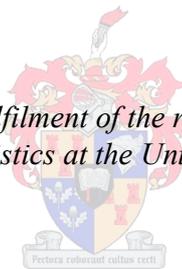# Requests at the University of Nizwa

by
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Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
Master of General Linguistics at the University of Stellenbosch

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April 2014

Declaration

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that the production and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe on any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Date: 26 February 2014

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Abstract

This study focuses on the requestive behaviour, including perceptions of politeness and directness, of Omani second language (L2) English students at Nizwa University in Oman as revealed by their written responses to real life scenarios. The study is an attempt to improve linguistic understanding of pragmatic differences, with reference to the similarities and differences between Omani L2 English students and L1 English speakers' communicative proficiency, in order to contribute to improved language teaching curricula.

The research design consisted of an initial series of two questionnaires which required that the participants rate given responses based on their perceptions of 'politeness' and 'indirectness'; a third discourse completion test (DCT) that required participants to respond in writing in the form of a request to five real life scenarios; and a fourth questionnaire that required teachers to judge the written responses of the DCT according to five criteria. Additionally, the Omani-speaking teachers of L2 English were interviewed and asked questions relating to their responses from a sociopragmatic/ cultural perspective. The Omani teachers' responses were then used to assist in the analysis of the written response data. The four instruments above thus used both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

The results of the data analysis showed that (1) the query preparatory is considered by both groups to be the most polite request strategy and is used to mitigate imposition; (2) Omani L2 English students consider the words *should* and *must* to be most impolite in contrast with the L1 English speakers who consider the mood derivable to be the most impolite request strategy; (3) mild hints are considered far more polite by L1 English speakers than by Omani L2 English students; (4) politeness is influenced by differences in perceptions of social variables such as social distance, social power and degree of imposition; (5) direct strategies are not considered impolite and are used six times more frequently by Omani L2 English students than by L1 English speakers in low-imposition contextual situations; and (6) positive transfer and conventionalisation of the time intensifier has been produced and the strategy is used more than twice as much by the Omani L2 English students than by the L1 English speakers. In contrast, the L1 English speakers use the preparator 11 times more frequently than the Omani L2 English students who predominantly have no pragmalinguistic knowledge of this tactic.

The study highlights the need for pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic training of students in the classroom and for pragmatics to be included in the material and curriculum design of English language learning programmes.

Opsomming

Hierdie studie fokus op hoe versoeke, insluitend die persepsies van beleefdheid en direktheid, van tweede taal (T2) Omani studente aan die Universiteit van Nizwa in Oman geformuleer word soos geopenbaar deur hulle skriftelike reaksies op realistiese lewenscenarios tydens vraagstelling. Die studie is 'n poging om taalkundige begrip van pragmatiese verskille te verbeter, met verwysing na die ooreenkomste en verskille tussen Omani T2 Engelssprekendes en L1 Engelssprekendes se kommunikatiewe vaardighede, ten einde by te dra tot die verbetering van taalonderrig leerplanne.

Die navorsing het bestaan uit 'n aanvanklike reeks van twee vraelyste wat vereis dat deelnemers antwoorde gee op grond van hulle persepsies van beleefdheid en indirektheid; 'n derde diskoers voltooiings toets (DVT) wat vereis dat deelnemers skriftelik reageer op versoeke in vyf realistiese lewenscenarios; en 'n vierde vraelys wat vereis dat onderwysers die skriftelike reaksies op die DVT in vyf areas beoordeel. Daarbenewens is die T2 Omani onderwysers ondervra met betrekking tot hulle antwoorde vanuit 'n sosio-pragmatiese perspektief. Die Omani onderwysers se antwoorde is vervolgens gebruik om die ontleding van die skriftelike response te doen. Die bogenoemde vier instrumente gebruik dus beide kwalitatiewe en kwantitatiewe navorsingsmetodes.

Die resultate van die data-analise toon dat (1) die "query preparatory" deur beide groepe as die mees beleefde vraag-strategie beskou word en gebruik word om taakoplegging te versag; (2) T2 sprekers beskou die woorde *moet* en *behoort* meestal as onbeskof, in teenstelling met die T1 Engelssprekendes, wat die "mood derivable" as die mees onbeskofte vraag-strategie ervaar; (3) die "mild hint" word as baie meer beleefd deur L1 Engelssprekendes as deur T2-sprekers ervaar; (4) beleefdheid word beinvloed deur verskille in persepsies van sosiale faktore soos sosiale afstand en –druk, en die graad van oplegging; (5) direktheid word nie as onbeskof gesien nie, en kom ses keer meer voor by T2 sprekers in laer taalvaardigheid situasies; en (6) positiewe oordrag en vaslegging van tyd as 'n drukkrag het voorgekom, en die taktiek word meer as twee keer soveel deur die T2 sprekers as deur die T1 Engelssprekendes gebruik. In teenstelling gebruik die T1 Engelssprekendes die "preparatory" 11 keer meer as die T2 sprekers, wat meestal geen pragma-linguistiese kennis van hierdie tegniek het nie.

Die studie beklemtoon die noodsaaklikheid van pragma-linguistiese en sosio-linguistiese opleiding in die klaskamer, en dat pragmatika in materiaal en kurrikulumontwerp vir Engelse taalleer programme ingesluit word.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest appreciation and gratitude to the following people who have contributed to the success of this project. To Christine Smit and Dr. Southwood who were always prepared to assist me with any issues or problems. Additionally, I must give a special thanks to Dr Kate Huddlestone who was always at least several steps ahead of me and whose guidance, support, direction and encouragement I needed to complete this work. Thirdly, I must thank my wife and daughter for their support and patience during the course of the Masters programme. Finally, I must thank God the Eternal Father for inspiring my mind when needed, and giving me the strength, power and courage to keep going.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1   Focus of the study

This study focuses on the requestive behaviour, including perceptions of politeness and directness, of Omani second language (L2) English students at Nizwa University in Oman as revealed by their written responses to real life scenarios. The study is an attempt to improve linguistic understanding of pragmatic differences, with reference to the similarities and differences between Omani L2 English students and first language (L1) English speakers' communicative proficiency, in order to provide recommendations for improved language teaching curricula.

The study will focus on not only students' pragmalinguistic competence, but also their sociopragmatic (sociolinguistic) competence; concepts which originated with Leech (1983) and Thomas (1983). Together these two concepts comprise what is known as 'pragmatic competence'. The term "pragmatics" that is in general use relates more to the social/cultural aspects of language use and is defined as follows by Crystal (1997:301): "Pragmatics is the study of language from the point of view of the users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction, and the effects their language has on other participants in the act of communication". Pragmalinguistic competence involves knowledge of the pragmatic conventions for performing successful language functions such as making requests; it includes knowledge of the various strategies involved in making requests, e.g., direct or indirect strategies. Sociolinguistic competence requires "knowledge of sociolinguistic conventions for performing language functions appropriately in a given context" (Bachman 1990:90). It involves social perceptions relating to norms of society, e.g., assessments of social distance, social power and degree of imposition involved in making requests. This study will focus on the analysis of the linguistic forms produced to achieve communicative goals, and also the effectiveness relating to pragmatic appropriateness cross-culturally, i.e., between native English speakers and Omani L2 English students. The study will thus highlight the similarities and differences in requestive behaviour from a pragmalinguistic and sociolinguistic perspective.

1.2   Rationale for the study

As an English language lecturer in Oman, I communicate a great deal with Arabic-speaking Omani students. Initially, I noticed that many of them came across as being impolite and direct when making requests. For example, they make statements like *Teacher I want a pen* or *I want my mark*. Over time I have wondered how much of their perceived inappropriate communication is a caused by a lack of pragmalinguistic competence in their L2 (English) and how much is due to cultural differences. For example, in English-speaking countries many forms of direct speech acts are considered impolite; however, in other cultures and languages direct speech is considered polite in certain circumstances.

In other words, as L2 English learners with little exposure to the target culture, Omani students may lack social skills and knowledge of norms in the target language, or knowledge of pragmalinguistic conventions, and this may affect their ability to perform language functions appropriately. These students may also lack knowledge of general pragmatic conventions, such as request strategies in English (Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper 1989:278). This insufficient knowledge would then lead them to transfer directly from their first language. If this is what they are doing, then it could be asked whether requests are conventionally more direct in their first language than in English. This in turn leads to the question of whether direct speech acts could be considered polite in one culture and impolite in another (Blum-Kulka 1987:133).

To be able to teach language functions (requests, apologies, greetings, etc.) effectively, a teacher needs to understand which problems experienced by learners are pragmalinguistic in nature, which problems are sociopragmatic in nature, and which problems relate to lack of grammatical competence. An understanding of the possibility, for example, that requests that are considered impolite in one culture may be considered polite in another culture is also necessary (Blum-Kulka 1987:133). It is important and necessary that speech acts are included in syllabus and material design (Flowerdew 1988:69). As a teacher, the question then arises whether patterns of politeness and indirectness in making requests are perceived similarly or differently by Omani L2 English students and L1 English speakers. Furthermore, one needs to ask what the differences are in the ways that Omani L2 English students and L1 English speakers produce requests. The answers to these questions may help teachers to

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instruct students in the pragmatic aspects of speech act realization in the language learning classroom.

1.3   Research questions

1.3.1   Are patterns of politeness and indirectness perceived similarly or differently by Omani L2 English speaking university students and L1 English speakers?

1.3.2   What are the differences in the way that Omani L2 English university students and L1 English speakers produce requests?

1.3.3   How do differences in (a) politeness, (b) formality, (c) appropriateness, (d) grammaticality, and (e) clarity of requests manifest in requests made, as judged by Omani L2 English teachers and L1 English-speaking teachers?

1.4   Data collection instruments

The research design and methodology consisted of an initial set of two questionnaires which required that the participants rate given responses based on their perceptions of 'politeness' and 'indirectness' for five real life scenarios; a third discourse completion test (DCT) that required participants to respond in writing in the form of a request to five real life scenarios; and a fourth questionnaire that required participants (Omani L2 English-speaking teachers and L1 English-speaking English teachers) to rate the written responses to the DCT according to five criteria. The questionnaires are presented in Appendices A – D.

1.5   Participants

The participants in the study were 20 undergraduate Omani L2 English students, divided into two groups of 10 for the purpose of questionnaire administration, and three Omani L2 English-speaking teachers, as well as 33 L1 English-speaking teachers, divided into three groups of 10 and one group of three. The first group of Omani L2 English students completed the first two questionnaires, while the second group completed the third questionnaire, and the three Omani L2 English-speaking teachers completed the final questionnaire, rating the students' written responses to the DCT. Each of the three groups of 10 L1 English-speaking teachers completed one of the first three questionnaires, while the final group of three L1 English-speaking teachers completed the final questionnaire, again rating the students' written responses to the DCT. The research did not use any students from

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the Foundation Institute, and an effort was made to use the more proficient L2 English speakers, although this was not a strict selection criterion (refer to 3.4 for an explanation of selection process). All the teachers were from the Foundation Institute (see section 3.2 for a description of the purpose of the Foundation Institute) of Nizwa University. More detailed information on both participants and research methodology is given in chapter 3.

1.6   Thesis layout

In chapter 2, an overview of the theory and literature relevant to this study is provided. Broad topics covered are, firstly, speech acts, which includes a brief history of speech act theory development, a taxonomy of speech acts, and types of speech acts, e.g., direct and indirect. The next section covers politeness, with special emphasis on Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness and includes a discussion of face threatening acts, politeness strategies, and sociological variables, e.g., social distance, social power, and degree of imposition. Thirdly, pragmatic competence will be discussed, including illocutionary (pragmalinguistic) and sociolinguistic (sociopragmatic) competence, pragmatic failure and pragmatic transfer. Fourthly, intercultural communicative competence will be discussed. This section will review criteria of transcultural (intercultural) communication and components of intercultural communication. Cultural differences that effect communication will also be discussed. Finally, a review will be provided of selected previous empirical studies on requests. The Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project Framework (CCSARP) which is an important part of the literature will be discussed in chapter 3.

In chapter 3 the research methodology and theoretical framework are outlined. The research methodology gives a description of the context wherein L2 English learning takes place, as well as the teaching and learning practices within the English language learning environment. Information regarding the participants, instruments and procedures used for the research is given in detail in this section. The theoretical framework (CCSARP) of Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989) is described under nine coding categories.

Chapter 4 presents an analysis and discussion of the data gathered. The CCSARP coding categories, as well as reference to relevant literature found in chapter 2, are used to analyse the data gathered for this study. The results are systematically reported and the findings are discussed in relation to the rationale given for conducting the study, the context that was

sketched of the study, the existing body of information on the topic, and methodological issues.

In chapter 5 the main points of this study are summarized; the contribution of the study along with its limitations are set out; the implications of this study for English language teachers are set out, along with further direction for research on this topic; and concluding remarks and final thoughts on the study are given.

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CHAPTER 2

Literature overview

2.1   Introduction

The aim of this literature review is to discuss the various theories that are generally associated with the speech act of requesting. In addition, this review will take into account numerous studies that have been conducted in the area of requests. The literature review will start by examining the work of theorists such as Austin and Searle who developed speech act theory. The literature on speech act theory will continue with a discussion on speech act classification and types and will include a discussion of Grice's cooperative principle and the maxims of conversation. Following the theoretical discussion of speech act theory, this chapter will discuss politeness and its implications regarding requests, since the making of requests is closely associated with politeness. Linked to politeness is the concept of 'face', and this will be discussed with emphasis on Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness. Section 2.4 will discuss pragmatic competence and the numerous implications it has for requestive behaviour. Sociopragmatic and sociolinguistic competence will be discussed, including reasons for pragmatic failure cross-culturally. Finally, a review of selected previous empirical studies of requests will be done. These will include studies of cultures around the world, but especially those from Arabic-speaking cultures. Some studies highlight universal aspects of speech act behaviour, while others indicate universal aspects of the speech act of requesting.

2.2   Speech acts

In 1962, J.L. Austin proposed a theory of language use, Speech Act Theory (SAT), in his book *How to Do Things with Words*. Austin was convinced that we do not just use language to make statements, but that we use them to perform actions (Thomas 1995:31) – actions such as stating, warning, promising, asking and requesting. These actions are performed as we express a proposition with a particular illocutionary force (Cruse 2000:331). "Illocutionary force" refers to the speaker's intention in producing a particular utterance: the function the speaker intends to perform through the use of the utterance.

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2.2.1   Locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts

According to SAT, speech acts are defined as actions performed when saying something (Cutting 2002:16). In an utterance, the action performed can be analysed on three different levels.

Locution   (locutionary act)   the actual words uttered

Illocution   (illocutionary act)   the force or intention behind the words

Perlocution   (perlocutionary act)   the effect of the illocution on the hearer

The analogy below makes clear the distinction between the three interrelated speech acts (Leech 1983:202).

Kicking the ball ⟶ Scoring a goal ⟶ Winning the match

(the words uttered)   (the intention behind the words)   (the   effect   of   the words)
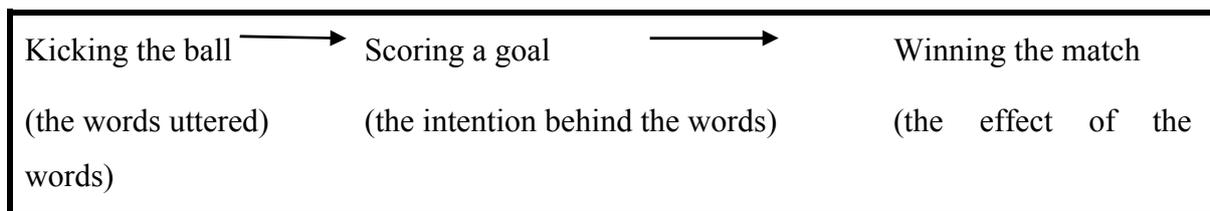
Figure 1: Analogy of three interrelated speech acts

Cummings (2010:455) gives the following example:

Locutionary act: *There is a bull in the field*. This is the act of saying something.

Illocutionary act: This is the act performed in saying something, so saying *There is a bull in the field*, may be a warning to you.

Perlocutionary act: This is the act performed by saying something. So, saying *There is a bull in the field* may frighten you.

Thomas (1995:49) gives the following example: "For example, I might say: *It's hot in here!* (locution) meaning: *I want some fresh air!* (illocution) and the perlocutionary effect might be that someone opens the window." However, the illocutionary force of the same locution can be different, depending on the context. For example, as Thomas points out, *What time is it?* could be a request for the hearer to tell the speaker the time or it could mean that the speaker is annoyed because the hearer is late or that the speaker thinks it is time for the hearer to go home (Thomas 1995:50).

