2. *mumkin tarfa‘ ṣawṭak aṣli ma sam‘ ah aiy ḥaja wa allāhi.*

   Can you raise your voice; I swear by the name of Allah that I can’t hear anything. (the speaker is a female)

3. *wa allāhi ana kunta ‘ian wa al-hiṣaṣ kulha fatatni.*

   I swear by the name of Allah that I was ill and I missed all the classes.

The fourth type was a Hadith which was said by Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) in which he advised Muslims to pursue the acquisition of knowledge. The Hadith states that Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) asked Muslims to “pursue acquiring of knowledge even if one has to travel to China”. The Hadith was used by one of the subjects but it is illustrative of a phenomenon that is prevalent in Sudanese culture. Quotations from the Holy Quran, Hadiths, literature, proverbs, and idioms are frequently

resorted to by the Sudanese to increase the force of their speech acts. The Hadith was used in situation number (1) where the subject was 'asking for a recommendation letter to join a course'. The Hadith was produced in the beginning of the speech act set as an introductory material to it.

Another external modification that was appeared in the subjects' performance was 'seeking agreement' strategies or what Sifianou (1999) has termed as appealers. The appealers were added at the end of the request sets. They were used in an attempt to elicit confirmation of the respondents' compliance with requests. The respondents used O.K. in English and its Arabic equivalents *tayib* and *kiwais* as modifiers. The following examples are taken from the subjects':

A\English data:

1. I want you to close your mobile, O.K.?
2. Make it silent. O.K?

B\ Arabic data:

1. ma tamish tajīb lai al-kitab min ūstadh filan bisur'a 'alaik Allāh. tayib.

Why don't you bring me the book from teacher (x) quickly, I ask you in the name of Allah, O.K.?

2. amshi li ammu khalihu yidīk fahṣ al-dam jībihu lai kiwais.

Go to your uncle and bring the blood test result from him, O.K.? (addressed to a female).

5. Conclusion:

The present study aimed at investigating the different modifications and supporting moves to requests produced by Sudanese university students when they responded to Arabic and English DCTs. It compared and contrasted the different types of modifiers produced by the subjects in an attempt to identify the universal and culture-specific ones. It also tried to identify the subjects' choice of the different modifiers and the factors behind their preferences. The subjects of the study were two hundred male and female university students who were enrolled in different academic programs at eight national universities. They speak the SCA and studied English as a foreign language for nine years.

The results of the study showed that the students used a shared group of eleven universal internal modifiers and six external ones when responding to the two DCTs. They used the internal modifiers of interrogatives, negations, past tenses, embedded 'if' clauses, consultative devices, understaters, hedges, downtoners, politeness devices, intensifiers, and expletives. They also used the external modifiers of checking on availability, getting precommitments, sweeteners, disarmers, cost minimizers, and grounders. They preferred to use the internal modifiers of interrogatives, politeness devices, and past tenses in addition to the external ones of grounders and checking on availability more than the others.

With regard to the internal syntactic and lexical downgraders, the study showed that the internal modifications of 'negations' and 'downtoners' were not used by the subjects in Arabic. It found that the embedded 'if' clauses, 'consultative devices', and 'hedges' were the least used modifiers. As for the external modifiers the study showed that 'grounders' were the most widely used type, a finding that is supported by similar studies (Flock, 2016). The study also revealed a group of culture-specific modifiers that did not appear in the CCSARP i.e. the subjects used 'alternatives', religious appealing markers, and other types of speech acts used as internal and external modifications.

The study showed that the subjects' choices of the different internal and

external modifications were determined by linguistic, cultural, religious, contextual, and social factors.

The findings of the present study showed the low frequency of some request modifiers, which could be attributed to the subjects' poor pragmatic competence. Different pragmatic features associated with speech acts should be addressed in foreign language curricula.

The study of modifiers used with other speech acts is an area that is not adequately addressed by pragmatists. Modifiers used with other speech acts could be studied or contrasted with those occurring in request sets. The current study could be replicated using other data gathering methods and with other groups of subjects with different languages, ages, and educational backgrounds.

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7. Appendices:

Appendix (1):

The English Version of the Discourse Completion Test:

The goal of this questionnaire is to study some types of English sentences. Please read the following description of situations, and then write what you would say to the other person in the blank lines. Write what you will say in real life situations. Note that this is not a test. Each question could be answered in more than one way. Your answers will remain confidential.

