Request Strategies and Level of Request Directness in Moroccan Arabic and American English

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Abstract: This study examines the use of request strategies and the level of request directness in Moroccan Arabic (MA) and American English (AE). First, the study seeks to identify the level of request directness and the types of request strategies employed by Moroccan Arabic native speakers (MANSs) and American English native speakers (AENSs). Second, it seeks to demonstrate the correlation between the level of request directness and the socio-pragmatic variables of social power, social distance, and degree of imposition in MA and AE. For data collection, a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) was used. The results of this study have revealed that MANSs and AENSs are significantly different in the use of direct request strategies and conventionally indirect request strategies. MANSs favor direct request strategies while AENSs favor conventionally indirect request strategies. Therefore, MANSs are found to be hearer-oriented while AENSs are found to be speaker-oriented. The socio-pragmatic variables of social power, social distance, and degree of imposition have a strong correlation with the level of request directness in MA more than in AE. The study concludes with some pedagogical implications to enhance the teaching of request strategies in MA and AE.

I. INTRODUCTION

In response to a request, one may use different verbal strategies such as "*awfully sorry, I just cannot do it right now*" or may use a positive response such as "*with pleasure, I will do it for you*". Such responses convey certain meaning and the meaning conveyed always depends on the context (such as setting and prior experience), and this entails that the requester should request things and the recipient should listen and respond to the intended request (Leech, 1983) [1].

The illocutionary act of requesting has become one of the most commonly researched speech acts in cross cultural studies. Practitioners in cross cultural pragmatics, for example, have been interested in comparing how and to what extent language speakers employ the same or different request strategies to express their speech acts (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) [2]. They have investigated and compared the use of speech act of request as performed by native speakers of different languages and cultures. As a result, speech act theory (SAT) has become progressively more crucial in cross-cultural pragmatics (CCP).

Requests are directly related to politeness because speakers may utilize polite behavior to lessen the potential threat of a person's face. Thus, people usually change their request from being the most direct to the most indirect depending on various socio-pragmatic variables such as social power, social distance, and degree of imposition (embarrassment). Brown and Levinson (1987) [3] revealed that people of various languages and cultures may have access to the same range of speech acts and realization strategies. Yet, they can differ in the performance of request strategies and request structures (Wolfson, 1989) [4]. Thus, in order to appropriately make requests and perceive the illocutionary force of an utterance as a request, speakers should be equipped with socio-pragmatic knowledge. In other words, in order not to sound rude or impolite, the speaker should be familiar with the degree of imposition of a speech act in the target language or culture. Also, he/she should have the pragmalinguistic knowledge such as the degree of politeness of certain request strategies and request perspectives.

Despite the fact that the speech act of requesting is culturally universal, many a researcher has shown that there are cross-cultural differences in the understanding of request patterns, especially at the level of request directness (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) [2]. Therefore, request, as a speech act, has been chosen for several reasons. Firstly, request is one of the communicative acts that we repeatedly and frequently employ in our daily interactions. For example, one may ask for permission or favors. Secondly, requests are performed in different structures and strategies such as imperatives, declaratives, interrogatives, and elliptical phrases. They can have

different levels of directness that indicate different personal and interpersonal relations (Achiba, 2003) [5]. Thirdly, the act of requesting is considered as a face-threatening act (Brown & Levinson, 1987) [3] since this kind of speech act is vulnerable to the socio-pragmatic variables of social power (status), social distance, and degree of imposition. Such variables not only influence the choice of request strategies but they also affect the level of request directness in various languages. Hence, language speakers are to make better use of request strategies in order to decrease the threat and minimize the potential face damage or possible misunderstanding. The last motive is that it has been remarked that very few studies have been done on Moroccan Arabic request strategies. In fact, most of the studies that are relevant to this cross-cultural research investigated the speech act of request only in interlanguage pragmatics dealing with Pragmatic Transfer (Abdou, 1999 [6]; Aloui, 2011 [7]; Boussfiha, 2005[8]; Latif, 2014 [9]; Melouk, 1989 [10]; Mouaid, 1996) [11].

Given the scarcity of the research into speech acts in the Moroccan context, the principal objective of this study is to investigate and compare the use of request strategies in Moroccan Arabic (MA) and American English (AE). First, it investigates the types of request strategies employed by Moroccan Arabic native speakers (MANSs) and American English native speakers (AENSs). Second, it seeks to demonstrate if the socio-pragmatic variables of social power (status), social distance, and degree of imposition have any correlation with the level of request directness in MA and AE.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2. Definition of Request

The speech act of requesting falls under the category of directives. Trosborg (1995) [12] considers the act of request directive because the requester asks the hearer to carry out an action for the requester's exclusive benefit. Such directives attempt to get the addressee to do an act which the speaker wants him/her to do, and which it is not obvious that the addressee will do it in the normal course of events. Imperatives, interrogatives and declaratives are the linguistic realizations of requests in the English language. Moreover, when we want to request information or services, we should know how to make the intended request in its less face-threatening form. We should also use the lexical and grammatical resources that are appropriate in each specific context. Because of the fact that requests threaten the hearer's negative face by restricting her or his freedom of action (Brown & Levinson 1987) [3], it is necessary to formulate them socio-pragmatically and culturally in an appropriate way. We should take into consideration three important variables:

1- The power differential between the requestee and the requester (P): **Social Power**
2- The distance-closeness between them (D): **Social Distance**
3- The degree of imposition of the utterance content (IM): **Degree of Embarrassment**

In fact, there are a number of definitions of requests, and this clearly shows the complexity of this speech act. Cohen (1996, p.156) [13] provide a broad definition and state that *request* is realized when the requester expresses a wish that can be performed by the requestee. Thus, the speech act of requesting requires the addressee to perform an act to provide some information for the speaker's sake. According to Leech (1983, p.135) [1], the act of requesting is a speech event that gives the addressee a choice as to whether to carry out the desired act or not, and it does not assume the speaker's control over the person addressed.

According to Searle (1969, p.39) [14] , the act of request is a directive illocutionary force that makes the addressee do something for the requester in conditions where it is not obvious that he/she will carry out the action in a normal course of events. When the requester initiates the request, he/she considers the addressee capable of performing the intended action. Therefore, a request is a pre-event act that is intended to affect the addressee's behavior.

2.1. Request Strategy Types

Request strategy is defined as the necessary or compulsory choice of the level of directness in which the act of requesting is realized (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p.277) [2]. Directness means the extent to which the speaker's illocutionary intention is clear from the locution. The scholars, in their classification of request head acts, identified nine strategy types ranging from the most to the least direct strategy (*mood derivable* is the most direct while *mild hint* is the least). Request strategy types can be divided or grouped into three main strategies: *Direct strategies, conventionally indirect strategies and non-conventionally indirect strategies*.

2.1.1. Direct Request Stragegies

Direct strategies are defined as utterances in which the meaning of the utterance is consistent with the speaker's intention (Holtgraves, 1986) [15]. For instance, when the speaker intends to make a request, he/she makes it in an explicit way. Direct strategies are usually used when the speaker is dominant or in a position of authority, and they communicate only one propositional meaning. There are five direct requesting strategies: *Elliptical phrases/imperative (mood derivable), explicit performative, hedged performative, obligation*

statements, and want statements.

In direct requests, the illocutionary force is usually transmitted through direct linguistic indicators. The most direct way to make a request is *the imperative or mood derivable*. This imperative form of requesting directly shows that the utterance is an order or a command. In this example, ''*close the window*'', one may feel that there is some degree of authority. Besides, if the requester has certain power over the addressee, it becomes obligatory for the addressee to abide by the request. Examples of imperative (mood derivable) strategies are orders from a teacher to a student, from a parent to a child, and from a boss to an employee (Trosborg, 1995) [12]. Imperatives can be mitigated by inserting question tags or the politeness marker 'please' (*llah yxellik*). Besides, *elliptical forms or phrases* are also considered very direct (e.g. "*two cups of tea, please*").

One may use *performatives* as a direct strategy to make a request. He/she can use verbs such as ask, request, order, demand in order to communicate the intention of making a request. The use of such verbs clearly marks the statement as a request. There are two types of performatives. The first one is called *explicit performative*. It refers to the statements that are authoritative by nature and may sound impolite if one is outside a formal context. The illocutionary force of the explicit performative utterances is clearly named. For example, "*I am asking you to clean up your room*". The second one is called *hedged performative*. If the requester desires to mitigate the intended request, he/she can use this strategy (hedges). For instance, in this statement ''*I would like to ask you to move that car*'', the strategy used is a hedged performative because the utterance is modified by a hedging expression. The hedged performative verb indicating the request intention is modified by modal verbs or verbs expressing intention to show some politeness in the act of requesting.

Another direct strategy to convey a request is the use of *obligation statements* or necessity to make a request. This strategy refers to the utterances that state the hearer's obligation to carry out the act of request. In this example, "*madam, you'll have to move that car*", the act of requesting is still direct even if it is presented in a weaker form. Moreover, when the requester employs a statement of obligation or necessity, he/she exercises personal authority. Moreover, (Trosborg, 1995) [12] maintains that modal verbs such as "*should*" and "*ought to*" involve a moral obligation; "*have to*" involves an external obligation, whereas "*must*" involves an internal obligation, and it is often imposed by the requester. So, obligation statements refer to the utterances which state the obligation of the requestee to perform the act, and such utterances are usually employed by someone of higher status.

The weakest direct strategy in making a request is *want statements*. It refers to the utterances that state the speaker's needs and wishes which the requestee may perform or comply. In other words, the requester wants the requestee to perform the intended act, and the needs of the requester are the center of the intended request. Moreover, the requester's want statement can be either expressed as a wish or a desire like "*I really wish you would stop complaining*" or more directly as a demand like "*I want you to be quiet*". Want statements are impolite unless their structure is modified, and if they are mitigated by some politeness markers such as "please", they may sound like begging (e.g. *please, I want to see that movie)* (Trosborg, 1995) [12].