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It is clear that the meanings of speech acts themselves will not guarantee illocutionary success because hearers do not always understand the illocutionary force of the utterance. The illocutionary force must be understood as illustrated above. For example, the request for your brother to go to the cold-store can be done using different utterances:

1.   (a)   I would like you to go to the cold store to buy some food.

    (b)   Go to the cold store to buy some food.

    (c)   Would you go to the cold store to buy some food?

    (d)   We have no food to cook for dinner.

    (e)   We really need some food from the cold store.

The above five examples may all be understood by certain Omani students, depending on their level of L2 language development, but for most the last two above would be understood literally without the illocution behind the utterance being comprehended as a request strategy. The normative rules of conversation for performing successful speech acts will be discussed in the next section.

2.2.2   The Cooperative Principle and the four maxims of conversation

The goal of pragmatic theories is to account for how we go about producing and interpreting communicative exchanges. All communication is actually *inferential* because the hearer must infer the speaker's intention (Ariel 2008:4). In order for communication to be successful, speakers must obey certain rules of cooperation. For example, if people lied to each other whenever they spoke, the communication would cease to be of value, so one of the maxims is to be truthful (Jannedy et al. 1994:236). Conventions such as "truthfulness" emerged naturally in society and are learned by trial and error (Jannedy et al. 1994:236). Grice (1975:45) maintains that talk exchanges do not consist of disconnected remarks; they are to some extent a cooperative effort, and each participant recognises to some extent a common purpose. For example, the following exchange would serve no purpose:

2.   Ahmed: What is the time?

    Abdullah: It's a nice day today.

    Ahmed: The exam is next week.

    Abdullah: I am buying a new car tomorrow.

Grice (1975:45) formulated a Cooperative Principle which explains the principles of cooperation which underlie successful communication: "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged". There are four maxims that underlie the Cooperative Principle:

A: Maxim of Quantity

(1) Make your contribution as informative as is required.

(2) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

The maxim of quantity states that we should not give too much information. Grice says that this is not a transgression, but certainly a waste of time. Nor should we give too little information. Take a look at the following examples:

3.   (a) If you are assisting me to fix my car and I ask for four screws; I expect you to hand me four, not two or six.

(b) If we ask a friend if they failed any exams and they answer, *I failed math*, the maxim of quantity permits us to assume that he did not fail any other exams. If we later found out that he failed science and history as well, we will feel deceived.

(Grice 1975:47)

In (a) Grice uses an analogy to explain the maxim and the importance of giving the right amount of information and not too much or too little. In (b) the hearer, in response to the request for information, does not give enough information and does not serve the current purpose of the exchange. This is known as a *violation* or *flouting* of the maxim. Finegan and Besnier (1989:332) give the following example:

(c) Suppose you asked a man painting his house what color he was painting his living room and he replied, "The walls are off white in contrast to the black sofa and the regency armchairs that I inherited from my late aunt. Bless her soul; she passed away . . ."

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In (c) above far too much information is given and is not "appropriately informative". Giving too little information is as bad as giving too much. Society brands those who say too much as "never shutting up" and those who do not give enough information as secretive or untrustworthy (Finegan and Besnier 1989:333).

B: Maxim of Quality

Over this maxim lies a crucial supermaxim, i.e., make your contribution one that is *true*.

(1) Do not say what you believe to be false.

(2) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Truthfulness is important and everyone understands this principle, but the second principle of this maxim is not as easily understood. People often say things for which they have no evidence, especially in areas such as politics, religion or science. For this reason these subjects are often avoided in conversation because they generate disagreement. Look at the following example which illustrates the maxim of quality:

4.   (a) A family is sitting at the dinner table just about to have hot dogs for dinner. The mother asks her teenage daughter to please fetch the ketchup from the pantry. The daughter responds with *We don't have any, I told you to buy some when you went shopping*. Behind the daughter, clearly visible through the open door of the pantry, is a six pack of ketchup.

In (a) above the maxim of quality is violated. The daughter does not respond positively to her mother's request to fetch the ketchup. Instead she says that there is no ketchup. Clearly she does not violate principle 1 because she believes that what she is saying is true, but she violates the second principle in that she lacks the adequate evidence to make the statement. Grice (1975:47) gives the following analogy to explain the maxim:

(b) If you are helping me bake a cake and I ask for some sugar I do not expect you to hand me salt.

For the maxim of quality, speakers are not only expected to tell the truth, but they must also avoid saying something for which they have no evidence (Ariel 2008:6).

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C. Maxim of Relevance (or, in Grice's terms, "relation")

(1) Be relevant.

Being relevant is central to the orderliness of conversation or discourse. What we say should be an 'appropriate' contribution and it should not be misleading. Grice (1975:47) gives the following analogy:

5.   (a) A partner's contribution should be appropriate to immediate needs at each stage of the conversation. If I am mixing a cake I do not expect to be handed a cookbook or oven cloth (this may be an appropriate contribution later).

        (b) John: Has Peter found a job?

             Tom: Well, he goes into the city every day.

In (b) we see how important the maxim of relevance is with regard to making *conversational inferences*. In this case, Tom will draw the inference that Peter has a job because he will expect that what John has said is relevant to the conversation. If, however, Tom knows that Peter visits his grandparents in the city each day, then what he said would have been misleading and possibly even been construed as a lie.

D: Maxim of Manner

(1) Avoid obscurity of expression.

For example, if you are speaking to an L2 student and the student requests to make an appointment for a certain time, then do not say, *I'll have to take a rain check on that* because the L2 learner may not understand what you mean.

(2) Avoid ambiguity; that is, avoid saying things that have two meanings.

(3) Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).

(4) Be orderly.

Finegan and Besnier (1989:333) give an example to show how the maxim of manner can be violated with respect to orderliness:

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6. A birthday cake should have icing; use unbleached flour and sugar in the cake; bake it for one hour; preheat the oven to 325 degrees; and beat in three eggs.

The recipe above is peculiar because in English we follow a chronological order of events to describe the process of baking (Jannedy et al. 1989:333).

The above relates not to what is said, but to *how* it is said, and the speaker needs to make clear what contribution he is making (Grice 1975:46-47).

As we have seen in the examples above, when a maxim is *violated*, there is a breakdown in communication. Sometimes misunderstanding takes place in a conversation, because the hearer does not understand the conversational implicature (what is implied by the utterance). If, however, a speaker does *intentionally* ignore one of the maxims then s/he is *flouting* that maxim and not being cooperative. In the case of intercultural communication, indirect speech acts will often lead to miscommunication; not because the maxims have been flouted but because the conversational implicature has not been understood.

Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986:166) state that *pragmatic failure* occurs when speakers fail to understand one another's intentions (what is implied). Miscommunication can occur between people who share the same linguistic and cultural backgrounds, but more often occurs interculturally between people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

2.2.2.1 Violation of the Cooperative Principle and indirect speech acts

The Cooperative Principle works as a guide only, so in conversation meaning is attached to utterances even if they seem to diverge from the maxims. Since participants expect cooperation in conversation, they seek another interpretation (an implicit one) if there is no clear literal meaning. The following example is given by Levinson (1983:102).

7. A: Where's Bill? (request for information)

    B: There's a yellow VW outside Sue's house.

At first glance, this response seems to violate two maxims, the maxim of *relevance* (be relevant) and the maxim of *quantity* (make your contribution as informative as is required).

Grice (1975:50-52) affirms the utterance will be inferred on some level according to the Cooperative Principle, and so the hearer will seek meaning by diverging from the literal meaning. The hearer will thus infer that the statement *There's a yellow VW outside Sue's house* is relevant and deduce that Bill may drive a yellow VW (O'Keeffe et al. 2011:88).

The following example of a request made in response to a yes/no question violates the maxim of relevance:

8.   A: Have you finished your assignment?

        B: Can you give me more time for my assignment?

In the above, a "yes" or "no" answer would be relevant. B, however, queries whether it is possible to get more time to complete the assignment (maybe the ruling restricts any extensions for the assignment). A in turn understands that B is requesting more time and that B has obviously not completed the assignment.

Using and understanding indirect speech acts requires familiarity with language and society. This is where L2 language students have problems with the use of indirect speech acts. In conversation, maxims are often flouted for many reasons, and sometimes maxims appear to have been violated, but upon closer inspection cooperation is taking place. The difficulty generally arises between speakers of different cultures and languages. For example:

9.   (a)   Student: Have you marked my essay, Sir?
                Teacher: Do pigs fly? (response as a joke)
        (b)   Mother: My daughter sleeps all the time!
        (c)   Mary: Help me with my homework, please?
                Susan: You asking me for help everyday is like a chain around my neck.

In the examples above, the maxims have been flouted by the use of indirect speech acts, but cooperation is taking place. For L2 learners these types of conversation will generally result in pragmatic failure. Pragmatic competence (see section 2.4 below) would ensure successful communication. In the first example above, the student would have to understand that the teacher is answering by making a joke, and that the answer to the question is "no". In the

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second example, the listener would need to understand that the statement is not meant literally because no-one sleeps all the time. The violation of the maxim of quality (be truthful) can be observed in indirect speech acts. In the last example, Susan responds with a metaphor, another instance of flouting, to Mary's request for help. Mary would need to understand that Susan does not like helping her everyday and the conversational implicature tells Mary to stop asking Susan.

The use of Gricean maxims as a descriptive tool for unpacking indirectness is difficult due to the dependence on context. Situational contextual factors that differ between languages and cultures make it difficult for L2 learners to understand conversational implicatures. This is especially true interculturally, where different cultures have different perceptions of politeness and social appropriateness.

Socio-pragmatic (sociolinguistic) mismatches occur when:

1) In different cultures, different pragmatic 'ground rules' are invoked.
2) Relative values, such as 'politeness' are ranked in different order by different cultures.

<div align="right">Thomas (1983:106)</div>

This section has given an introduction to speech acts and the types of speech acts that occur, and the component parts of the Cooperative Principle that are relevant to understanding requests. The next section will describe 'felicity conditions', or conditions that make speech acts appropriate according to cultural norms.

2.2.3   Felicity conditions

Felicity conditions are also known as "pragmatic conditions" and are referred to as such by Labor and Fanchel (1977 as cited by Blum-Kulka 1982:31). Finegan and Besnier (1989:331) refer to these conditions as "appropriateness conditions", which can be classified into four categories.

Using the speech act of 'requesting', O'Keeffe et al. (2011:86) explain the four categories of felicity conditions as illustrated in Figure 2:

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Felicity conditions for requests (adapted from Levinson 1983:240)

(A = act, H= hearer, and S = speaker)

Propositional content: Future act A of H

Preparatory: 1. S believes H can do A

    2. It is not obvious that H would do A without being asked

Sincerity: S wants H to do A

Essential: Counts as an attempt to get H to do A

Figure 2*:* Felicity conditions for requests

2.2.3.1   **Propositional content**

The words which convey the content of the act make up the propositional content of the speech act. In the act of requesting, the content would be what is being requested of the hearer. The locution must contain acceptable words for affecting the specific speech act.

2.2.3.2   **Preparatory conditions**

The preparatory conditions would involve the belief that the hearer can carry out the requested action in the future. This would include the situational context, whether the person performing the act has the authority to do so or not, and so forth. In the case of declarative speech acts, the person must have authority to perform the speech act (marriage ceremony, christening, baptism, etc.).

2.2.3.3   **Sincerity conditions**

The sincerity conditions for a request are that the speaker sincerely wants the hearer to do the action. For example, if a young man requests that a young woman attend the Spring Ball with him, but he is not sincere and has no intention of taking her, then the speech act has not been performed properly or successfully, and is *infelicitous*. Sincerity conditions involve the speaker being sincere and genuine and having appropriate beliefs or feelings about the speech act being performed. For instance, the person performing a marriage ceremony must believe

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that the words they use will effectuate a marriage. If sincerity conditions are not met, the act will be performed, but will not be successful. If this is the case there is said to be an *abuse* (Cruse 2000:344).

2.2.3.4   Essential conditions

The essential conditions basically define the act being carried out. For a request, the utterance of the speaker must count as an attempt to get the hearer to do what is requested. When the speaker says *Pass me the water*, the essential condition is met when the utterance is seen to count as an attempt to get the hearer to pass the water (O'Keeffe et al. 2011:86).

Felicity conditions are useful in describing all types of speech acts. In the request *Please lend me a pencil*, (i) the content of the utterance must identify the act requested by the speaker, and the form used must be one recognised for making requests; (ii) the preparatory condition includes the speaker's belief that the hearer is capable of lending a pencil and that if the speaker had not asked the addressee would not have done so; (iii) the sincerity condition requires the speaker to sincerely want (desire) the hearer to lend a pencil to the speaker; and (iv) the essential condition is that the speaker intend by the speech act to get the addressee to lend him a pencil.

Jannedy et al. (1994:232) give further clarification of felicity conditions for requests:

- We make requests for a single purpose.
- We do not normally ask people to do things that have already been done.
- We normally do not ask people to do things that they cannot do.
- We do not ask those of higher social standing to do things for us unless under special circumstances.
- We do not usually request things we do not want done.

In this section we discussed conditions that make speech acts appropriate. The next section will elaborate on speech act classification.

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2.2.4   Taxonomies of speech acts

Austin (1962) was the first scholar to introduce a taxonomy of speech acts. Despite weaknesses in Austin's taxonomy, it served as a foundation for others to build on, most notably Searle (1975).

Searle (1975:345) stated that there were (at least) 12 significant dimensions of difference between different illocutionary acts. Flowerdew (1988:71), Cummings (2010:456) and Searle (1975:348) list the following three dimensions as most important.

(1) *Illocutionary point* − the point or purpose of an illocution. It is what we do with language. The illocutionary point is not the same as the *illocutionary force*. The point of a request is the same as that of a command, i.e. to get the hearer to do something. The *illocutionary force* corresponds directly to the thing the hearer wants the speaker to do. To phrase it differently: What is the point of making a request? To get the hearer to do something. What is the point of making a promise? "It is an undertaking of an obligation by the speaker to do something" (Searle 1975:345). The illocutionary point dimension corresponds to the *felicity essential conditions*.

(2) Differences of *direction of fit* between words and world. Some illocutions have as part of their illocutionary point to get the words to match the world. In others the world must change to fit the words. With *statements* (for example, *The sky is blue today*), words fit the world. The truth of the utterance is determined by whether or not it corresponds to the state of the world. With *requests* (for example, *Give me a pencil, please*), the world must change to fit the words; that is, the world must be changed to fulfil the request. The hearer must stop what he/she is doing to fulfil the request; thus, the world is changed to fit the words. The difference of fit corresponds to the felicity condition of *propositional content*.

(3) Differences in expressed *psychological states* – the speaker expresses some attitude, state, etc. to the propositional content. This holds true even if s/he is insincere; he/she still "expresses a belief, desire, intention, regret, or pleasure in the performance of the speech act" (Searle 1975:347). The difference in expressed psychological state corresponds to the *felicity sincerity condition*.

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Searle (1975:348) built most of his taxonomy around these three significant dimensions that are related to the felicity conditions discussed in section 2.2.3. Next, Searle's five basic types of speech acts, comprising the different types of illocutionary acts, will be examined. His taxonomy of speech acts can be found in Levinson (1983:240), Flowerdew (1988:71), Searle (1975:354-360), Archer et al. (2012:39-40) and numerous other works.

(1) *Representatives:* The point or purpose of representatives is to commit the speaker to varying degrees to the truth of the expressed proposition. All the members of this class can be assessed as true or false and they are not just statements. The speaker makes a belief fit an already existing state in the world. The *direction of fit* here is 'word-to-world'. This class contains verbs such as "boast", "complain", "conclude", "deduce", "hypothesise", "suggest", and "swear" (Searle 1975:355). For example, *I am the best, This food is terrible, I swear that I will get revenge*, and *The earth is flat*. It should be noted that "suggest" could be used to make a request. For example, *I suggest you leave now* can also be taken as a request for the hearer to leave.