1. You are applying for a course in an Egyptian institute. The institute sent you an e-mail telling you that you should send a recommendation letter from the head of your department. You know the head of department very well. She taught you many courses and she lives near your house. You go to her office and knock at the door. What would you say to her?

……
……..

2. You are studying with a friend. The credit in your mobile phone is not enough to make a call. You want to remind your relative in Saudi Arabia of the reference book that he promised to send you. It is 11 P.M. and all the shops are closed. Your friend charged his phone three hours ago. You want to ask him / her to let you use his / her phone. What would you say to him / her?

……
……..

3. In the holiday you work as a secondary school teacher in your hometown. You are preparing a lesson and you need a book from another teacher in an office in the other side of the school. You see your cousin who studies in the first year. You want to ask him to bring the book for you. What would you say to him?

……
……..

4. You are attending the first lecture in this semester. The speaker is a new professor who you didn't see before. The professor talks about important things such as his course's plan, reference books, tests and exams. The professor speaks in a low voice and you can't hear him well because the lecture hall is crowded. You want to ask him to raise his voice. What would you say to him?

……
……..

5. It is 9:00 P.M. in the boarding house. You have an examination tomorrow, and you are studying in your room. A loud music coming from a nearby room distracts you. You don't know the student who lives in that room. You want him / her to turn down the music. What would you say to him / her when you reach the room?

……
……..

6. You are ill. You arrive at the doctor's office. The waiting room is crowded. You see a young girl who sits by herself watching T.V. She is ten years old. You want to ask her to bring you your blood test result from the nearby clinic. What would you say to her?

……
……..

7. You are one of the organizers of a graduation ceremony. The club is very crowded as a large number of guests arrived. Graduates procession is to enter through the main gate. The dean of your college parked his car at the entrance. Your colleagues told you to ask him to move his car. You go to where he sits in the front. What would you say to him?

……
……..

8. Since you had Malaria, you missed some important lectures. Your examinations are to be held next month. You need to borrow one of your colleague's lecture notes. You meet your colleague Sarah who attends lectures regularly and is known for her beautiful handwriting. You want to ask her to give you her notebooks. What would you say to her?

……
……..

9. Your students' association runs a summer school. You are a teacher. In the class, the mobile phone of one of your students rings. The ring tone is noisy and the other students begin to complain. You want to tell the student to turn off his mobile phone. What would you say to him?

……
……..

Appendix Number (2):

The Arabic Version of the Discourse Completion Test

تهدف هذه الاستبانة إلى دراسة بعض أنواع الجمل. رجاءً، اقرأ وصْف المواقف الآتية جيدا، ثم اكتب ما ستقوله للشخص الآخر بعد نهاية كل واقعة مستخدما اللغة العامية. حاول أن تكون إجابتك واقعية قدر الإمكان.

شكرا لحسن تعاونك.

1. عاوز تقدم لكورس فى معهد مصرى. المعهد رسل ليك أيمايل بنبهك لانه يفترض ترسل خطاب تزكية من رئيس القسم .أنت بتعرف رئيسة القسم كويس لانها درستك عدد من الكورسات قبل كدة و ساكنة قريب من بيتكم. أنت الآن وصلت مكتبها و بتدق فى الباب.حتقول ليها شنو؟

.....
.....

2. بتذاكر مع صاحبك.رصيد المكالمات بتاعك ما بسمح ليك أنك تعمل تلفون. يفترض تعمل مكالمة مهمة لقريبك فى السعودية علشان تذكره يرسل المرجع الوعدك بيه. الساعة هسة 11 بالليل و كل المحلات قفلت.صاحبك شحن تلفونه قبل تلاتة ساعات. أنت عاوز تطلب منه يسمح ليك تستعمل تلفونه علشان تتصل على قريبك.حتقول لصاحبك شنو؟

.....
.....

3. أثناء الاجازة بتشتغل كأستاذ ثانوى فى حيك. بتحضر فى درس و محتاج لكتاب من أستاذ فى مكتب فى الجانب التانى من المدرسة.فى حوش المدرسة شفت ود خالك اللى بيدرس فى سنة أولى .أنت عاوز ترسله علشان يجيب ليك الكتاب من المكتب التانى.حتقول ليه شنو؟

.....
.....