2.1.2. Conventionally Indirect Request Strategies

Conventionally indirect request strategies refer to the act of requesting something indirectly. In these strategies, the requester's meaning and the propositional content are not the same, and they imply more than one meaning. In this respect, Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) [2] define conventionally indirect strategies as "*strategies that realize the act by reference to contextual preconditions necessary for its performance, as conventionalized in a given language*" (p.47). Conventionally indirect request strategies are associated with vagueness at the utterance's level and characterized by pragmatic duality. In fact, speakers may have the desire to request something but because of certain factors or circumstances, they cannot request it directly. They opt for indirectness, as it is the best way to save the other's face. For instance, requests in English can be pragmalinguistically realized in three forms: imperatives, interrogatives and declaratives. However, the use of imperatives in Moroccan Arabic makes the intended meaning awkward for making polite requests because imperatives are less polite in English (Alaoui, 2011) [7]. That is, imperative requests in Moroccan Arabic are more polite, whereas imperative requests in English are less polite. In Moroccan Arabic, imperatives are usually modified by politeness markers or expressions such as "*llah yxellik*", (may God keep you) with an ellipsis of *Allah* (God). Thus, there are pragmalinguistic conventions in the making of request.

Searle (1975) [16] maintains that "*there can be conventions of usage....I am suggesting that can you, could you, I want you to, and numerous other forms are conventional ways of making requests,...but at the same time they do not have an imperative meaning*" (p.76). These pragmalinguistic conventions of usage are classified into two main types: conventions of means and conventions of forms. Conventions of means refer to the utterances that are meant to perform an indirect request, and they are used to question the hearer's ability. In contrast, conventions of form refer to the exact wording or expressions employed for a given indirect request. For instance, the expressions "*can you*" or "*could you*" can be used as conventions of form for questioning the hearer's ability, which is at the same time a convention of means for the speech act of requesting. Therefore, the

most important conventions for this category of request strategies are pragmalinguistic request strategies which are related to the utterance itself.

The conventionally indirect request strategies include two types: *suggestory formulae* and *query preparatory*. In the suggestory formulae strategy, the requester turns the act of requesting into a suggestion, and the hearer performs it. In this example ''*how about washing the dishes*?'', the requester suggests the act of washing to the hearer. In the query preparatory strategy, the requester employs utterances that are linked to preparatory conditions such as: ability and willingness or possibility. Blum-Kulka et al. (1987, p.280) [2] maintain that "*the utterance contains reference to a preparatory condition for the feasibility of the request, typically one of ability, willingness or possibility as conventionalized in the given language*". The speaker questions rather than states the presence of the chosen preparatory condition (query preparatory). The modal verbs "*could/can/ would*" show possibility, ability, permission, and willingness. Let us consider the following examples:

- I wonder if you *could* help me clean up the dishes. (*ability*)
- *Can* I go out with my friends? (*Permission*)
- *Will* you help me lift this heavy box? (*willingness*)

The requester may ask the hearer's willingness to do something in a form of permission. Requests for permission are usually speaker-oriented. They explicitly demonstrate that the requester is the beneficiary of the request (e.g. "*Can I use your laptop, please*?").

2.1.3. Non-Conventionally Indirect Request Strategies (Hints)

Non-conventionally indirect request strategies refer to the requestive acts that can take any linguistic form or hints (Blum-Kulka et al. (1987, p.280) [2]. There are two benefits behind using such strategies. First, the requester can avoid the responsibility or the intention for making a request. The use of hints has more than one interpretation, and the hearer is obliged to make an inference so as to recover what the requester actually means. Second, the requester can satisfy the negative face to a degree greater than that afforded by the negative politeness strategy. Hints are considered as 'off-record' strategies and more polite than 'on-record' strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987, pp.70-73) [3]. Moreover, Blum-Kulka (1982) [17] shows that native speakers of Hebrew and American favor conventionally indirect request strategies to hints because hints lack pragmatic clarity, and they also carry multiple pragmatic forces. In this respect, Ervin-Tripp (1976) [18] argues that hints are frequently employed among close families and communal groups; therefore, it is often difficult to consider hints the most polite form of requests.

Non-conventionally indirect request strategies (hints) require the hearer to infer the meaning from the context. There are two types of hints: *strong hints* and *mild hints*. Strong hints refer to the utterances employed by the requester who has authority over the requestee, and they refer to the relevant elements of the intended action. In this example, "*you have left the room in a mess*", the requester's intention is to get the addressee to tidy the room. Mild hints refer to the utterances that have no reference to a specific thing or element in the intended action, but the addressee can infer it as a request from the context. In this example, "*I need the pragmatics lecture's notes, and you are the only person I know in this class*", the requester's intention is to get the addressee to give him/her the pragmatics lecture's notes.