(2) *Directives:* The illocutionary point of these is that they are attempts to get the hearer to do something (Flowerdew 1988:71). They may be modest attempts like "invite" or "suggest" or forceful attempts like "insist". The *direction of fit* is when the speaker wants the world to change to fit the words – 'world-to-word'. The *felicity sincerity condition* is 'want' (or wish or desire).The felicity propositional content is that the hearer does some future action (Searle 1975:355). Verbs in this class include "order", "command", "instruct", "advise", "question", "ask", "invite", "beg", "plead", "pray" and "permit". Words such as "dare", "defy" and "challenge" also fit into this class (Searle 1975:356). It should be noted here that orders, instructions, certain questions, invitations and advice are all ways of making requests. Consider the following examples where the speaker attempts to get the hearer to do something:

10.   (a)   Stand up straight! (imperative order).
       (b)   Take a right and then a left, and then go straight (instruction).
       (c)   Have a piece of cheese. It's delicious! (invitation).
       (d)   Have a quiet word with your teacher about the assignment (informal advice).
       (e)   Don't you have somewhere to go? (indirect speech act meaning 'Will you leave, please?' or 'Isn't it time for you to leave?')

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The ability for L2 learners to understand the illocutionary force of the speech act request utterance in the last example above will be discussed below in the section regarding pragmatic competence.

(3) *Commissives:* The illocutionary point of commissives is to commit the speaker to some future course of action. The *felicity propositional content* is that the speaker does some future action. The *direction of fit* is world-to-words and the *felicity sincerity condition* is "intention". Although the *direction of fit* for directives and commissives is the same, they are not the same category. The point of a promise is to get the speaker to do something and the point of a request is to get the hearer to do something (Searle 1975:356). Examples of commissives are *I will not do that; I will study harder next time;* and *I'll be back next week.*

(4) *Expressives:* The illocutionary point of this class is to express psychological state. The speaker expresses feelings about the state of affairs specified in the propositional content. The speaker does not assert himself/herself. Paradigms of expressive verbs are, for example, "congratulate", "apologise", "condole", "deplore", "welcome", "congratulate" and "thank". There is no direction of fit as the truth of the expressed proposition is presupposed (Searle 1975:357). For instance, *I am so sorry!; I am devastated!; I am so happy to see you!*; and *congratulations*!

(5) *Declarations:* Searle (1975:358) feels that there is a need for one last category of speech acts; one in which the state of affairs expressed in the propositional content is brought into existence by the utterance itself. These are speech acts that, when uttered, change the world. For example, *I resign; I excommunicate you; I christen this battleship the Mississippi*; and *War is hereby declared*. Successful performance guarantees that that the propositional content corresponds to the world (word-to-world). For example, if I successfully perform the act of marrying you then you are married. If I do not have authority to perform marriages (preparatory condition) then the performance of the declaration will be unsuccessful.

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Type of speech act	Direction of fit	X - situation S - speaker
Representatives	Words-to-world	S believes X
Directives	World-to-words	S wants X
Commissives	World-to-words	S intends X
Expressives	No direction of fit	S feels X
Declarations	Words change the world	S causes X

Table 1: General functions of speech acts (Searle 1975)

Searle's taxonomy is probably the most widely accepted to date. According to Flowerdew (1988:71), if the taxonomy were valid it would represent a powerful tool L2 teaching syllabus designers. He quotes Searle as saying there would be "a rather limited number of basic things we do with language". These could then form the basis of a syllabus. According to Flowerdew (1988:72), it is surprising that language teachers have not adapted or developed a more principled framework for teaching based on Searle's taxonomy.

Associated with each speech act is a set of conditions that must be met if the speech act is to be successfully performed (Blum-Kulka 1982:31). A discussion of explicit (direct) and implicit (indirect) speech acts follows in section 2.2.5.

2.2.5 Direct and indirect speech acts

Direct and indirect speech acts can be distinguished on the basis of their grammatical form or structure. When we have a direct relationship between the form and the function of the speech act, then the speech act conveys the literal meaning of the utterance and the utterance is a *direct speech act* (Archer et al. 2012:41). Direct speech acts occur when the locution is in line with the illocution. An *indirect speech act* is when we do not say literally what we mean. What we mean is not in the words themselves, but in the implied meaning (Cutting 2002:19). *Indirectness* occurs when the locution is at odds with the illocutionary force, or when there is an indirect relationship between the form and function of the speech act. Table 2 summarises direct and indirect speech acts.

Direct speech acts	Indirect speech acts
1. Have a direct relationship between form and function	- Have an indirect relationship between form and function
2. When the locution is in line with the illocution (illocutionary force)	- When the locution is at odds with the illocution (illocutionary force)
3. The speech act conveys the literal meaning of the utterance	- The speech act does not convey the literal meaning of the speech act
4. Has a performative verb	- Does not have a performative verb
5. Felicity condition – propositional content conveys the requested act[1]	- Felicity condition – propositional content does not covey the requested act
6. Sentence type is one typically used to perform a certain speech act. For example, a question is performed using an interrogative (see table 5)	- The sentence type is not one typically used for that function. For example, "Can you pass the salt" stated as a request by using the form of a question (interrogative)

Table 2: General differences between direct and indirect speech acts. Table 2 is a representation of the information presented thus far.

2.2.5.1   Direct speech acts

Direct speech acts are marked by special syntactic structures (Jannedy et al. 1994:229). There is a direct relationship between the linguistic structure of the utterance and the function that the speech acts performs. We can expect to see the following patterns when the illocutionary force is in line with the linguistic structure.

Sentence type	Speech act	Function	Example
1 Declarative	Statement (assertion)	- It conveys information - It is true or false	"We have no food to cook for dinner."

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[1] For example, *lend me your notes* (direct) and *I was sick on Saturday* (indirect) do not relay the same propositional content. In the latter, knowledge of the context in which the conversation takes place must be present to understand the illocutionary force (see the discussion of hints below).

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| **2 Interrogative** | Question | - Elicits information
- Causes others to behave in certain ways | "Will you leave me alone?" |
| **3 Imperative** | Order/command/request | - Causes others to do some act | "Please leave me alone."
"Leave me alone." |

Table 3: Direct speech acts (adapted from Jannedy et al. 1994:229)

Direct speech acts can be identified in two ways (Jannedy et al. 1994:232):

Firstly, by producing direct/literal utterances (as in statements):

11. (a) I was sick yesterday.
    (b) I am so busy because my mother is sick and I have to go to the hospital in the evening.
    (c) My new car is blue.

Secondly, by using a performative verb that names the speech act (as in interrogative and imperative):

12. (a) Did Peter pass the test? / I ask you whether or not Peter passed the test.
    (b) Please wash my car for me. / I request that you wash my car for me.

The imperative is mostly used for requests and commands. The imperative always involves a second person, i.e., use of the imperative would never require that a person command or request something of themselves. The infinitive (base form of the verb) is used to form the imperative.

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Positive affirmative sentences	Negative affirmative sentences
"Come here."	"Don't come here."
"Clean the kitchen."	"Don't clean the kitchen."
"Help your mother."	"Don't help your mother."

Table 4: Examples of affirmative requests / commands

Important to note is the fact that requests and commands are similar and obedience to the command would depend on who the speaker is. A military command arises from the recognised authority of the speaker (Cruse 2000:339). In each case the hearer can refuse, thus making the command a request. However, in the case of a command the consequences of disobedience may be more severe. Generally commands are performed without question, but sometimes they are not; as, for example, when an officer orders his men to shoot unarmed civilians or orders the torture of captured enemy troops. Whether a command is obeyed does not only depend on what is being commanded, but also on the context and the beliefs of the hearer. In the instance of *Clean the kitchen*, the hearer could take the utterance as a command or request depending on his/her perspective and the consequences of not complying. The imperative can also be modified and the imposition 'downgraded' by the use of the word "please", as in *Please help your mother*. In this case, the utterance would be clearly seen as a request and be less threatening to 'personal face', and used as a syntactic device to mitigate the force of the 'face threatening act' (politeness and face will be discussed in section 2.3.1 below).

Certain words and phrases that are used to modify speech acts, e.g., "please", are known as "modifiers". Speech act markers (a phrase that refers to certain words and phrases that modify speech acts) can be used for social impact – sociolinguistically for politeness (see section 2.3 below) or to indicate pragmatic force (Blum-Kulka 1985:213). Blum-Kulka (1985:219) gives the following example:

13.   Father to daughter:

        Father: Go to bed, come.

        Daughter: No, no, no.

        Father: To bed, <u>please.</u>

Firstly, "please" is used to soften the imposition of a direct command in English, but at the same time it is not needed grammatically. It serves as a politeness marker. Secondly, we see that "please" downgrades the coerciveness. If the father had said "to bed" only he may have been more successful, but the use of "please" in this instance may possibly cause greater resistance. We can therefore see that the use of "please" in direct strategies is multifunctional and can be used for social impact as well as to affect the illocutionary force or coerciveness of the speech act.

Imperatives can be used in a number of ways as illustrated below. Each category below can be viewed as a request depending on the hearer's perspective:

To give direct orders	(1) "Stand up straight." (2) "Climb in the vehicle." (3) "Run around the field ten times."
To give instructions	(1) "Take three tablets before eating." (2) "Close your books." (3) "Go straight then take a left at the traffic light."
To make an invitation	(1) "Come in and sit down." (2) "Have a pancake. They are delicious." (3) "Have anything you want."
For use on signs	(1) "Stop" (2) "Do not smoke" (3) "Insert one dollar"
For requests	(1) "Talk to me on Sunday." (2) "Lend me your notes." (3) "Go to the supermarket and buy some vegetables."
We can make the imperative more polite by using "do" or "please"	(1) "Please give me more time for my assignment." (2) "Do give me the bill." (3) "Please do your homework."

Table 5: Different uses of the imperative

The interrogative is used to elicit information. Interrogatives express ignorance of something and elicit a response to remove ignorance (Cruse 2000:338). Interrogatives are all questions. They request information of some kind. *Could you, can you* and *would you* are used in making requests. According to the felicity condition above, all requests require that the hearer perform some sort of action. The phrases *could you, can you*, and *would you* can be used to request information. For example, *Can you tell me the way to the nearest bank?* In the examples below, the phrases are used to make requests.

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14.   (a)   Could you pass the salt?

       (b)   Can you talk to me on Sunday?

       (c)   Would you bring me the bill?

The three examples above require action on the part of the hearer. Contrast these requestive questions with *Are you hungry?* In the latter, there is no action required in the response; a verbal "yes" or "no" would suffice. It should be noted that requests containing *could you, can you* and *would you* can be classified as "indirect speech acts" (see 2.2.6.2 below). The avoidance of direct or bare imperatives and the use of alternate strategies such as these are known as "whimperatives" (Cummings 2010:94). Whimperatives flow from cultural scripts and as such should be taught to all L2 learners as part of acculturation (acculturation is the socialisation process of adopting the social behaviour as well as linguistic patterns of the target culture or language). In some cultures, directness is favoured and whimperatives as given above are considered unnecessary from a cultural linguistic perspective.

2.2.5.2   Indirect speech acts

Since the days of early speech act theory, the puzzle of indirectness has troubled researchers (Terkourafi 2011:2861). Why would people want to communicate a message that is clear and easy to understand in a more convoluted way? The widely accepted answer to this question is that people do this for reasons of politeness (see section 2.3 below). Indirectness would generally be associated with politeness and tact. Humans make the extra effort involved to be polite to ensure that they do not jeopardise their social relationships (Terkourafi 2011:2861). Clark and Shunk (1980:111) state that

> When people make requests they tend to make them indirectly. They generally avoid using imperatives like *Tell me the time*, which are direct requests, in preference for questions like *Can you tell me the time?* Or an assertion like *I'm trying to find out what time it is*, which are indirect requests.

There are typically two main types of indirectness, i.e., conventional and unconventional; the latter is also referred to as non-literal or hints. The nine request strategies will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 3. The following table shows the nine different request strategies

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associated with direct and indirect speech acts (Blum-Kulka 1987:133, Blum-Kulka et. al. 1989:278-280).

Descriptive category / strategy	Examples
1. Mood derivable **(a) most direct**	Move your car/clean up the kitchen (direct speech act)
2. Performative	I'm asking you to move your car. (direct speech act)
3. Hedged performative	I would like to ask you to move your car. (direct speech act)
4. Obligation statement	You'll have to move your car. (direct speech act)
5. Want statement	I want you to move your car. (conventionally indirect)
6. Suggestory formulae **(b) least indirect**	How about cleaning up? (conventionally indirect)
7. Query preparatory	Would you mind moving your car? (Conventionally indirect)
8. Strong hints **(c) least direct** (most indirect)	You've left the kitchen in a right mess. (request to clean the kitchen) (contextually indirect/non-conventional)
9. Mild hints	We don't want any crowding (request to move car) (contextually indirect / non-conventional)

Table 6: Examples of 9 request strategies showing direct strategies (1-5), conventionally indirect strategies (6-7) and non-conventionally indirect strategies (8-9 hints).

It should be noted that politeness is usually associated with conventionally indirect strategies, but not necessarily with hints. "Politeness" can be defined as a courteous manner that respects social norms by showing regard for others (see section 2.3 below). It should also be noted that the most indirect strategies are hints. There is therefore a correlation between politeness and directness. Direct strategies are generally considered impolite; conventional indirect strategies are considered polite; but hints are not always considered polite. Furthermore, the nature of the association between indirectness and politeness will vary across cultures (Blum-Kulka 1987:132). Contextual factors (such as cost of imposition, social power and social distance) affect speech act realisation across cultures, but research has proven that people across cultures prefer conventional indirect strategies over direct and non-conventional indirect strategies in making requests (Lin 2007:1637).

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Blum-Kulka (1982:30) has observed that although speakers have explicit direct ways of achieving communicative goals they generally choose to use indirect strategies. However, use of direct and indirect speech acts to achieve communicative ends will vary from culture to culture.

Whimperatives, as discussed above, although used for requests in English and recognised as such by native English speakers, are not recognised as "markers" used for requests in some other languages. Consider the following forms of indirect strategies such as *are you willing, can you, could you*. Firstly, speakers need to understand that in English *can you, are you* and *could you* are used for requests in the right context, and are not used for questions. Blum-Kulka (1985:221) gives the following examples from research data from Hebrew subjects:

15. (a) Can you open the window? [Hebrew speaker data]
    (b) Can you open the window? [English speaker data]
    (c) Can you open the window please?

According to Blum-Kulka (1985), in the first example above 17% of Hebrew students identified the speech act as a question, 17% as a request and 66% as both. In the second example, 33% of English speakers identified it as a request and 67% as both. No English speakers identified it as only a question. However, this phrase with the inclusion of the modifier "please", as in the third example above, is understood by virtually 100% of both Hebrew and English speakers as a request. Certain sentences such as the query preparatory *can you* above have the surface form of questions but can be used as requests, and with the inclusion of the word "please", these are always recognised as requests (Geukens 1978:269). The query preparatory refers to a request with the use of the word "can" (see table 6 above).

There are two types of indirect speech acts as stated above, i.e., conventional and non-conventional (or non-literal), the latter being more commonly known as "hints" (see table 6 above). We understand that speakers at times mean exactly what they say, at other times more than what they say, and in other instances something completely different to what they say (as in the case of hints). In direct speech acts only one thing is done by the speaker, but when they speak indirectly they do more than one thing. For example, *Can you pour me a glass of water?* as an indirect speech act can do more than one thing. Firstly, it asks the listener about his *ability*

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and secondly, it requests a glass of water. Searle (1979:61) stated that an indirect speech act is one in which "one act is performed by way of another". Bach and Harnish (1979:70) describe an indirect speech act as one in which "an illocutionary act is performed subordinately to another illocutionary act". These types of query preparatory speech acts stated as questions, but which are requests, are indirect speech acts (see table 4 number 6). For other examples of conventional indirect speech acts see table 6 above.

Non-conventional (non-literal) indirect speech acts or hints are the most indirect of all request strategies. The following are examples of requestive hints:

16.   (a)   I am going to my best friend's party on Saturday (as a refusal to a request).
         (b)   I wasn't at the lecture yesterday (as a request to lend a friend's lecture notes).
         (c)   We have no food to cook for dinner (as a request to go to the supermarket).
         (d)   I haven't finished my assignment (as a request for more time).
         (e)   We would like to leave soon (as a request for the bill at a restaurant).

Weizman (1993:123) states that in the interpretation of hints the intention of the speaker is highly context-embedded, i.e., the utterance is not understood by its literal meaning as in direct speech acts. Take the following examples:

17.   (a)   It is getting late (one friend to another).
         (b)   Thank you, Francis (principal to student).

In the first example above, one friend is tired and wants to go to bed. We can see that the hearer will accurately interpret the statement as a request meaning *Can you go home now?*. In the second example above, the utterance functions both as an expression of gratitude and a statement that the student's assistance is no longer needed, or as a request/command for the student to leave the principal's office. The utterance will be interpreted by the speaker and hearer in the context of their meeting. Strong hints require less contextual knowledge than mild hints (see table 6).