4. بتحضـر فـى أول محاضـرة فـى السمسـتر. المحاضـرة بقدمهـا بروفيسـورجديد مـا درسـك قبـل كـدة. البروفيسـور كان بتكلـم عـن الكـورس اللـى حيدرسـه و المراجـع المطلوبـة اضافـة للاختبـارات اللـى حيعملها.القاعـة مزدحمـة و البروفيسـور بتكلـم بصـوت منخفـض و أنـت مـا قـادر تسـمعه كويـس و عـاوزه يرفـع صوتـه شـوية. حتقـول ليـه شـنو؟

.....
.....

5. السـاعة 9 مسـاء فـى الداخليـة. أنـت بتذاكـر لانـه عنـدك أمتحـان بكـرة. فـى صـوت مسـجل عالـى مزعجـك و مـا بخليـك تقدرتذاكـر. أنـت مـا بتعـرف الطلبـة اللـى بسـكنوا فـى الغرفـة اللـى جـاى منهـا الصـوت. عـاوز تطلـب مـن الشـخص المشـغل المسـجل يخفـض الصـوت شـوية. حتقـول ليـه شـنو؟

.....
.....

6. أنـت عيـان ومشـيت العيادة.شـفت بنـت صغيـرة عمرهـا عشـرة سـنوات قاعـدة لوحدهـا بتشـوف فـى التلفزيون.عـاوز تطلـب منهـا تجيـب ليـك فحـص الـدم بتاعـك مـن المعمـل. حتقـول ليها شـنو؟

.....
.....

7. أنـت واحـد مـن المنظميـن فـى حفـل تخرج.النـادى اللـى فيـه الاحتفـال مزدحـم جـدا. يفتـرض موكـب الخريجيـن يدخـل مـن البوابـة الرئيسـية للنادى.عميـد الكليـة وقـف عربيتـه فـى المدخـل .زملائـك طلبـوا منـك تكلمـه يحـرك عربيتـه مـن قـدام البوابـة. حتقـول ليـه شـنو؟

.....
.....

8. تغيبت عن بعض المحاضرات المهمة لانه كان عندك ملاريا.الامتحانات فى الشهرالجاى.محتاج تستلف دفتر محاضرات واحد من زملائك .قابلت زميلتكم سارة اللى بتحضر المحاضرات بصورة منتظمة واللى بتشتهر بخطها الجميل. عاوز تطلب منها تسلفك دفترمحاضراتها.حتقول ليها شنو؟

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9. أنت شغال أستاذ فى المدرسة الصيفية اللى عاملاها رابطة الطلاب بتاعتكم . فى الفصل رن جرس تلفون واحد من الطلاب. الجرس أزعج الطلاب و بداءوا يشتكوا. عاوز تطلب من الطالب يقفل الموبايل بتاعه.حتقول ليه شنو؟

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معدلات الطلب العربية والإنجليزية لدى طلاب الجامعات السودانية

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ملخص البحث:

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى دراسة معدلات الطلب الداخلية والخارجية التي يستخدمها طلاب الجامعات السودانية في اللغتين العربية والإنجليزية. كما حاولت أن توجد أوجه الشبه والاختلاف بين تلك الملامح التداولية لتحديد الأنواع المستخدمة عالميًا وتلك المستخدمة محليًا، والأنواع التي يفضل الطلاب استخدامها أكثر وأسباب ذلك. كما حاولت أنْ تصنف المعدلات التي استخدمها الطلاب. تكونت عينة الدراسة من مئتي طالب جامعي قاموا بالإجابة عن اختبارين لإكمال الخطابة باللغتين العربية والإنجليزية.

خلصت الدراسة إلى أنّ الطلاب استخدموا أحد عشر معدلا داخليًا وستة معدلات خارجية؛ فقد استخدموا الاستفهامات، وأدوات التهذيب، وصيغ الماضي، والمبررات، والتأكد من الإمكانية أكثر من الأنواع الأخرى. لم يستخدم الطلاب النفى أو التبسيط في اللغة العربية، كما استخدموا جمل الشرط، وأدوات الاستشارة، والتقييد بصورة أقل من الأنواع الأخرى. كما وجدت الدراسة أنواعًا من المحسنات لم يتطرق لها مشروع مقارنة الأفعال اللغوية (1989) وهى البدائل، وعلامات الجذب الديني، والأنواع الأخرى من الأفعال اللغوية. وخلصت الدراسة إلى أنّ هناك عوامل لغوية، واجتماعية، وثقافية، ودينية، وسياقية أثّرت في اختيارات الطلاب.

الكلمات الدالة: طلاب الجامعات السودانية، الدارجة السودانية، أفعال لغوية، الطلبات، المعدلات الداخلية والخارجية.

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