To sum up, direct request strategies are employed to sound clear and efficient, conventionally indirect request strategies are employed to show respect while non-conventionally indirect request strategies are employed to avoid any damage to the hearer's face.

2.1.4. Request Perspectives

The CCSARP project analyzed the choice of request perspectives in the head act. That is, the head act perspective can be **speaker-oriented** in the sense that the focus is on the role of the speaker as a requester *(Can I read your research?)*. The head act perspective can be **hearer-oriented.** This means that the focus is on the role of the hearer (*could you give me some water?*). The head act perspective can be **inclusive** (hearer-speaker oriented) and **impersonal**. Inclusive means that both the speaker and the hearer are included, (*can we close the door*?), whereas impersonal means that neither the speaker nor the hearer are included (*the window needs to be closed*). Brown and Levinson (1987) [3] argue that the use of the hearer-oriented perspective makes the act of requesting more embarrassing than the use of the speaker-oriented perspective. When the requester avoids naming the addressee as the performer of the requested act, the imposition of the request is minimized and the hearer's face is not threatened. Moreover, the speaker-oriented requests can imply that the hearer of the intended request has control over the requester. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) [19] argue that speaker-oriented requests are perceived more polite than hearer-oriented requests because they do not involve control or embarrassment on the hearer.

2.2. Previous Scholarship on Request

A number of researchers have carried out research on request as a speech act Blum-Kulka et al., 1987 [2]; Weizman, 1989 [20]; Latif, 2014 [9]; Hammani, 2019) [21]. They argue that language speakers vary their requests between direct and indirect ways depending on different socio-pragmatic factors such as social power, social distance, and degree of imposition. These researchers have found out that the level of request directness used in certain situations while making requests differs cross-culturally. For example, Argentinean Spanish speakers tend to use more direct strategies than other languages like British English (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) [2].

Weizman (1989) [20] conducted studies on the use of request hints in three different languages: Australian English, Canadian French, and Hebrew. She categorized her findings of the use of hints in the three languages according to the level of opacity. She argues that by using hints for the realization of requests, the speaker gets the addressee to carry out the request act in such a way that the recognition of his or her intention is not explicit in the utterance meaning of the hint. The use of hints' strategies seems to be universal since no significant differences were found in the performance of hints in the three languages in different situations.

Wierzbicka (2003) [22] investigated request strategies in English, Polish and Greek. She concluded that English native speakers make use of interrogatives while making requests; whereas, Polish speakers tend to use more imperative constructions. Thus, English native speakers have a great tendency towards the interrogative and conditional forms; while polish speakers rarely use interrogatives. Moreover, she argues that even when interrogatives are used in Polish, such as 'would you like to, do you want to', they seem tentative, formal, and lacking certain degree of confidence (Wierzbicka 2003, p.34) [22]. The scholar also argues that the significant differences between Polish and English in terms of politeness and directness are due to the cultural rules that exist in these societies. The scholar did not relate what she found to politeness theory as she tried to avoid the complexity of claiming politeness/impoliteness.

Al-Marrani (2010) [23] conducted a study on the socio-pragmatics of polite request strategies employed by Yemeni speakers. Discourse Completion Test (DCT) was used as a data collection instrument. The participants of the study were 196 undergraduate students: 98 males and 98 females. The data were examined according to the analytical framework proposed by Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989) [2]. The findings of the study revealed that the research participants used different polite request strategies (direct, conventionally indirect and non-conventionally indirect strategies) with softeners to alleviate the impact of requests. Yemeni speakers preferred to employ conventionally indirect strategies more than other strategies when the social distance, social power, and degree of imposition were very high between the requester and requestee. However, when the interlocutors have equal status or the speaker has a higher status than the hearer, the participants preferred to employ more direct strategies.

The present study investigates the types of request strategies and the level of request directness in Moroccan Arabic (MA) and American English (AE).

III. RESEARCH DESIGN AND INSTRUMENT

The present study is based on a non-experimental design. It has been chosen because it enables researchers to answer research questions depending on measurable variables with an intention to explain, predict and control certain phenomena. Moreover, the data, obtained from the data collection instrument, focus on the quantity of things and statistical patterns (Leedy, 1993) [24]. Such data usually take the form of numbers, and they involve counting or quantifying so as to reach valid conclusions. This design helps us account for the differences and similarities that exist in MA and AE in terms of request strategies and level of request directness.

The linear regression analysis and Spearman's correlation coefficients were used to demonstrate the correlation between the level of request directness and the socio-pragmatic variables of social power/status, social distance, and degree of imposition.

3. Research Participants

Two groups were involved in this study. The first group included 64 Moroccan Arabic native speakers (MANSs). The second group included 41 American English native speakers (AENSs). The gender, the age and the educational level (variables) of the research participants were not controlled in this thesis despite the fact that the number of males who participated in this study outnumbered that of females. As required by research ethics, all the participants who took part in this study gave their consent and showed their willingness to participate. The American participants' DCTs were shared and filled out online since it was not possible to meet all of them face to face. As far as Moroccan participants are concerned, it was possible to meet all of them and give them the DCTs. The request situations were clarified and explained to the research participants, and then the given DCTs were collected.