Weizman (1993:124) makes a distinction in terms of degree and type of opacity found in hints (mild and strong). Degree of opacity is the number of "missing clues" required for a full interpretation. Such missing clues are to be found in the context.

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The question then arises, why use hints at all? Weizman (1993:124) quotes Leech as stating "Indirect locutions tend to be more polite (a) because they increase the degree of optionality, and (b) the more indirect an illocution is, the more diminished and tentative its force tends to be". According to Leech (1983:108), the more optionality the hearer is given the easier it is to say "no" or "yes" and, accordingly, the more polite the utterance is perceived to be. However, research has found that conventional indirect speech acts are perceived as being polite, but the same is not necessarily true for hints (non-conventional indirect speech acts). Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986:165-177) and Blum-Kulka (1987:131-145) did research with American, British and German participants and found that hints are considered less polite than conventional indirectness. Evidence indicates that the most effective way to save face is to not use hints. 'Face' is the public self-image that every individual wants to claim for himself (Brown and Levinson 1987:61). So, once again, what is the purpose of using hints? Weizman (1993:125) suggests "that hints be thought of as the only request strategy that bears a high deniability potential for both parties: the requester may plausibly deny having made a request… or deny its propositional content". The requester may legitimately ignore the request or pretend to have misunderstood its contents. For instance, consider the following speech event:

18. A: I need a cat trap, do you have one? I am taking my cat to the vet in Muscat on Saturday?

B: I do have one but I am using it, I am also taking my cat to the vet in Muscat on Saturday.

In the above conversation, A requests of B to borrow a cat trap. B responds that she cannot lend him one, but adds that she is also going to Muscat on the same day. To understand the illocutionary force of a request from B to A the context must be clearly understood: (1) A knows that B does not have a car; (2) where A and B live is 200 km from Muscat; (3) A knows that B is probably going to catch a taxi as she has done it before; (4) A knows that B is asking for a lift; (5) A does not want to offer B a lift because A wants to have a private conversation with his wife while they are travelling; and (6) A knows that B is too polite to ask directly as she does not want to impose herself.

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In this context, firstly, A can deny that a request of him was ever made and B can deny she ever made a request, Secondly, the requestee A may legitimately ignore or pretend to misunderstand the content of the request. Here we see how high deniability potential is secured by the use of a requestive hint. Thus, the good social relationship enjoyed by these two friends will be maintained as suggested by Terkourafi (2011) above. Additionally, successfully performing speech acts requires an understanding of politeness. The next section will discuss politeness, which is closely associated with making requests.

2.3   Politeness

Politeness refers to a person having a courteous manner by showing regard for others. Politeness is complicated in any language because it requires not only understanding of the language but also understanding of social and cultural values. Meyerhoff (2006:81) gives the following example:

> "I'll have an iced mocha", my New York friend Ellen said. "An iced mocha" repeated the server. "Do you want whipped cream on that?" "You have to ask?" said Ellen.

Meyerhoff explains that in the example above, the waiter from Michigan found Ellen's response *You have to ask?* and her ironic tone of voice difficult to understand. Outside of New York, her response didn't have the meaning of an enthusiastic "yes". In Michigan, this kind of response is considered quite rude. The waiter probably expected a *yes please* or *yes thank you*. This indirect response, although considered polite and friendly in New York, was not considered so in Michigan in this particular instance. As illustrated above in the discussion on direct and indirect speech acts, politeness and indirectness have a close correlation. Previous research on requests has shown that power, social distance, situational setting and degree of imposition are culture-related and will differ, and that direct and indirect strategies will also differ culturally (Le Pair 1996:654, Le Pair citing Blum-Kulka 1989 and Fukushima 1996).

Wierzbicka (2003:69) states that cultures differ in what they perceive as appropriate communicative behaviour. For example, imposition is viewed negatively in some cultures, but not in others. Wierzbicka (2003:69) summarises the findings of various studies as follows:

- In different societies and different communities, people speak differently.

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- These differences in ways of speaking are profound and systematic.
- These differences reflect different cultural values, or at least different hierarchies of values.
- Different ways of speaking, different communicative styles, can be explained and made sense of in terms of independently-established different cultural values and cultural priorities.

Many devices used in English to make requests do not exist in other languages. In English, if a speaker wants a hearer to do something, s/he would probably not use the imperative (for example, *Close the window, Paul*) when trying to be polite. They may instead make a suggestion in the form of a question to make a request; for example *Why don't you close the window, Paul*? Wierzbicka (1985:152) says that in Polish the indirect speech act *Why don't you close the window*? would imply unreasonable and stubborn behavior on the part of the speaker ("*Why haven't you done what was obviously the right thing to do? You should have done it long ago; I can't see any excuse for your failure to have done so*"). Wierzbicka says it could be interpreted in this way in English, but not necessarily; however, in Polish it would definitely be interpreted as such.

Wierzbicka (1985:172) cites Searle as stating that the requirements of politeness make it inappropriate to issue flat imperative sentences; instead, we seek to find indirect means to our illocutionary ends, and Seale claims that the fact that we seek indirect means as a choice over directness is universal. Wierzbicka states that Searle's claim is incorrect and that this requirement is an English Language requirement, as in British culture, and not applicable to all cultures. The following example is given (Wierzbicka 1985:146):

> At a meeting of a Polish organisation in Australia a distinguished guest is introduced. She is offered a seat of honour with these words: "Mrs. Vanessa! Please! Sit! Sit!"

Here the short imperative *sit* is used, which makes it sound like a command addressed to a dog (Wierzbicka 1985:146). She says that more formal offers, as would be appropriate in this situation, would take the interrogative form for this request. For example, *Won't you sit down?* or *Would you like to sit down*? However, in Polish the short imperative is perfectly polite.

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Certain universals of politeness have been claimed to exist. For example, Leech (1983) put forward six politeness maxims which he says work with Grice's maxims of conversation (see section 2), but that may vary in importance from culture to culture. The best known of all the researchers on politeness are Brown and Levinson (1987). They endeavour to describe and account for the politeness phenomena across languages and cultures.

2.3.1   'Face' – Brown and Levinson (1987)

Brown and Levinson (1987:57) state that they want to account for cross cultural similarities by examining the abstract principles that underlie polite usage of language. In other words what are the assumptions and reasoning employed to produce requests, as is the interest in this paper? What are the similarities across cultures which make people use direct, conventional indirect or unconventional indirect speech acts (hints; or, as Brown and Levinson put it, "indirect expressions" (implicatures))?

The first point that needs to be understood in relation to politeness is that, according to Brown, all human beings are rational. That is, "they will weigh the different means to an end, and choose one that most satisfies the desired goal (Brown and Levinson 1987:65). In order to understand what people are saying we must understand, much of the time, what is implied. This point was first made by Grice (1975). Brown and Levinson (1987) agree with this claim and give the following example:

19.   A: What time is it?
       B: Well, the postman's been already.

In the example above, it would have to be assumed by A that B is a rational being and that s/he will infer that the postman usually comes at 11:00 a.m., so it must be after 11:00 a.m. When what is said cannot be interpreted on the literal level as relevant to the conversation, the statement is known as a 'conversational implicature'. In other words, the words imply something different from what is being literally said.

In order to understand Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, we must understand the concept of 'face'. In every society there are norms for polite social behaviour that are known to members of that society; for example, respect for superiors or the elderly, generosity,

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modesty, kindness, sympathy, etc. However, within each communicative interaction there is another concept relevant to politeness known as 'face'.

2.3.2   Face and face threatening acts (FTAs)

'Face' is the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself (Brown and Levinson 1987:61). Face is something that can be maintained, enhanced or lost. If we are embarrassed or humiliated we 'lose face'. In general, people cooperate in maintaining face in conversation. Brown and Levinson (1987:62) state that they "treat the aspects of face as basic wants, which every member knows every other member desires, and which in general it is in the interest of every member to partially satisfy". For example,

20.   (a)   Excuse me, Dr. Suleiman, but could I have a moment of your time?
       (b)   Hey buddy, got a minute?

In the above, the first example would be an appropriate request if speaking to a superior in the workplace or elsewhere. However, in the second example the request would be inappropriate and impolite, and would be regarded as a *face threatening act* (FTA). If someone says something that constitutes a threat to another person's expectations concerning self-image, it can be described as a face threatening act (Yule 1996:61).

When a person has the choice of initiating an FTA, there is also the option of mitigating the act to lessen the threat to the other individual. This is called *face saving act* (FSA) (Yule 1996:61). We would do well to consider this option under circumstances of frustration or irritation. For example, imagine that you are teaching a class and outside the classroom door some students are talking loudly and disturbing your class. You have the choice between an FTA or an FSA.

21.   (a)   Stop making a noise outside my classroom and leave now (FTA).
       (b)   Would you mind speaking quieter please; I am trying to give a lesson and my class is being disrupted (FSA).

In the first example above, the utterance would cause the students outside some embarrassment or resentment. In contrast, the second example would be just as effective, but polite. An FTA does not show regard for face, but an FSA does show regard for face. Both the above examples

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are FTAs because they are reprimands; however, in the second example, a politeness strategy is utilised.

There are two related aspects of face, namely 'positive face' and 'negative face' (Brown and Levinson 1987:61,100).

Positive face: "The positive consistent self-image or 'personality' (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants" (Brown and Levinson 1987:61,100); or that the addressee's wants should be thought of as desirable by others. In other words, the desire that his/her wants be respected and that the addressee will desire to maintain or enhance the self-image of the other person.

Negative face: "Is the need to be independent, to not be imposed on by others, and to have freedom of action" (Yule 1996:60).

Yule (1996:62) explains the difference as follows: positive face is the need to be connected and negative face is the need to be independent. When making requests a person's face must always be respected because requests are inherently face threatening. Knowledge of cultural values and norms will help to communicate requests successfully.

With face threatening acts there are two ways to offer redressive action and save the other person's face; in other words, to perform a speech act that is an FSA; *positive politeness and negative politeness*. An FSA that is designed to preserve a person's negative face is called *negative politeness*. It will show deference and accentuates the importance of the other's time and concerns, and it may include an apology or excuse for the interruption or imposition (Yule 1996:62). An FSA that is uttered to save a person's positive face is said to involve *positive politeness*. It will empathise and show solidarity by highlighting that both speakers share a common goal (Yule 1996:62).

2.3.3   Politeness strategies

Politeness strategies involve FTAs. FTA's can be on-record or off-record. On-record strategies without redressive action are direct speech acts and do not show concern for face. FTAs with

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redressive action do have concern for face. The strategies illustrated in Figure 3 will be discussed below.
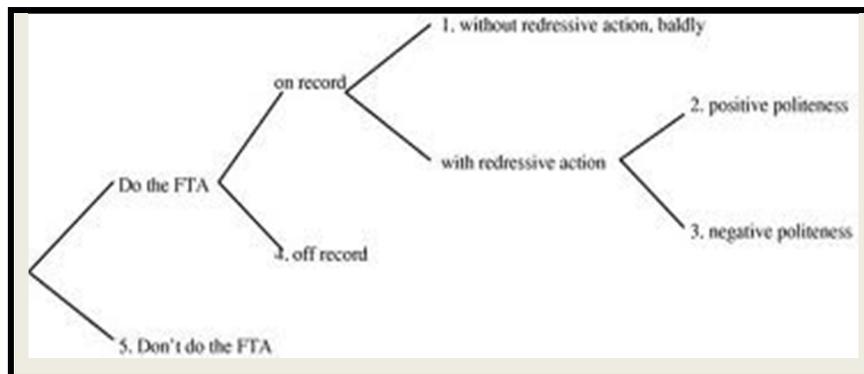
Figure 3: Circumstances determining choice of strategy (Brown and Levinson 1987:60)

2.3.3.1 On-record and off-record

When we make requests, we have two options in our choice of speech acts. We can speak directly or indirectly. "Off-record" in Figure 3 refers to indirect speech acts, specifically hints. On-record refers to direct speech acts, including suggestory formulae and query preparatory (see Table 6 above). Suggestory formulae and query preparatory are conventionally indirect. They use phrases such as *can you*, *would you* or *how about*; softening the imposition of the request and thus showing respect for the other's face. To clarify, when considering Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (see table 6 above), on-record includes request strategies 1-7, and off- record refers to request strategies 8-9.

2.3.3.2 On-record without redressive action (bald-on-record)

Bald-on-record strategies can be treated as speaking in conformity to Grice's maxims (Brown and Levinson 1987:94). The majority of speech acts do not proceed in accordance with these maxims. Brown and Levinson (1987:95) state that the purpose of their paper is to highlight that the most powerful motive for "not talking maxim-wise is the desire to give attention to face". Generally, maintaining face would not be possible if our utterances were of a direct kind. For example, the imperative requests (request strategy 1) *Give me a pen* or *Lend me $5* do not give attention to face. Bald-on-record strategy is used when the speaker (S) wants to perform the FTA with maximum efficiency, more than wanting to satisfy the hearer's (H) face wants (Brown and Levinson 1987:95). Take the following examples:

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22. (a) Help!

 (b) Watch out!

 (c) Send me a postcard.

 (d) Lend me a hand here.

 (e) Take care of yourself!

In the above example from Brown and Levinson (1987:95-97) the face threat is not minimised. In fact, the above utterances are not impolite taken in the right context and the FTA is minimised by *implication*. For instance, in (1) above a person being attacked by muggers would not be concerned with saving anyone face in requesting help. However, bald-on-record direct strategies are more often than not impolite. Take the following example uttered by an angry parent to a child, *Clean the kitchen now!* Power relationship often determines choice of strategy. Moreover, in some instances bald-on-record direct strategies are polite, as in *Have some more cake* or *Gimme that wet umbrella* (Yule 1996:63).

2.3.3.3   On-record with redressive action (positive and negative politeness)

Positive politeness is redress directed at the hearer's positive face. It minimises the threat to the hearer's face. Positive politeness makes the hearer feel good about himself, his interests or his possessions. Brown and Levinson (1987:102) claim that FTAs performed with a positive politeness strategy occur under three categories: (a) speaker and hearer claim common ground, i.e., show admiration or interest; (b) speaker and hearer are co-operators, i.e., in the case of an offer or promise; and (c) when the speaker fulfils the hearer's want for something, i.e., give goods, gifts, co-operation, sympathy or understanding. Consider the following examples (Brown and Levinson 1987:103-128):

(1) Attend to hearer's interests, wants, needs, goods

 You must be hungry; it's a long time since breakfast. How about some lunch? (request)

(2) Use ingroup identity markers (Where familiarity exists between listener and speaker)

 Bring me your dirty clothes to wash, Johnny (request).

(3) Intensify interest

 You always do the dishes. I'll do them this time.

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(4) Use ingroup language or dialect (Where familiarity exists between listener and speaker)

Got any spare cash? (request)

(5) Presuppose/raise/assert common ground

Do you want to come with me to the movies? (request)

(6) Assert or presuppose speaker's knowledge or concern for hearer's wants

Look I know you want the car back by 17:00, so shouldn't I go to town now?

(7) Be optimistic

You'll lend me your lawnmower for the weekend, won't you? (request)

Negative politeness is redressive action directed at the hearer's negative face: his desire or want to be free of imposition to act and have his attention unimpeded (Brown and Levinson 1987:129). It is used more often than positive politeness in English as an FSA. It minimises the imposition that the FTA affects. These strategies assume the addressor will be imposing on the addressee and a greater potential for embarrassment exists than that which exists for bald-on-record or positive politeness strategies. Examples from Brown and Levinson (1987:129-210) include the following:

(1) Be indirect

(a) I'm looking for a comb (request).

(b) Could you pass the salt? (request)

(c) Are you able to post this letter for me? (request)

(d) Let me ask you to please close the door (request).

(e) I would like to borrow a cup of flour if I may (request).

(2) Question, hedge

(a) Won't you open the door? (request)

(b) Take this out, will you? (request to take out the garbage)

(c) May she go to the market? (speaker is requesting on behalf of third person)

(3) Be pessimistic

(a) I've come if I may to see you for what might be a night (request to stay)

(b) I don't suppose there'd be any chance of you lending me a thousand dollars? (request for money)

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(4) Give deference

    (a)   Would you care for a sandwich?

    (b)   Excuse me, sir, but, would you mind if I close the window? (request)

    (c)   I think I must be absolutely stupid but I simply can't understand this map (request for help).

(5) Apologise

    I'm sorry; it's a lot to ask but can you lend me $1000? (request)

The above examples sometimes violate the maxim of quantity in that they do not always provide enough information.