AENSs were students at the United States. They came from different places and States to study there

for B.A and M.A degrees in different disciplines. Some of them were contacted in Morocco at the MATE (Moroccan Association of Teachers of English) conference and at the Center for Cross Cultural Learning (CCCL). Concerning MANSs, they were Native speakers of Moroccan Arabic. They came from different places, cities, villages and towns in Morocco to study at universities. They were students in different disciplines and different academic levels. Most of the participants in this group were students at the faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, and the faculty of Sciences. They studied in different Moroccan universities such as Ibn Tofail, Kenitra; Cadi Ayyad, Marrakesh; Hassan II, Casablanca; Mohammed V, Rabat; Abdelmalek Essaâdi, Tetuan. They studied Philosophy, French, Sociology, Psychology, English, Arabic, Geography, Mathematics, and Physics.

3.1. Research Instrument

The most common data gathering instrument used in the field of cross-cultural pragmatics is the Discourse Completion Task (DCT). The latter was first developed by Blum-Kulka et al., (1989) [2] in the study of speech acts. It has been widely employed to collect pragmatic production of speech act strategies both written and oral in cross cultural pragmatics. A number of researchers used the DCT as the main data collection technique. These scholars have revealed that DCT is an effective tool that can collect the desired data when the purpose of the investigation is to inform the speakers' pragmalinguistic and socio-pragmatic knowledge.

The DCT instrument is composed of a set of scripted passages or dialogues that represent different situations/scenarios. For example, each dialogue or passage is preceded by a concise description of the target situation, determining the setting, and the potential social distance between the participants and their social power relative to each other and the degree of imposition (Blum-Kulka et al., (1989, pp.13-14) [2].

In this study, the DCT instrument administered to the research participants consists of sixteen situations. The research participants were asked to respond spontaneously and naturally to the given situations or scenarios, and they were also asked to write down what they would actually say in natural contexts. They were given a blank space in which they had to make and write their requests. Each situation (scenario) is accompanied with a section asking the research participants about the degree of imposition of the intended requests, familiarity with the addressee, and social /power status (using linear scale from 1 to5). For example, "*how much embarrassing the request is*", "*how familiar a person with the requestee /addressee*", and "*who has higher status/power*".

3.2. Research Objectives

There are two main objectives behind this study. First, it investigates the types of request strategies and level of request directness in Moroccan Arabic and American English. Second, it seeks to demonstrate the correlation between the level of request directness and the socio-pragmatic variables of social power, social distance, and degree of imposition in MA and AE.

3.3. Research Questions

1- Are there any significant differences in the use of request strategies and request directness in Moroccan Arabic (MA) and American English (AE)?
2- What are the most frequent request strategies in MA and AE?
3- Is there any correlation between the socio-pragmatic variables (social power, social distance, and degree of imposition) and the level of request directness in MA and AE?

3.4. Research Hypotheses

These are three hypotheses that emanate from the research questions:
1- There are significant differences in the use of request strategies and request directness in MA and AE.
2- MANSs employ more direct strategies while AENSs employ more indirect strategies.
3- The socio-pragmatic variables of social power, social distance, and degree of imposition have a strong correlation with the level of request directness in MA and AE.

IV. FINDINGS

The data analysis is concerned with request categories, namely direct strategies, conventionally indirect strategies, non-conventionally indirect strategies, and request perspectives. Each category consists of sub-categories. The mean difference of the main request strategies in MA and AE, the socio-pragmatic variables, and the level of request directness are presented.

Request Strategy Types

Figure 1: Distribution of Request Strategies Types across Groups in MA and AE
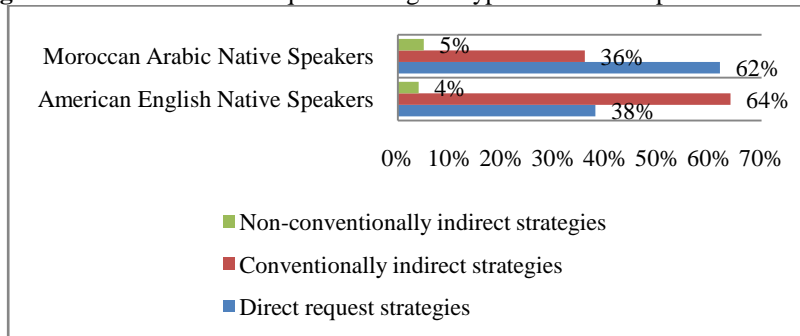
The graph above indicates that MANSs have employed more direct request strategies (62%), whereas AENSs have used less direct strategies (38%). Concerning the use of conventionally indirect request strategies, AENSs seem to be outstandingly more indirect (64%) than MANSs (36%). As for the non-conventionally indirect request strategies (Hints), the graph shows no significant difference between MANSs (5%) and AENSs (4%) in the use of hints.