2.3.3.4 Off-record (indirect hints)

The FTA is performed in such a way that it is impossible to attribute only one clear communicative intention to the act (Brown and Levinson 1987:211). The act can remove the potential for the speaker to be imposing. However, the hearer can still perceive the speaker as being imposing. As previously stated, off-record FTAs are performed using request strategies 8-9, i.e., mild hints and strong hints. If the speaker wants to do an FTA but not take responsibility for it and leave the interpretation up to the hearer, s/he uses an indirect hint. In some instances the hearer may not want to say 'yes' to a request as the imposition is too great; s/he can therefore ignore any understanding of the request and thus avoid the awkwardness of saying no and possibly damaging a good social relationship. The speaker in turn understands that the request may be too great an imposition and for this reason chooses an off-record strategy. Face preservation plays an important role in what motivates the speaker to use off-record indirect speech acts.

Brown and Levinson (1987:213) proceed to classify ways in which contextually ambiguous implicature is achieved (see Figure 4 below). The way that this is done is to invite conversational implicatures by violating one of the Gricean Maxims, which are the four trigger types. Each maxim that is violated will then in turn trigger a politeness strategy. Strategies are classified by kinds of 'clues' (see below) spoken by the speaker from which meaning will be inferred (Brown and Levinson 1987:213).

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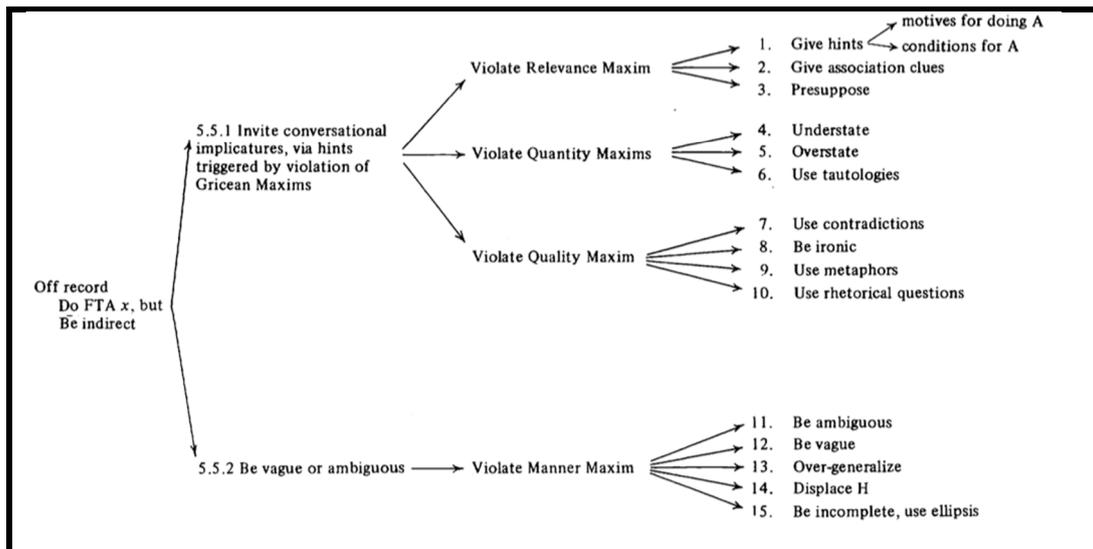
Figure 4: Chart of politeness strategies: off-record (Brown and Levinson 1987:214)

Brown and Levinson (1987:213-226) give the following examples of off-record politeness strategies:

(1) Give hints (violates the maxim of relevance)

  (a) It's cold in here (request to shut the window).

  (b) What a boring movie! (request to leave)

(2) Overstate (violates the maxim of quantity)

  (a) I tried to call a hundred times, but there was never any answer. (request to know why)

  (b) You never do the washing up. (possible request to wash up)

(3) Be ironic (violates the maxim of quality)

  (a) Lovely neighbourhood, eh? (in a slum)

  (b) Thanks for helping! (as a request to someone who is not helping)

(4) Over-generalise (violates maxim of manner)

  (a) The lawn has got to be mown (request).

  (b) Mature people sometimes help with the dishes (request).

The various strategies are summarised in Figure 5 below.

```
                    How to get a pen from someone

            Say something              say nothing
                                       (but search in the bag)

        On-record    off-record
                     ('I forgot my pen')

    Face saving act    bald on record
                       ('Give me a pen')

Positive politeness              Negative politeness
('How about letting me use your pen?')   ('Could you lend me a pen'?)
```
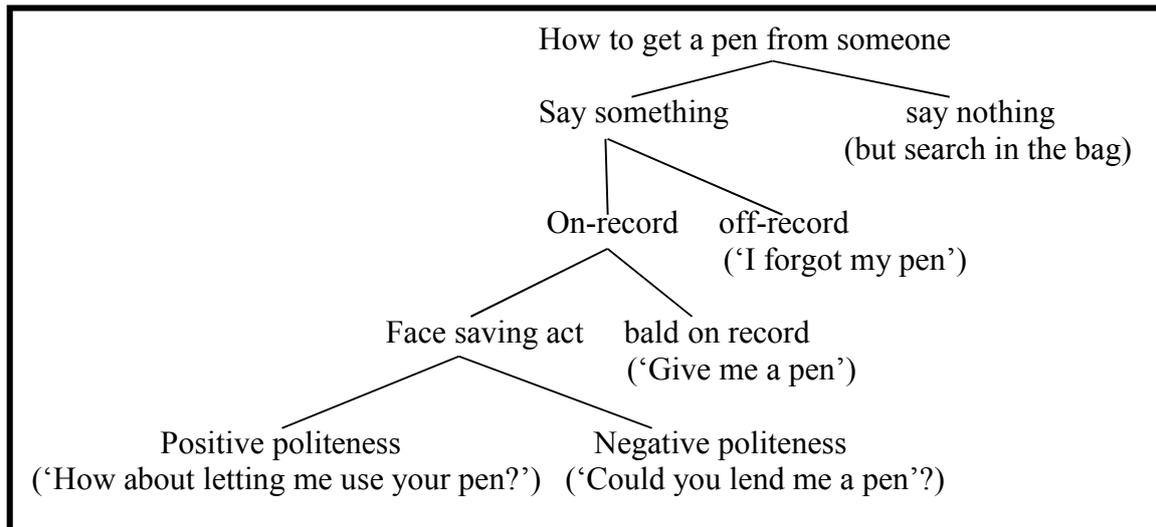
Figure 5: How to get a pen from someone (Yule 1996:66)

2.3.4   Sociological variables – choice of strategy

Brown and Levinson identified three culturally sensitive factors that determine the seriousness of an FTA (Meyerhoff 2006:87; Fraser 1990:230; LoCastro 2012:142; Brown and Levinson 1987:238-242). The three variables are social distance, power and absolute ranking or weight (cost) of imposition.

"Power" here refers to the power relationships between the hearer and the speaker. We are generally inclined to speak to social equals differently than to those of higher or lower status. Meyerhoff (2006:87) explains by use of the following example: A person will be more polite to a government official processing a new passport than to a telemarketer who rings during dinner. The person needs the government official to process the passport application, i.e., he is dependent on the government official, but the power roles are reversed with regard to the telemarketer.

To further illustrate, imagine that some people are making a loud noise outside your office. Firstly, if they are colleagues you may claim common ground and use 'positive politeness'; for example, *I would appreciate it if you could please be quiet, I am trying to prepare a lesson and it's really difficult with all the noise.* Secondly, they may be students and your irritation may cause you to use a bald-on-record strategy to press your point. For example, *Stop talking so loudly and go somewhere else*! Thirdly, the people speaking may be the directors of your

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department, in which case you would say nothing and hope they go away quickly. In this instance, no FTA is performed.

Social distance is "between the speaker and the hearer; in effect, the degree of familiarity and solidarity they share" (Fraser 1990:231). We distinguish between friend, family, enemy and stranger. In some cases we share the same social status, and in others there is social distance. Our choice of strategy would depend on who we are talking to. We generally use more polite strategies with people we don't know very well as opposed to family members or friends. For example, if you were cooking a meal with a family member you might say "pass the grater" if it was within their reach, but with someone you don't know very well, like a colleague with whom you are sharing an hotel suite at a conference, you might say, "Would you mind passing the grater please, I just can't reach it".

The cost of imposition of the same thing is not the same across cultures and groups. For example, borrowing money from a close friend or family member may be a greater imposition in the United States of America (USA) than in Mexico (LoCastro 2012:142). In contrast, asking the time is generally considered a minor imposition. We can ask complete strangers with little attention to face wants, e.g., *Sorry, do you have the time?* or even just *What's the time?* (Meyerhoff 2006:88). In Oman, asking someone that you don't know very well if you can borrow their car is not a big imposition. However, the same request in the USA, England or numerous other countries would be regarded as a huge imposition, and in fact asking to borrow someone's car should best be avoided completely.

In order for students to choose the appropriate strategy in different social settings from those outlined above they have to acquire sociolinguistic competence in the given language. Meyerhoff (2006:96) explains the connection between sociolinguistic, grammatical and pragmatic competence as follows:

> Dell Hymes proposed that formal linguistic systems (our grammatical competence) are part of different sociolinguistic systems. Our sociolinguistic competence allows us to select the appropriate utterances from all the possible grammatical utterances made available to us by our grammatical competence (Hymes 1974:75). That is, competence goes beyond simply knowing the rules for combining words into phrases… In order to be a truly competent speaker of a language, you also have to know when to use certain

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styles or registers, what variants are generally… recognised as being appropriate for different groups of speakers, appropriate politeness routines, and even when to speak or stay silent. Some of this kind of knowledge may even be described as pragmatic competence in the literature, but the important point here is that some linguists recognise forms of competence that go beyond syntax and semantics.

2.4   Pragmatic or communicative competence

To understand an utterance we must not only understand the words and phrases, we must understand the context in which they are spoken. The understanding of context is essential if speech acts are to be understood. "Pragmatics is thus concerned with the relationships between utterances and the acts or functions that speakers or writers intend to perform through these utterances, which can be called *illocutionary force* of utterances, and the characteristics of the content of language use that determine the *appropriateness* of the language [sociolinguistic competence-PH]" (Bachman 1990:90). Jannedy et al. (1994:229) explain that just as people perform physical acts such as taking a walk and mental acts such as imagining kicking a ball, they also perform speech acts such as requesting information, giving orders, giving advice, giving warnings, etc.

Pragmatic competence in the performance of successful speech acts is made up of *illocutionary* and *sociolinguistic* competences. Illocutionary or pragmalinguistic competence involves knowledge of the pragmatic conventions for performing successful language functions such as making requests. It includes the knowledge of how to produce speech acts, knowledge of different functions, and knowledge of various strategies available to signal illocutionary force, e.g., direct or indirect. Sociolinguistic competence requires "knowledge of sociolinguistic conventions for performing language functions appropriately in a given context" (Bachman 1990:90). Thus knowledge of social norms and customs is important to perform successful speech acts. For instance, a student saying to a native English teacher *I want my mark*, would be inappropriate and could be considered rude. However, in the student's native language such a direct request may be considered polite and appropriate.

2.4.1   Illocutionary or pragmalinguistic competence components

"Illocutionary competence is used both in expressing language to be used with certain illocutionary force and in interpreting the illocutionary force of the language" (Bachman 1990:92). Bachman gives the following example:

23.   (a)   It's nearly midnight!

(b)   It's raining cats and dogs.

(c)   Thanks a lot!

Pragmalinguistic competence is necessary to verbalise the language with certain illocutionary force and also to interpret the language (Bachman 1990:92).

24.   (a)   It's nearly midnight! (Please leave! - request)

(b)   (No I won't leave because) it's raining cats and dogs.

(c)   Thanks a lot! (for nothing)

For a successful speech act to be performed the illocutionary force (function the speaker intends to perform) would have to be interpreted correctly. What the speaker above really means is in brackets. For example, the illocutionary force of *thanks a lot* is the opposite in this instance. The above example demonstrates the illocutionary force of the three utterances as request, refusal and sarcastic rebuttal.

To be pragmalinguistically competent a language learner would have to be able to use language that means something different in addition to what is said, and also understand what is meant by using that language. For example, a mother may ask her child to go to the supermarket to buy some food in the following way: *We have no food to cook for dinner*. The mother exhibits illocutionary competence in making the request with the use of a hint. The hearer exhibits illocutionary communicative competence in understanding the indirect speech act.

2.4.2   Sociolinguistic (speech act) competence

While illocutionary competence makes us capable of expressing numerous functions and interpreting illocutionary force, sociolinguistic competence makes us capable of performing

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language functions appropriate to the context (in other words, the social and cultural norms inherent in the target language) (Bachman 1990: 94). It also includes a correct perception of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour (Thomas 1983:99). Below we will discuss the factors that contribute towards sociolinguistic competence.

2.4.2.1 Appropriateness

Appropriateness refers to a linguistic variety or form which is considered suitable in a given social situation (Crystal 1997:24).

For an illocutionary act to succeed the speaker must judge his/her position relative to his/her interlocutor by assessing, for example, social position (e.g. roles, status, gender etc.). For example, in British society, relations between employer and employee are more casual than in Omani society, where bosses enjoy high status and demand respect. Lack of formality would be considered impolite and inappropriate. Similarly, the words *I now pronounce you husband and wife,* would be considered inappropriate if stated as *You are now a husband and a wife.*

What is appropriate in one culture will not necessarily be appropriate in another culture. Therefore it is important that the language learner have pragmatic understanding of the target culture. For example, your grandmother has requested to see you on a certain day when you are scheduled for another engagement. You in turn must request that the time be changed:

25.   Granny, I'm afraid I am not available today. I have an important engagement to go to. Can I possibly take a rain check on this, and meet up with you next week?

The example above would be fine for a native English speaker, but for an Omani the response is inappropriate. It is considered impolite to be so informal with your grandmother. For an Omani the following request would be appropriate (even though there are grammatical errors the pragmatic force of the request is clear):

26.   My grandma, my best friend has a party at the same day that you ask me to come. With my respect to you, I will see you in another day if you don't mind.

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Greater deference and respect are held in Omani culture for the grandfather figure in an extended family. The act of trying to refuse a request made by the grandfather is difficult and needs to be done carefully. The grandfather has the right to say "no" and his invitation must then be accepted.

Christie (2000:219) asserts that pragmatics provides "a theoretical framework that can account for the relationship between the cultural setting, the language user, the linguistic choices the user makes, and the factors that underlie those choices".

Bachman (1990:94-98) identifies four abilities that are needed for sociolinguistic competence and that enable us to perform language suitable to the context.

2.4.2.2   Sensitivity to differences in variety or dialect

Languages have different varieties and dialects depending on regional location or social group. Different contexts require different varieties to be appropriate to the context. Bachman (1990: 95) explains why different varieties of language are required within different social settings or group contexts with this example: a black student indicated that she would not use African American English in class where Standard American English would be appropriate. However, she would be laughed at or scorned if she used Standard American English with her African American friends.

2.4.2.3   Sensitivity to style of discourse

Bachman (1990:96) following Joos (1967) in his classic discussion on style distinguishes five different levels, i.e., frozen, formal, consultative, casual and intimate. In different cultures and across different language boundaries there will be diverse norms relating to these five styles. For example, in an Arab culture, including Oman, superiors in the workplace as well as the elderly are spoken to with deference and in a formal manner; in contrast to some Western countries like the USA and England where informality is the norm, e.g., *How are you today, Steve?* (spoken to your supervisor) or *Hi gramps, I need a favour*. The latter would be totally inappropriate in an Arab culture where the grandfather has high status.

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2.4.2.4 Sensitivity to naturalness

Sensitivity to naturalness is the ability to formulate or interpret linguistically accurate utterances, which are phrased as they would be phrased by a native of that language variety. Interpretability can be affected as illustrated in the following example: compare *I wish you wouldn't do that* with *I would feel better by your not doing that* (Bachman 1990:97). In the first instance, the example is more direct with less regard for face. The second example softens the imposition by using the discourse phrase *I would feel better*. In certain cultures a greater degree of directness would be more appropriate than in other situations.

2.4.2.5 Ability to interpret cultural references and figures of speech

Figurative language and the associated meanings and images that are evoked are deeply rooted in the culture of a given society or speech community (Bachman 1990:98). Consider the following example:

27. (a) Teacher can I miss class tomorrow because I am tired?

(b) You have missed so many classes already, if you miss class tomorrow it will be your Waterloo.