Direct Request Strategies

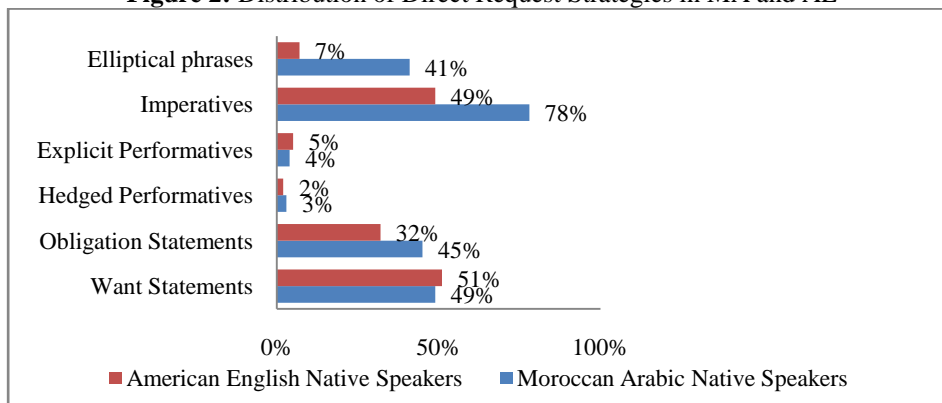**Figure 2:** Distribution of Direct Request Strategies in MA and AE

Figure 2 shows that mood derivable (imperatives and elliptical phrases), want statements and obligation statements (locution derivable) clearly predominate over other types of direct strategies. More specifically, the graph shows that MANSs have employed imperatives (78%), obligation statements (45%) more than AENSs, whereas AENSs have employed want statements (51%) more than MANSs. Concerning performatives (hedged and explicit), there is only a slight difference between MANSs and AENSs. The graph also shows that MANSs (41%) have outperformed AENSs (7%) in the use of elliptical phrases. We can conclude that there are significant differences in the direct request strategies except in performatives.

**Conventionally Indirect Request Strategies**

Figure 3: Distribution of Conventionally Indirect Request Strategies in MA and AE
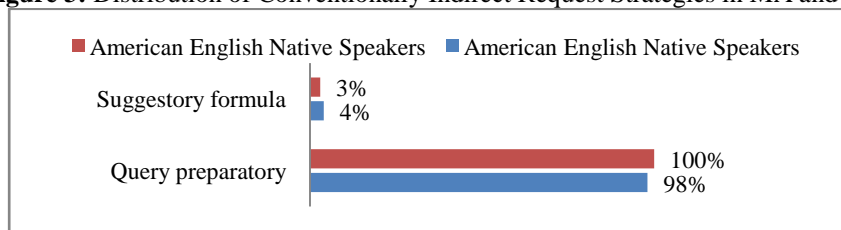
The graph indicates that both MANSs and AENSs opt for query preparatory. There is a slight difference between them. 100% of MANSs have employed query preparatory strategy and 98% of AENSs have employed this strategy. The graph also shows that there is no significant difference in the use of suggestory formula between MANSs (3%) and AENSs (4%).

**Non-conventionally Indirect Request Strategies (Hints)**

Figure 4: Distribution of Non-conventionally Indirect Request Strategies in MA and AE

■ American English Native Speakers ■ Moroccan Arabic Native Speakers
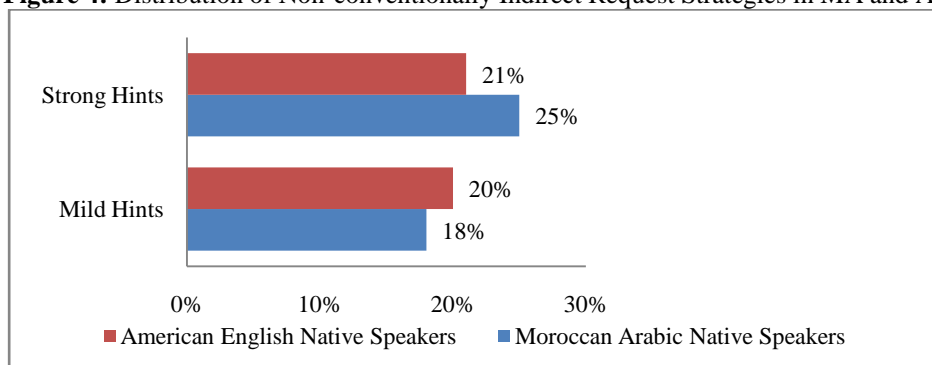
The graph above indicates that both MANSs and AENSs have employed strong hints and mild hints almost equally (MANSs 25%) and (AENSs 21%). It is concluded that this type of request strategies is not frequently used by both groups.

Request Perspectives

Figure 5: Distribution of Request Perspectives in MA and AE

■ American English Native Speakers ■ Moroccan Arabic Native Speakers
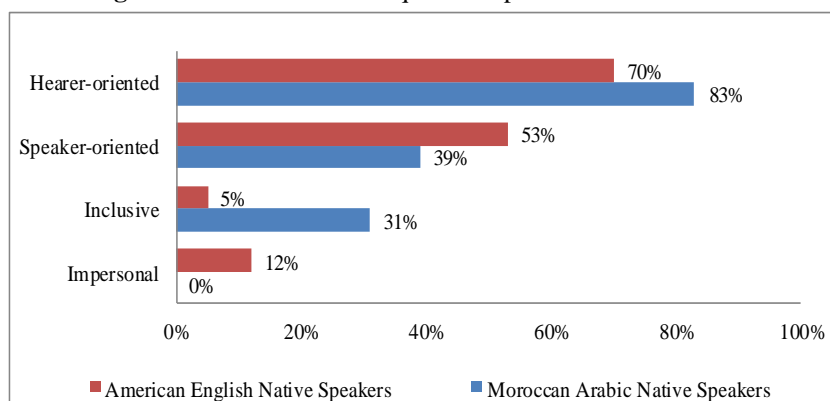
The graph above describes the use of request perspectives that are performed by MANSs and AENSs. The graph shows that hearer-oriented perspective is abundantly used by both MANSs' and AENSs. However, MANSs have used it more than AENSs. For instance, MANSs score 83% while AENSs score 70%. Speaker-oriented perspective is also used by both groups, but AENSs (53%) seem to favor this request perspective more than MANSs (39%). Concerning inclusive perspective, MANSs score (31%) while AENSs score only (5%). However, in an impersonal perspective, AENSs score (12%) while MANSs do not opt for it at all (0%). It is concluded that MANSs are hearer-oriented, whereas AENSs are speaker-oriented.

Table 1: The Correlation of Socio-pragmatic Variables with the Level of Request Directness in MA and AE

	Groups	American English	Moroccan Arabic
Social Power	Correlation	.162	.168
	Sig.	.003	.000
Social Distance	Correlation	.048	.125
	Sig.	.352	.006
Degree of Imposition	Correlation	.107	.171
	Sig.	.009	.000

Table (1) shows that there is a significant correlation between the social power and the level of request directness in both groups. There is also a correlation between the degree of imposition and the level of request directness in both groups. However, there is no significant correlation between the social distance and the level of request directness in AE (*sig= .352*). In contrast, there is a strong and positive correlation between the social

distance and level of request directness in MA (*sig=.006*).

V.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The statistical analysis shows that MA and AE are different in the types of request strategies and at the level of request directness.

MANSs and AENSs differ in their performance of request strategies and at the level of request directness. MANSs have employed more direct strategies, namely mood derivable, locution derivable, and want/wish statements. AENSs, on the other hand, have employed more conventionally indirect strategies such as query preparatory (willingness and permission) and less direct request strategies. The differences found between Moroccan Arabic (MA) and American English (AE) are mainly at the level of request directness, the types of request strategies, and in request perspectives. MANSs favor ability structures and inclusive *we-structure*, whereas AENSs prefer permission, ability structure, willingness, and impersonal *it/there* structures. MANSs are found to be more hearer-oriented while AENSs are found to be more speaker-oriented. The level of request directness in MA and AE is significantly different. It is concluded that MANSs' requests are more direct than AENSs' requests.

The socio-pragmatic variables of social power (sig=.000), social distance (sig=.006), and degree of imposition (sig=.000) have a strong correlation with the level of request directness in Moroccan Arabic to a larger degree. In other words, Moroccan Arabic native speakers are found to be more vulnerable to the three mentioned socio-pragmatic variables; whereas, American English native speakers are found to be vulnerable only to two socio-pragmatic variables, namely social power and degree of imposition. AENSs' request directness is not correlated with the social distance variable (sig= .352) because Americans belong to a small power distance culture (individualistic out-group culture). Regardless of the cultural differences that exist between MA and AE, speakers who have higher social power employ more direct requests than those who have lower social power. Other contextualized aspects like formality and informality of a situation of the intended request, urgency of a situation, and the degree of certainty affect how both requesters (MANSs & AENSs) employ direct strategies, mainly imperatives and elliptical phrases.

The reflection of cultural dimensions is significant in the performance of request strategies and request directness. MANSs and AENSs show different orientations towards the notions of power distance, positive politeness, negative politeness, uncertainty avoidance, and collectivism-individualism. In regard to positive politeness, MANSs have employed request strategies such as elliptical phrases and imperatives to show solidarity, closeness, and endearment such as *llah yrdi ɛlik* (May God be pleased with you)*, and llah yxellik* (May God protect you). One important remark is that Brown and Levinson (1987) [3] related the notion of directness to inappropriate and impolite behavior; however, in this study, it has been found that request directness can be considered as a sign of social closeness, solidarity, and in-group relationship in Moroccan Arabic (collective in-group high-context culture).