In order for the student to interpret the above correctly s/he would have to understand what "Waterloo" connotes or symbolises to native English speakers, and not just have the idea or understanding of the place. Figurative language such as hyperboles, similes and metaphors are used extensively in English and are a necessity for L2 learners to exhibit sociolinguistic competence.

2.4.3 Pragmatic failure

Pragmatic failure occurs when mistakes in producing and understanding situationally appropriate language behavior occur (LoCastro 2012:83). "Pragmalinguistic failure… occurs when the pragmatic force mapped onto a linguistic token or structure is systematically different from that normally assigned to it by a native speaker" (Thomas 1983:101). Sociolinguistic failure occurs when an individual is unaware of socio-cultural norms and rules in terms of politeness, and as a result uses inappropriate language strategies. Hudson, Detmer and Brown (1995) conducted research in sociolinguistic and pragmalinguistic L1 Japanese language

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ability and indicated the importance of the teacher identifying pragmatic failure when assessing language ability.

2.4.3.1 Pragmalinguistic failure

According to Thomas (1983:101), pragmalinguistic failure originates from two sources, namely 'teaching-induced errors' and 'pragmalinguistic transfer'. "Transfer is the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously… acquired" (Kasper 1992:205). Transferring equivalent syntactic utterances from one language to another can result in inappropriate transfer of speech act strategies that convey a different pragmatic force (Thomas 1983:101). Pragmatic ambiguity thus arises. For example, *can you* is used in English to make requests. However, in French and Russian the phrase *can you* would first be recognised as a question regarding ability (Thomas 1983:101).

Another example of pragmalinguistic failure and inappropriate transfer can occur with regard to choice of speech act strategy. English native speakers use numerous indirect strategies, but some other cultures use more direct strategies that to them are considered to be polite, but to native English speakers would be considered impolite. For example:

28.   (a)   Tell me (please) how to get to the police station. (request Russian)

       (b)   Excuse me, please, could you please tell me how to get to the police station? (request native English)

In the first example above the request in Russian would seem somewhat discourteous to a native English speaker. This would result in possible pragmalinguistic failure due to the directness of the speech act. In the second example above the request would seem to take too long to a Russian (Thomas 1983:102). However, in both cultures these speech acts are polite and appropriate.

Thomas (1983:102-103) lists numerous studies that have been done on pragmalinguistic failure, including Kasper (1992), Candlin (1979), Rutherford (1980), Clyne (1981), Schmidt and Richards (1980).

Not all transfer is negative. There have been several studies demonstrating positive transfer. Kasper (1992:212) gives the following examples of research showing positive transfer:

- Forms of requesting with the use of *can you* (from Danish, German, Japanese, Chinese, Hebrew to English; from Danish to German; from English to Hebrew).
- *Why not* and *do you mind* questions from English to Hebrew (Blum-Kulka 1982).

However, the main concern with transfer has been with negative transfer where sociopragmatic and sociolinguistic knowledge is projected onto the target language that has different pragmatic perceptions and behaviours to the L1 culture.

2.4.3.2 Sociolinguistic failure and sociolinguistic transfer

Kasper (1992:209), referencing Olshtain and Cohen, explains that sociopragmatic transfer is operative when the social performance and linguistic action of language learners in their mother tongue/home culture influences their performance in the target language/culture. In other words, sociolinguistic transfer occurs when an individual applies the rules of one's own culture to another culture. In addition, it occurs when an individual using a foreign language applies the rules of speaking in his/her own language to the target language, i.e., transferring socio-cultural patterns such as strategies regarding power distance, social distance or size of imposition from his/her native language to English. For instance, a Western employer would find it odd for an employee to constantly bow and avoid eye contact, as is done in Japanese society. This may be a purely unconscious process because sociolinguistic appropriateness sometimes seems so natural that it is assumed to be universal, i.e., shared by all language cultures (Ya 2008:82). It should be noted that transfer can take place pragmalinguistically too, when language learners transfer syntactic grammatical structures from one language to another.

Thomas (1983:104) states that sociopragmatic judgements are culture-specific with regard to size of imposition, cost/benefit, social distance and relative rights (power) and obligations. She suggests that correcting pragmalinguistic failure is far easier for teachers than correcting sociolinguistic failure. Thomas (1983:104) states that sociolinguistic decisions are social and although students don't mind being corrected linguistically, they are sensitive about their moral, religious or political beliefs being judged according to another culture's social norms,

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beliefs, etc. She says that sociolinguistic competence involves knowing how to apply these judgements to linguistic utterances.

Thomas categorises cross-culturally different assessments under three headings, i.e., size of imposition, tabus (taboo topics) and cross-culturally different assessments of relative power and social distance.

2.4.3.2.1. Size of imposition

In Thomas (1983:104), Goffman's notion of what is 'free' and what is 'non-free' is used to discuss another area essential to speech act competence. In different countries, what is considered "free" and "non-free" are different. In England it is acceptable to ask someone for a match, and this requires little formality or extra politeness, but to ask for a cigarette is different. In Russia, cigarettes are virtually free and one could ask for one simply by saying *Give me a cigarette.* In England, a Russian requesting a cigarette in this way would underestimate the amount of politeness required and also the size of the imposition. This would result in sociolinguistic failure.

What is 'free' and what is 'non free' is not only assigned to material goods; it can also apply to information (Lakoff 1974:27). For example, inquiring about a stranger's income, politics, marital status, etc., in Britain is inappropriate, but in other countries such information can be sought freely without giving offence.

In England or America it would be considered a huge imposition to walk up to your superior's desk and interrupt when s/he is speaking to someone, unless there was some emergency or urgency. In Oman, it is common for someone to interrupt while you are in a meeting, and it is not considered a great imposition if done deferentially. The superior will merely shift his/her attention to the other person, conduct his/her business and then shift his/her attention back to you.

2.4.3.2.2. Tabus (taboo topics)

In many cultures it is inappropriate to discuss topics such as sex and religion. In some cultures, discussing another married couple's sex life is considered a perfectly acceptable topic if done in a certain way and with respect. In others it is not. For example, in Anglo Saxon culture we

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have the word "privacy"; there is no such word in Polish. Wierzbicka (1985:19) explains that physical and non-physical privacy creates a psychological distance between people. A Polish person may find it perfectly acceptable to ask personal questions that, to a native speaker of English, would feel awkward and inappropriate, e.g., questions relating to salary, politics or religious beliefs.

In Oman it is *haram* (unclean or taboo) for a male to request information from another male about female members of his family. Even such innocent questions like *Does your mother work* will cause a person to be extremely uncomfortable as it is not culturally appropriate or acceptable behaviour and is considered a private matter.

2.4.3.2.3. Sociopragmatic value judgments

In English and other languages, for speech acts to be successful, values such as honesty and sincerity are important. This may not be true in other cultures. An example in Oman is when one of my students is absent and her friend lies for her. I become morally indignant and upset because my student looks me in the eye and lies when I know they are lying. From the student's cultural perspective it is acceptable to lie to protect your friend from getting into trouble, and if a person lies and I don't find out it prevents me from getting upset and that is good too. However, for other Omani people lying is not acceptable under any conditions, so even within the same culture there are different norms; for example, across different age groups.

Additionally, different cultures emphasise different judgements on pragmatic principles (Thomas 1983:108) – in Oman, to some, protecting your friend is more important than being honest. This principle stems from the collectivist view of being loyal to the group, in contrast to individualism where the individual is more important than the group. Oman culture is collectivist as opposed to, for example, England and America which are individualistic. The main point of difference between the two views is to do with group importance over individual importance. In collectivist societies the interest of the group overrides the interest of the individual. In an individualistic society the view is opposite.

Language teachers will find that in addition to the difficulty they have in teaching grammar, a more challenging problem is the one associated with sociolinguistic competence (Thomas

1983:109). Thomas suggests that teachers investigate the causes of sociolinguistic incompetence and take action to rectify the problem. In Thomas (1983:110) it is claimed by Rintell that a student exposed to the target culture will begin to acquire pragmatic competence. She adds that the process will take five to seven years, and even then the L2 learner will not acquire full sociopragmatic competence. She goes on to say that the word "begins" should be observed. I would add that the majority of students do not have the luxury of immersing themselves in the target culture by living abroad in the target culture. It is necessary to teach social rules as part of the education of the student in the processes of pragmatic decision making, and sensitising students to expect cross-cultural differences in the linguistic realisation of politeness, truthfulness, etc. (Thomas 1983:110).

Ellis (1992:21) did research where two boys (aged 10 and 11 years) were offered instruction over a period of two years in requestive speech acts. It showed that the development of indirect request strategies developed slowly, but that direct speech acts dominated, and specifically imperatives. At the end of the two-year period it was determined that "it may be necessary to create such a need artificially to draw learners' conscious attention to the way in which language is used to encode social meanings". This research reinforces what Thomas (1983) said; namely that it is not enough for students to immerse themselves in the target culture, but focused classroom teaching is necessary to develop social pragmatic competence.

2.5   A review of selected previous empirical studies of requesting in L2

In the field of linguistics, the main purpose of studying requestive speech acts has been to reveal the possible universality of pragmatic features across languages and cultures, and also the possible variance of pragmatic features between different languages and different cultures (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984:209-210). The speech act of requesting has attracted a great deal of attention and interest and has resulted in numerous cross-cultural and intercultural studies. Cross-cultural studies refer to cultural studies between different cultural groups in different countries. Intercultural studies refer to studies between different cultural groups in the same country.

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2.5.1   House and Kasper (1981)

House and Kasper (1981:157-185) investigate requests between English native speakers and German native speakers. Each group produced request strategies in their own languages that were then compared for strategy type. They use the CCSARP framework and distinguish between nine levels of directness, ranging from most direct to least direct. This study hypothesizes that the two communities will use different strategies based on the social norms of the culture. The study shows that Germans use more direct strategies than English speakers who are more indirect in their language usage; however, Germans use more internal modifiers such as "please" or "possibly" or "perhaps" to soften imposition or the illocutionary force of their utterances. Germans are therefore perceived as being less polite than English speakers.

2.5.2   Blum-Kulka (1986)

This paper investigates pragmatic failure with regard to length of utterance or verbosity. The data used was the CCSARP request situation data of Hebrew L2 and English L1 speakers. It was found that there is a difference between the length of utterance between English L1 native and Hebrew L2 non-native speakers. Each group produced requests in their L1. The Hebrew speakers use more words in making requests than do English speakers. Additionally, the research concluded that lower level learners tend to avoid verbosity because their knowledge of the language is limited. However, higher level or advanced learners, concerned with the effectiveness of their speech acts, tend to be more verbose than their native speaker counterparts (Blum-Kulka 1986:177).

Blum-Kulka (1986:168) gives the following example of a request using too many words from the perspective of the hearer, resulting in pragmatic failure:

> A teacher working with recorded material left a note for the video technician asking him to prepare a copy of a tape for her. The note contained the following: *If it is not too much bother, could you please make a video cassette of this lesson.* The technician did what he was supposed to do and added a note of his own: *When have I ever refused to prepare a cassette for you? I am really surprised at you.*

The requester was a speaker of Norwegian and the technician a native Hebrew speaker. The technician felt that it was his job to make a cassette, and he interpreted the *If it's not too much*

bother as a complaint or a criticism when in fact it was a polite request (Blum-Kulka 1986:168). As Wierzbicka (1985:145) has previously stated, "Different cultures produce different speech acts".

The results of the above study indicated that English speakers tend to become irritated with Hebrew speakers' verbosity in L2 English.

2.5.3   Wierzbicka (1985)

In this study, request strategies between L1 Polish and L1 English speakers are investigated. Wierzbicka (1985:145) hypothesises that studies in speech acts are generally ethnocentric. She quotes scholars such as Clark (1980:111) who asserts that when people make requests they generally avoid imperatives; preferring indirect speech acts like questions or assertions. For example:

29.   (a)   Tell me the time (imperative).

(b)   Can you tell me the time? (question - request).

(c)   I'm trying to find out what time it is (assertion - request).

Wierzbicka (1985:145) asserts that the above statement by Clark and is not true, and that it is not all people who behave in this way (for example, Polish people are more direct); it is L1 English speakers who behave in this way. The assumption is that different cultural norms will generate different requestive strategies that are considered within that specific culture to be polite even if not considered so by English speakers. For instance, in English the interrogative is used regularly to make requests, whereas in Polish they would rarely use the interrogative for requests as it is associated with hostility and alienation (Wierzbicka 1985:156). In English, the use of interrogatives for requests is associated with respect for autonomy of the individual in contrast to the Polish cultural perspective. Polish speakers use different strategies for indirectness associated with politeness (see Wierzbicka (1985:155)). For example, *Would you like to* or *Do you want to* are awkward expressions for requests in Polish, in contrast to English where they are used to give the hearer an option to accept or decline.

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2.5.4   Fukushima (1996)

Fukushima's research examines the differences between English production of requests by British subjects and English production of requests by Japanese subjects. The participants were 16 British undergraduate students and 15 Japanese undergraduate students. Participants were given situations where they had to respond in the form of a request. They made their responses in their native languages. The results of the study revealed the following:

1. Situations with higher imposition require more politeness strategies for both Japanese and English speakers.
2. Both groups are influenced by degree of imposition, relative power and social distance, but the strategies used are different.
3. The strategy type most frequently used by both groups was conventional indirect requests. The British subjects' percentage of use was higher than the Japanese subjects' percentage of use (Fukushima 1996:677).
4. More direct requests were employed by the Japanese, especially in situations where the degree of imposition was low. More than half the Japanese used direct strategies, compared with only 20% of British subjects.

In Japanese culture, direct forms are permitted among group members of equal status as they strengthen the bond of solidarity between members. However, in British society negative politeness is preferred because distance is valued in such relationships (Fukushima 1996:677). However, Fukushima hypothesises that negative politeness among Japanese is only used among out-group members and bald-on-record strategies among in-group members because it builds solidarity (Fukushima 1996:678). There is a direct correlation here again between collectivist and individualistic cultural values and norms of behaviour.

2.5.5 Empirical research involving L2 Arabic speakers of English and L1 English speakers

As an English teacher of Arabic students it is important to understand how and why these students form utterances in a certain way. An understanding of these pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic differences will aid L1 English teachers of Arabic L2 English students.

2.5.5.1 Jalilifar (2009)

This study of speech act requests was carried out with 96 Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students and 10 Australian native speakers. A DCT was used to elicit written responses to real life scenarios. The scenarios were based on two social factors, i.e., social power and social distance. The findings revealed the following:

1. There is pragmatic development by EFL learners from use of direct to use of conventionally indirect strategies.
2. High proficiency learners tend to overuse indirect requests because once they have mastered them they fear they will return to their old inappropriate direct strategies; in comparison to native speakers who use both more appropriately. The overuse by L2 English speakers is due to lack of sociopragmatic competence – the L2 learners learn the strategies, but do not always use them appropriately, as opposed to the low proficiency L2 English students who only know direct strategies in English and use them inappropriately.
3. Low proficiency students tend to overuse direct strategies.
4. Iranian learners show social awareness and sensitivity to social power but not social distance (see section 2.3.4 for a discussion on the social variables of power and distance).

Jalilifar attributes lack of communicative ability to insufficient sociopragmatic knowledge. Again we must consider the question of what is appropriate social behaviour, and from whose socio-cultural perspective is it correct?

2.5.5.2 El-Shazly (1993)

In this study request strategies are examined between American English, Egyptian Arabic and Egyptian English as a Second Language (ESOL) learners. The results show differences between these groups:

1. Arabic speakers have a high tendency to use conventional indirect strategies in the form of interrogatives (see section 2.2.4 – taxonomies of speech acts).
2. There is no difference between the different groups with regard to upgraders (see section 3.6 for an exposition of upgraders).

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3. Arabic speakers use more downgraders than the other groups and it is common for them to use more than one downgrader in a single utterance (see section 3.6 for an exposition of downgraders).

4. Arabic speakers also have a tendency to use religious expressions as downgraders.

2.5.5.3   Umar (2004)

This is a sociolinguistic study designed to investigate request strategies of advanced Arab students of English. The aim of the study was to investigate differences (if any) in request strategies by the Arab learners and English speakers, as well as to determine whether pragmatic transfer is exhibited in choice of strategy (Umar 2004:57). The subjects consisted of 20 Arab students majoring in English and linguistics from Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Bahrain; as well as 20 native English speakers pursuing graduate courses in humanities in Britain. The data elicited for this study was from a DCT in the form of a questionnaire with real life situations which required written responses in the form of requests. The data analysis revealed the following (Umar 2004:78-80):

1. Both groups adopt similar strategies when dealing with equals or people of higher position. They rely heavily on indirect strategies.

2. Requests addressed to people in lower positions elicit more direct strategies from the Arab group than the British group. The researcher attributes this to socio-cultural reasons. This indicates evidence of transfer, i.e., Arab culture permits a more direct level of interaction between close people, e.g., brother, sons, daughters and even close friends (Umar 2004: 79).

3. Native English speakers use more syntactic and semantic modifiers (see section 3.6) than the Arab speakers when making requests and therefore come across as more polite and tactful. This is attributed by the researcher to linguistic superiority (higher levels of proficiency) amongst the native speakers.

4. Arab speakers, even at advanced levels, may fall back on their cultural background when formulating requests.

Arab L2 English learners should always be made aware of pragmatic differences in their language and the target language, and that a request strategy considered appropriate for a given

situation in Arabic culture may not be appropriate in English culture in the same situation (Umar 2004:42,82).

2.5.5.4   Imen (2012)

This study investigates the requestive behavior of Tunisian EFL students. The participants consisted of 67 female Masters students. The students were asked to respond in writing to six different situations requiring a request. The data analysis was conducted using the CCSARP analytical framework of Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) and focused on directness levels. The data analysis showed the following:

1. Social distance, social power and ranking of imposition, determine what request strategies are used (direct and conventionally indirect).

2. Requests directed at people in lower social positions are generally direct, with 40.2% producing direct strategies. The next preference is for conventionally indirect query preparatory, with 31.3% of participants producing this strategy (Imen 2012:102).

3. Request strategies directed at acquaintances and friends are generally conventionally indirect when imposition is high (for example, when requesting to borrow a friend's lecture notes). Here once again the preference was for query preparatory, with 74.6% of participants selecting this option (Imen 2012:106).

4. Requestive strategies directed at a person in a higher position (for example, an employee making a request of a manager to leave early) result in the use of indirect strategies. Here the preference once again was for query preparatory, with 80.5% producing this strategy.

Negative politeness or indirect strategies are used to protect the requester and the requestees' faces during a conversation (Imen 2012:87). This study shows that request utterances are influenced by both linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and that students need to be aware of socio-pragmatic differences between their culture and the target culture.

2.5.6 Empirical research involving L2 Arabic speakers of English only

The research in these studies is valuable to teachers of English because it shows the proficiency of the learners with regard to the direct and indirect strategies available to them for making requests.

2.5.6.1 Kilickaya (2010)

In this study, pragmatic knowledge of Turkish EFL students was tested with regard to their ability to use different request strategies. The participants were 40 undergraduate Turkish EFL students. The method was a DCT that elicited verbal responses in the form of requests. The results indicated that the Turkish learners did not know enough strategies to be able to produce appropriate politeness strategies in the target language. The statistical data showed that the EFL learners use mainly conventional direct strategies, with only one exception where an indirect strategy was used. The researcher attributes the pragmatic failure of the students to inadequate resources/student text books that do not teach sufficient forms in situational or cultural contexts. An explanation as to why learners diverge from pragmatic norms is given by Ishihara and Cohen (2010:77) who claim that misleading instruction given by teachers or text books, or lack of background cultural knowledge, or the choice to not learn pragmatic rules (for example, unmotivated, disinterested and disengaged students) are reasons for pragmatic failure.

2.5.6.2 Al-Marrani and Sazalie (2010)

Al-Marrani conducted a socio-pragmatic study of request strategies to determine politeness of Yemeni English language learners. The participants consisted of 98 male and 98 female students. The analytical framework used was CCSARP request data outlined in Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). The data analysis revealed the following:

1. Yemeni students used a variety of strategies, i.e., direct, conventional indirect and hints, including the use of mitigating devices to soften the illocutionary force.
2. Conventionally indirect strategies are used when social distance, power distance and size of imposition are high.
3. When speakers are equal or when the speaker has a higher status than the hearer, more direct strategies are used.

As with studies done by Umar (2004) and Imen (2012), this study confirmed that background socio-cultural factors play a major role in communication. The question again arises as to whether speakers should conform to native speaker norms of English. According to intercultural communication theory, to be successful in communication and to achieve communicative goals we should conform to native speaker norms (Ting-Toomey 1999:261-269). However, if the target norms conflict with a speaker's deep rooted moral, political or religious beliefs then the speaker must adapt through being mindful and knowledgeable of the target culture (Thomas 1983:104).

2.6   Conclusion

In conclusion, an in-depth understanding of all aspects of the relevant theory, as well as previous research data is necessary for the analysis of the speech act of requesting, i.e., knowledge of speech act theory, politeness theory, pragmatic competence theory, intercultural communicative competence theory, and previous research.

CHAPTER 3

Research design and theoretical framework

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 provides a brief description of the context of the research and an account of the research design and theoretical framework used for this study. As pointed out in chapter 1, the aim of the research is to determine the differences in requestive behaviour and perceived patterns of politeness and indirectness between Omani L2 English students and L1 English speakers. Concerning the research design, information will be given about the participants and the instruments used and procedures followed to elicit the data. Concerning the theoretical framework, I will give an exposition of the CCSARP as found in Blum-Kulka et al. (1989:273-294).

3.2 Description of context

Arabic is the official language of Oman, although there are several different dialects. University of Nizwa students study Arabic at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The dominant indigenous language is Arabic and it is spoken by all Omanis. Arabic students from Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Jordan and Tunisia study at the University of Nizwa, but the majority of students are Omani. Even though the students from different countries speak different dialects of Arabic, they are still able to understand one another. All Omanis are Muslims and the language of their holy writing in the Koran is Arabic. Thus the continual study of Arabic, as well as the study of English, is important to the students at the university. An Omani colleague from the Ministry of Education explained that different regions in Oman have different dialects of Arabic, but that in the region of Dakhiliyah, the region of the University of Nizwa, all Omanis speak the same dialect. When Omanis communicate in Arabic with people from other regions, they simplify the Arabic. The reason for this is that many Arabic phrases particular to specific dialects have different conversational implicatures across Arabic dialects. The same process of communication would apply across borders to other Arabic-speaking countries.

The research was carried out at the University of Nizwa in Oman. The university is a private university, but students do receive funding from the government for certain courses. The majority of students come from rural villages and have had limited access to English. English

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is a mandatory subject at school, but is not evaluated for proficiency, and teachers at public schools are not native speakers, as being Muslim is a requirement to teach in a government public school in Oman. In recent times the policy at schools has changed, and some students are now being evaluated for proficiency. Most of the students arrive at Nizwa University with a low level of English proficiency (although the level of proficiency is getting higher each year, because the Ministry of Education is raising the standards as well as implementing English language learning objectives and assessment into the school curriculums) but they do have some basic knowledge of the language. Seventy to eighty percent of the students in the Foundation programme begin with an elementary course (level 1 – beginner – elementary) in English lasting one semester (14-16 weeks) and then advance to a pre-intermediate course upon successful completion of the elementary course. However, there are some students who begin with a pre-intermediate course and then advance to an intermediate course lasting one semester, and there is a small percentage of students who begin with an intermediate course and advance to a more advanced course in the second semester. The levels of proficiency mentioned above are named Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 and Level 4.

In order for students to begin their undergraduate studies they must first complete one year in the Foundation programme. The Foundation programme is designed to develop the students' English language proficiency to a level where they can study at undergraduate level in English. Upon completion of the Foundation year the students begin their undergraduate studies. Students do continue to develop their English proficiency through attendance at lectures and through their studies using English text books; however, their social interaction with native English speakers is limited. English 1 and English 2 are two post-Foundation English courses offered, but the focus of these two courses is primarily on grammatical and pragmalinguistic competencies, e.g., writing, structure of language, vocabulary and grammar, and not sociolinguistic competencies (implicatures) which are needed to get good TOEFL scores. Programmes at Nizwa University include nursing, engineering, BA Education/ English, translation studies and computer technology studies. In order to graduate, students need to obtain a TOEFL score of 500. TOEFL tests are done on a regular basis throughout each academic year of study. This encourages students to continue to develop their English language proficiency.

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3.3   Teaching and learning practices

Students receive their initial English instruction in the Foundation programme. The text books used to teach are specifically designed for the American or British teaching context. The Omani cultural context is not taken into consideration by teachers. The teaching focuses on developing reading, writing, listening, speaking and grammar skills, but excludes cultural and sociopragmatic conventions needed for effective communication in the target language. As of October 2013, a new in-house text book has been introduced for Level 1. The Omani context has been taken into consideration and the topics at elementary level are ones that students are familiar with. However, sociopragmatic behaviour and norms of the target language have not been incorporated.

The curriculum incorporates the standards of the Omani Ministry of Education accreditation criteria that are designed to develop the student's communicative ability and skills in real life contexts; however, the course material content does not support the objectives set out by the accreditation standards. For example, due to the lack of good teaching materials, most teachers will focus on linguistic rules when teaching grammar, and not on how these rules are used in a communicative context. As stated above, new materials have now been designed for Level 1 which addresses many of these issues, but not those related to sociolinguistic competence. What students need to acquire, in addition to grammatical competence, is cultural knowledge of the target language. Learning a language requires that students learn how to use the language in specific social encounters and that the strategies for doing this differ from culture to culture. Communicative competence is required, and while textbooks address pragmalinguistic areas of language proficiency to some extent, they do not address sociolinguistic competency in enough depth to develop pragmatic competence. In other words, different social situational contexts are not elaborated on or compared explicitly. For students to understand how to appropriately communicate from a sociolinguistic perspective they need to understand the differences between their own and the target culture in performing functions in different social contexts. There is awareness of this problem and steps are being taken to improve the situation; for example, textbooks are being written which will contextualise learning to a certain extent, but much work still lies ahead to create materials that will enable students to develop comprehensive pragmatic competence. The sociolinguistic aspect of language acquisition is still being neglected.

3.4   Participants

The participants were undergraduate Omani students at the University of Nizwa who have finished their Foundation studies, native Omani L2 English teachers and native L1 English teachers. All participants completed a Stellenbosch University informed consent form mentioned in section 3.5.5 (see Appendix E). Additionally, the study was given ethical approval by the Departmental Ethics Screening Committee (DESC).

The undergraduate students at the University of Nizwa were recruited in two ways. Firstly, I approached the director of the writing centre who hires interns during summer. The demand on the writing centre staff during summer requires the assistance of interns. The interns are generally selected from the best University of Nizwa undergraduate English students. The director agreed to allow me to undertake research in the form of some questionnaires with ten L1 Omani interns. Secondly, I approached a final-year student who works in the Foundation student help centre. He has been at the university for several years and I asked him to help me find the most proficient Omani L2 English students that he knew for a research questionnaire. A total of 20 Omani L2 English University of Nizwa undergraduate students were used: ten completed two questionnaires each and ten completed one questionnaire. Additionally, three Omani L2 English teachers participated, giving a total of 23 Omanis.

The L1 English teachers were all teachers from the Foundation Institute. Each Foundation teacher is fluent in English and has a teaching qualification. Several of the teachers have Masters and Doctoral degrees. In all instances the L1 English teachers have been teaching for several years. A total of 33 L1 English teachers participated; ten for each of the first three questionnaires and three for the final questionnaire. The L1 English teachers were from South Africa, USA, Canada, New Zealand and England.

The Omani L2 English teachers were all experienced teachers with teaching experience varying from 5 to 20 years. The Omani L2 English teachers had previously taught at schools and colleges in Oman. Each of the Omani English teachers was assigned to teach beginner/elementary English classes in the Foundation Institute Programme. Additionally, they had had much exposure to native English speaking culture through their association with L1 English teachers, but at the same time maintained their traditional cultural values which were clearly evident in their communication. It should be noted that the three Omani English

teachers had never lived in a foreign country and so had never experienced immersion in the target language culture.

3.5   Research design, instruments and procedure

The research design consisted of an initial two questionnaires which required that the participants rate given responses based on their perceptions of politeness and indirectness; a third DCT that required participants to respond in writing in the form of a request to five real life scenarios; and a fourth questionnaire that required participants to judge the written responses of the DCT according to five criteria . Additionally, the L2 Omani teachers were interviewed and asked questions relating to their responses from a sociopragmatic/cultural perspective. The Omani teachers' responses were then used to assist with the analysis of the written response data. The four instruments above thus used both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The five real life scenarios in the DCT were as follows:

Situation 1:

Your grandfather is having a special family gathering. He has sent a message that he wants you to be there because he wants to talk to you about something important. You got the message today. On the same day as your grandfather's party is your best friend's birthday party. You have helped her prepare for a long time and s/he expects you to be there too. You want to request/ask your grandfather if you can arrange to see him on a different day. What will you say?

Situation 2:

You missed a lecture this morning. It was an important lecture and you want someone to lend you their notes. You are new in the class so you don't know anybody really well, but you must ask someone if you can borrow their notes to copy. What will you say?

Situation 3:

You want your younger brother to go to the supermarket/cold store for you to buy some vegetables. What will you say to him?

Situation 4:

You have an assignment to hand in on a specific date. Your university instructor has already given you extra time to complete the assignment. All the other class members have already handed in their assignments. Your mother has been ill and you think that you should get more time for your assignment. Your professor has already told you that he will not give you more time. You want to ask your professor for more time. What will you say?

Situation 5:

You have a nice meal in a restaurant. Now you want the waiter to bring you the bill. What will you say to him?

3.5.1   Perceptions of politeness

Blum-Kulka (1987:278-281) lists nine categories of requests. These same categories were used to design a questionnaire to tap into the perceptions of politeness/impoliteness of ten Omani L2 English students and ten native English-speaking teachers. The questionnaire consisted of the five scenarios/situations described above – three medium-to-high face threats (situations 1, 2 and 4) and two low face threats (situations 3 and 5). Each scenario was accompanied by nine responses, each response corresponding to one of the nine categories of the CCSARP coding manual for analysing requests (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989:278-280). These nine responses for each scenario were placed in random order and the participants were asked to rate the responses from 1 to 9 in order of most polite to least polite. Politeness markers such as "please" and hedges, internal and external modification devices were not used in the responses to ensure that judgments related only to strategy type (Blum-Kulka 1987:135). Each scenario with the accompanying nine responses was presented on a separate sheet.

3.5.2   Perceptions of directness

The second set of questionnaires consisted of the same five scenarios. The only difference was that participants were asked to rate the responses on a scale of 1 to 9 in order of the most direct to the most indirect (see Appendix B). The participants for this questionnaire were ten Omani L2 English students and ten L1 English teachers. The L1 English teachers were different from the participants in the perceptions of politeness questionnaire, but the same ten Omani L2 students were used again. Once again, the request strategies are arranged sequentially from the least polite to the most polite according to the CCSARP coding manual.

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The most polite strategies will often correspond with the strategy that is the most indirect and the least polite strategy with the strategy that is the most direct (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989:278 - 281). However, perceptions of politeness and indirectness/directness will vary from culture to culture (see section 2.3).

3.5.3   Speech act elicitation

The instrument in this questionnaire was a DCT which used the same five scenarios that were used in the first set of questionnaires. For the DCT, written responses were elicited. The responses were in the form of written requests. The participants were ten Omani L2 English students and ten L1 English teachers. The participants for the DCT were not the same as those who participated in the first two questionnaires above. The participants were asked to respond as they would in actual situations. The situations are different according to certain sociable variables, e.g., social distance, relative social dominance and degree of imposition. The five scenarios were presented on a single sheet of paper with space for responses (see Appendix C). These written requests were later analysed using the nine categories listed in the CCSARP theoretical framework for analysing linguistic forms in requests (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989:275-289).

3.5.4   Teacher judgements

The final questionnaire was completed by three L2 Omani English teachers and three L1 English teachers. The six teachers had not participated in the previous three questionnaires. The six teachers rated each written response. For each response provided by the participants (L1 English teacher and Omani L2 English students), they had to answer "yes" or "no" to five questions as follows:

1. Is the student/teacher polite?
2. Is the student/teacher formal?
3. Is the request appropriate for the situation?
4. Is the request grammatically correct?
5. Is what the student is requesting clearly understood?

The responses were written; ten on each page (ten pages – see Appendix D). The written responses comprise 100 responses (5 scenarios x 10 L1 English teachers = 50; 5 scenarios x

10 Omani L2 English student responses = 50). The participants who rated the responses did not know who made which response. The participants had to place a circle around "y" or "n" for each question under each response. For this questionnaire, I followed up with an informal interview with the Omani English teachers to gain insight into why differences in rating responses by native and non-native teachers occurred, with special interest in socio-cultural differences. For English speakers it is easy to understand the responses from the L1 English teachers, but the Omani L2 English students' responses are not always clear. L1 English teachers need to understand the sociolinguistic reasons behind student responses. This understanding of Omani culture will enable teachers to develop teaching methodology that will address the teaching of request strategies and explain explicitly those differences to their students, thus developing cross-cultural understanding.