Another orientation towards positive and negative politeness is shown in preferences for speaker-oriented and hearer-oriented perspectives. AENSs prefer speaker-oriented conventionally indirect request strategies that indicate negative politeness and avoidance of the speakers' face damage. MANSs favor more hearer-oriented direct request strategies that show more in-group affiliation and collective participation (positive politeness).

MANSs use request strategies that show more collective orientation than AENSs. For example, MANSs have employed *inclusive we-structure* frequently in their performance of requests. This structure shows in-group solidarity, and it suggests that the hearer shares the attitude given by the requester. Furthermore, positive politeness is considered as a representative of the normal behavior between close interlocutors (MANSs), while negative politeness is considered as a sign of distance between interlocutors (AENSs). MANSs do not employ impersonal request perspective (namely *it/there* structures) because such structures do not exist in MA grammatical structure. The same holds true with willingness strategy (**will** has only one meaning in MA, which is future "**radi**"). The frequent use of the impersonal request perspective by AENSs could imply that the requester wants to distance himself/herself from the performance of the intended action through using *it/there* structures.

AENSs used only one verb form to show *wish* (I hope); whereas, MANSs used different verbs such as **[yari:t]** (I wish) and **[kantmena]** (I hope) in combination with the phrases **"matredhaši f-wejhi"**(I hope you don't refuse). The use of such phrases or expressions by MANSs shows the tendency towards positive politeness because there is close social distance between the interlocutors (requester and hearer). The use of the verb *wish* (I hope) by AENSs shows the tendency towards negative politeness because it keeps a great deal of social distance between the requester and the hearer due to differences in social power.

The types of request strategies employed by the two groups are affected by the socio-pragmatic variables of social power, social distance, and degree of imposition and by some cultural dimensions (collectivism-individualism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance). Such cultural dimensions not only

affect the type of request strategies, request perspectives, and the level of request directness, but they also affect the performance of request structures.

VI. CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

In conclusion, the three hypotheses stated above are confirmed. There are significant differences in the use of request strategies, in request perspectives, and at the level of request directness in MA and AE. The findings have revealed that MANSs favor direct request strategies while AENSs prefer conventionally indirect request strategies. The socio-pragmatic variables of social power (Status), social distance, and degree of imposition have a strong correlation with the level of request directness in MA (more than in AE). MANSs are found to be more vulnerable to the three mentioned socio-pragmatic variables, whereas AENSs are vulnerable only to two socio-pragmatic variables, namely social power and degree of imposition. In other words, there is no significant correlation between the social distance and level of request directness in AE. The cultural dimensions of individualism-collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance seem to affect the choice of request strategies in MA and AE. Concerning request perspectives, it is concluded that Moroccan Arabic's request strategies tend to be more hearer-oriented while American English's request strategies tend to be more speaker-oriented. MANSs do not employ *it /there* structures because such structures are not a part of Moroccan Arabic grammatical system. MANSs have outperformed AENSs in the use of inclusive *we-structure* because Moroccan culture is collectivistic in nature. In regard to non-conventionally indirect request strategies, both groups have employed mild and strong hints less frequently.

The findings of this study can help Moroccan teachers of English enhance the teaching and learning of requests. Understanding the nature of Moroccan Arabic's request strategies will facilitate the learning of English to Moroccan EFL students, especially in functions such as making requests. Language teachers will be able to control negative transfer from MA to AE. This study can also help the Moroccan textbook writers present the speech act of requesting in appropriate ways. For example, it might help textbook writers and teachers reconsider the teaching of requests in Moroccan EFL classrooms, especially when it comes to request for permission, ability, willingness, and offer.

Language teachers in Morocco in particular and Arab countries in general should read the findings of cross-cultural pragmatics research. This will help them avoid stereotypical judgments about how Americans employ and structure their requests. For instance, most textbooks of English in Moroccan high schools teach only *conventionally indirect request strategies* to learners. However, it is found in this study that AENSs also employ some *direct strategies and non-conventionally indirect strategies* to make requests. This means that the textbook writers and teachers of English seem to relate direct strategies to impolite strategies and conventionally indirect strategies to polite strategies. This is not always true. Direct requests can be appropriate if they are well-tuned up socio-pragmatically and pragmalinguistically.

Hints are obviously neglected by the Moroccan textbook writers and teachers as they do not have routinized forms. Also, students are not provided with rich contexts where meaning is implied or indirect and needs to be interpreted. Hence, if the learners are given such contextualized hints, they will develop inference skills.

Furthermore, this study might give insights into how Moroccan students make requests in their mother tongue and the differences between Moroccan culture and American culture. The perceptions of variables like social power, social distance, and degree of imposition differ cross-culturally and therefore can often lead to serious socio-pragmatic obstacles in learning the target language. Textbook writers and language teachers should be fully aware of the American culture and Moroccan culture. For example, when teachers give students examples or have them produce utterances in particular request situations, they should raise their students' pragmatic awareness to the importance of cultural dimensions such as power distance, collectivism-individualism, and uncertainty avoidance. This will surely help students improve their pragmatic knowledge and skills.

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