3.5.5   Ethical clearance

Each participant completed a Stellenbosch University 'consent to participate in research' form. The form included information on the following;: 1) purpose of the study; 2) procedures; 3) potential risks and discomforts; 4) potential benefits to subjects and/or to society; 5) payment and participation; 6) confidentiality; 7) participation and withdrawal; 8) identification and investigators; 9) rights of research subjects; 10) instruction to participants not to discuss the questions with anyone because questionnaires would not be completed at the same time; and 11) name, date and signature of participants. Ethical clearance was granted by a departmental ethics screening committee at Stellenbosch University, as well as the management of the University of Nizwa Foundation Program. The University of Nizwa encourages research at the university.

3.6   Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project Framework (CCSARP)

The framework used to analyse the data in this study was the Cross Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) developed by Blum-Kulka etc al. (1989). In Blum-Kulka et al. (1984:197) the goals of the project are given as follows:

> 1. To establish native speakers' patterns of realisation with respect to two speech acts – requests and apologies – relative to different social constraints, in each of the languages studied (situational variability).

2. To establish the similarities and differences in the realisation patterns of requests and apologies cross-linguistically, relative to the same social constraints across the languages studied (cross-cultural variability).

3. To establish differences between native and non-native realisation patterns of requests and apologies relative to the same social constraints (individual, native versus non-native variability).

One of the central issues relating to speech acts is the question of universality. To what degree is it possible to identity basic pragmatic features in given speech acts expected to be manifested in any natural language (Blum-Kulka et al. 1984:209)? To what extent is there similarity and to what extent is there difference, or to what extent is there universality and to what extent is there variance, and what influence does culture have on the production of speech acts such as, in this instance, requests?

In what follows, the information and examples are from the CCSARP Coding Manual (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989:273-289) unless otherwise stated. Examples from my data are followed by "Nizwa University Data" (N.U.D) in brackets. The latter examples were not corrected for grammar, punctuation or spelling, and are not specified as native or non-native speaker.

In considering the CCSARP framework, it should be noted that the main categories are considered to be universals, but the sub-categories may "vary in availability and relevance cross-linguistically and cross-culturally" (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989:274-275). Therefore, not all the sub-categories will be analysed if within the culture being studied no data matching that sub-category is available. The CCSARP framework was designed to enable researchers to focus on both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic language behaviour within one framework. Analysis of CCSARP data has determined that the main categories within the coding categories are potential candidates for universality, but the sub-categories cross-linguistically reveal rich cross-cultural variability in realisation patterns determined by social constraints (Blum-Kulka et al. 1984:210). The CCSARP data for requests is outlined below.

3.6.1   Segmentation

Identification of the head act. A head act is the minimal unit which can realise a request; it is the core of the request sequence. For example, *John, get me a beer please, I'm terribly*

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thirsty. In this example there are two non-essential parts. The two parts that are non-essential in this example are *John* (alerter) and *I'm terribly thirsty* (supportive move).

An alerter is an opening element which comes before the request, such as an attention-getter or term of address. For instance, *John, clean up the kitchen*, or *Excuse me, could you give me a lift to town?*

A supportive move is external to the request. The use of a supportive move is called external modification of the head act. It can modify the force of the speech act by either aggravating or mitigating its impact on the hearer. For example, *Leave me alone* or *I'll hit you!* or *Could you please stop jumping on the bed? I'm studying for an exam*. Supportive moves can come before or after the head act.

Additionally, in identifying the head act, requests can have more than one head act; more than one minimal unit to realise the requestive goal, as in *Clean up the kitchen* or *Get rid of the mess*. Both of these sentences are making the same request.

There are nine coding categories within the CCSARP framework. The coding categories will be discussed below.

3.6.2   Alerters

An alerter is the part of the utterance of which the function is to draw the hearer's attention to the speech act which is to follow. The main alerters as outlined in the CCSARP framework are as follows (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989:277):

a. Title role. *Professor, Waiter, Mr, Mrs*

b. First Name. *Judith, Darwin*

c. Surname. *Khalid* (N.U.D.), *Johnson*

d. Nickname. *Judy*

e. Endearment term. *Honey, Dear.*

f. Offensive term. *Stupid cow.*

g. Pronoun. *You*

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h. Attention-getter. *Hey, excuse me, listen, uhh* (N.U.D.).

i. Combination of the above. *Excuse me, John*!

3.6.3   Request perspective

The realisation of a request can be from the hearer's, speaker's, or both viewpoints. The explicit mentioning of an agent can also be avoided. The request perspective is found in the head act.

a. Hearer dominance. *Could you tidy up the kitchen soon?*

b. Speaker Dominance. *Do you think I could borrow your notes from yesterday?*

c. Speaker and hearer dominance. *Could we begin now?*

d. Impersonal (Using *people*, *they, one* and cross-linguistic equivalents as neutral agents). For example, *Can one ask for a little quiet?*

3.6.4   Request strategies

The request strategy is the choice of the level of directness that the speaker uses to convey the request. "By directness is meant the degree to which the speaker's illocutionary intent is apparent from the locution" (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989:278). The head act can only be uttered using one of the strategies. Directness is related to politeness, but what is considered most indirect is not necessarily considered most polite (see section 2.2.4). The request strategies below are in order of decreasing degree of directness.

a. Mood derivable. "The grammatical mood of the verb in the utterance marks its illocutionary force as a request" (Blum-Kulka 1984:202). For example, *Leave me alone*; *Clean up the kitchen*; *Move your car*; *No smoking in the lavatories please*; *The menu please*.

b. Explicit performatives. The illocutionary intent is explicitly named by the addressor by using the relevant illocutionary verb to make the request. For example, *I am <u>asking you</u> to move your car*.

c. Hedged performatives. Utterances which contain an illocutionary verb with explicit requestive intent are modified with verbs that express intention. For example, *I <u>must/have to</u> ask you to clean the kitchen right now*; *I would <u>like to/wanted to</u> ask you to present your*

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paper a week earlier. Note that the only difference between the explicit performative and the hedged performative is that the latter uses verbs to modify the performative; they both use performative verbs.

d. Locution derivable. The illocutionary intent is directly deduced from the semantic meaning of the locution. For example, *Madam, you <u>will have to/should/ought to</u> move your car*.

e. Want statement. The utterance expresses the speaker's intention, desire or feeling that the event denoted in the proposition (locution) come about. For example, *I <u>would like to/want to</u> borrow your notes for a little while*; *<u>I really wish</u> you would stop bothering me* (Blum-Kulka et al. 1984:202).

f. Suggestory formulae. The illocutionary intent of the locution is phrased as a suggestion. For example, *How about cleaning up the kitchen?*; *Why don't you get lost?*

g. Preparatory or query preparatory. The locution contains words which serve as a preparatory condition for the request, to check for ability, willingness or possibility of the speaker to agree to the request. For example, *Can I borrow your notes?*; *Could you possibly get your assignment done this week?*; I *was wondering if you could give me a lift?*; Would *you mind moving your car, please?*

Note that the query preparatory is usually phrased as a question, but also understood as a request.

h. Strong hint. Requires more inferential activity on the part of the hearer. The illocutionary force is not always clear immediately, but the elements are relevant. For example, *Will you be going home now*? (intention: getting a lift home); *I wasn't at the lecture yesterday* (intention: to borrow hearer's lecture notes); *You've left this kitchen in a right mess* (intention: to get the hearer to clean the kitchen).

i. Mild hint. There are no elements relevant to the intended illocution or proposition, e.g., *I didn't expect the meeting to end this late* (intention: getting a lift home); *You've been busy here, haven't you?* (intention: getting hearer to clean the kitchen).

3.6.5   Syntactic downgraders (internal modifiers)

Downgraders are used to modify the head act internally, and are thus part of the head act. Downgraders are used to mitigate or lessen the degree of imposition of the request. Syntactic devices are part of the structural properties of a given language; i.e., languages have different

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devices that are used for the same purpose. Those used in the CCSARP framework are derived from the eight languages studied in the project, i.e., Australian, American, British, Canadian, Danish, German, Hebrew and Russian. Omani Arabic, for example, may use different syntactic downgrading devices, but this has yet to be determined and will be discussed in the data-analysis section of this thesis. A general rule for identifying syntactic downgraders is to determine what syntactic devices are optional and whether they have a mitigating function in the context (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989:281). Syntactic downgraders enable surface analysis of structural variations that form independently of strategy type (Blum-Kulka et al. 1984: 203). In Blum-Kulka et al. (1989: 281-283) the following examples are given:

a. Interrogative. The interrogative is an option with a clear mitigating function, and the form is unmarked as in the query preparatory. For example, *Can I borrow your notes?* or *Could you give me a lift home?* Contrast these with the location derivable examples which are marked. For instance, *I must borrow your notes*, or *I have to borrow your notes*.

b. Negation of a preparatory condition. The fact that the addressee can comply with the request or that s/he is willing to carry out the request are two of the most common conditions of request compliance. For example, *Can't you give me a lift home, please?*; *I don't suppose you'd give me a lift home?*; *You couldn't give me a lift home, could you?*; *Shouldn't you perhaps tidy the kitchen?*

c. Subjunctive. Only optional subjunctive forms are coded as downgraders. For example, *Might be better <u>if you were to leave now</u>* (Blum-Kulka 1984:203).

d. Conditional. The conditional, as with the subjunctive, must be optional to be coded as a downgrader. For example, *I would suggest you leave now.*

e. Aspect. For example, *I'm wondering if I could get a lift home with you?*

f. Tense. Past tense forms are coded if they refer to present time. Past tense forms must also be able to be replaced by present tense forms without changing the semantic meaning. For example, *I <u>wanted</u> to ask for a postponement* (Blum-Kulka et al. 1984:203); *I <u>want</u> to ask for a postponement*.

g. Conditional clause (embedded 'if' clause). For example, *I was wondering if you could present your paper earlier than planned* or *It would fit in much better if you could give your paper a week earlier.*

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h. Combination of the above. For example, *I was wondering if I couldn't get a lift home with you?*, which contains aspect and a conditional clause.

3.6.6   Lexical and phrasal downgraders (internal modifiers)

Lexical and phrasal syntactic downgraders serve as optional additions and are used to mitigate impositive force or degree of imposition by modifying the head act internally.

a. Politeness marker. Added to a request in an effort to secure cooperative behaviour. For example, *Clean up the kitchen, please*. Expressions where the speaker attempts to involve the hearer directly are also politeness markers and are known as consultative devices (Blum-Kulka 1984:204). For example, *Do you think you could present your paper this week?* or *Could you tidy up a bit*? or *Is there a little room for me in the car?*

b. Understaters. Are used to minimise parts of the proposition such as the required action or object. For example, *Could you tidy up a bit before I start?*

c. Hedge. Elements of the utterance by which the speaker uses adverbials to avoid precise propositional specification to avoid provoking the hearer in such a situation. For example, *It would fit much better <u>somehow</u> if you did your paper next week*.

d. Subjectivizer. This refers to the way in which the speaker expresses his/her subjective opinion and in so doing lowers the requestive force of the illocution or proposition. For instance, *I'm <u>afraid</u> that you are going to have to move your car*, or *<u>I wonder</u> if you could give me a lift*, or *<u>I think/believe/suppose</u> you're going my way*.

e. Downtoner. Special modifiers that are used to modulate the impact of the request on the speaker. For example, *Could you <u>possibly/perhaps</u> lend me your notes?* or *Will you <u>perhaps</u> be able to drive me* (Blum-Kulka et al 1984:204)?

f. Cajoler. These speech items are used in order to assure harmony or create harmony or if harmony is threatened in a request between interlocutors. For example, *<u>You know</u>, I'd really like you to present your paper next week*.

g. Appealer. Elements used in making a request which appeal to the hearer's kindness/ understanding. The elements appear in the final position of the utterance. For example, *Clean up the kitchen, dear, <u>will you/okay?</u>* or *We're going in the same direction, <u>aren't we?</u>*

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h. Combinations. Combinations of the above. Lexical and phrasal downgraders can occur together in one sentence, and there may also be more than one syntactic downgrader in a single sentence.

3.6.7 Upgraders

Upgraders are parts of the utterance that have the purpose of increasing or intensifying the impact or illocutionary force of the request. Types of upgraders include the following:

a. Intensifier. In a proposition adverbial modifiers are used to intensify certain parts of the utterance. For example, *The kitchen is in a <u>terrible/frightful</u> mess*, or *I am <u>extremely</u> angry with you*.

b. Commitment indicator. Sentence modifiers used to show the speaker's heightened degree of commitment to the proposition. For example, *I'm <u>sure/certain/surely/certainly</u> you won't mind giving me a lift*.

c. Expletive. Expletives are lexical intensifiers by which the speaker exaggerates the reality announced in the proposition (Blum-Kulka et al 1984:204). For example, *Why don't you clean that <u>bloody/damn</u> mess up?* or *Clean up this mess, it's <u>disgusting.</u>*

d. Time intensifier. Elements of the utterance are intensified by urgency reference to time. For example, *You had better move your car <u>right now/immediately</u>*.

e. Lexical uptoner. A negative connotation is given to an element of a proposition. For example, *Clean up that mess.*

f. Determination marker. Elements in an utterance that indicate an increased degree of determination on the part of the speaker. For example, *I've explained myself and <u>that is that</u>.*

g. Repetition of request. Repeating the request by saying it twice or by paraphrasing. For example, *Get lost, leave me alone!*

h. Orthographic/suprasegmental emphasis. Using exclamation marks, underlining, marked pausing or stressing to achieve a heightened dramatic effect. For example, *Cleaning the kitchen is your business!!!*

i. Emphatic addition. Lexical items used to provide extra emphasis to the request. For example, *<u>Go and clean</u> the kitchen*.

j. Pejorative determiner. For example, *Clean up that mess (there)!*

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k. Combinations. Any combinations of the above.

3.6.8   Supportive moves (external modifiers)

Supportive moves are used to aggravate or mitigate the request. Supportive moves do not form part of the head act and occur either before or after the head act. Supportive moves are known as external modifiers because they are external and do not form part of the head act, in contrast to syntactic downgraders and lexical and phrasal downgraders, which do form part of the head act. There are two types of supportive moves: mitigating supportive moves and aggravating supportive moves:

A. Mitigating supportive moves:

a. Preparator. The addressor prepares the addressee by announcing that s/he will be making a request, or by asking about the availability of the hearer to carry out the request, by asking for permission to make a request. For example, *I'd like to ask you something…* or *May I ask you a question*, or *I was wondering if you may be available on Saturday*.

b. Getting a pre-commitment. Before making the request, the speaker checks for a possible refusal by trying to get the hearer to agree to carry out the request before knowing what it is. For example, *Could you do me a favour?* or *Will you do me a favour?* (Blum-Kulka et al. 1984:205).

c. Sweetener. The imposition involved is lowered by exaggerating appreciation of the hearer's ability to comply with the request (Blum-Kulka 1984:205). For example, *You have beautiful handwriting, would it be possible to borrow your notes for a few days?*

d. Disarmer. The speaker indicates possible refusal by indicating his/her awareness of a possible offence. For example, *Excuse me, I hope you don't think I'm being forward, but is there any chance of a lift home?* (Blum-Kulka 1984:206).

e. Grounder. Either before or after the head act, the speaker gives reasons, explanations or justification for the request. For example, *Judith, I missed class yesterday, could I borrow your notes?* or *Excuse me, I am really sorry to ask you (disarmer), but a family emergency meant I missed on the lecture this morning.*

f. Promise of reward. To increase the chances that the hearer will comply with the request a reward is offered. For example, *Could you give me a lift home? I'll pitch in on some gas* or

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Please go to the supermarket for me? And I will give you the money and <u>buy whatever you</u> <u>want for you</u> (N.U.D).

g. Imposition (cost) minimiser. The imposition placed on the hearer is attempted to be reduced by the speaker. For example, *Could you give me a lift home, <u>but only if you are going</u>* <u>*that way?*</u>

B. Aggravating supportive moves:

a. Insult. The user begins the utterance with an insult, thus increasing the degree of imposition. For example, *<u>You've always been a dirty pig</u>, so clean up*.

b. Threat. The speaker threatens the hearer with the intention of alerting the speaker to the consequences of non-compliance. For example, *Move that car, <u>if you don't want a ticket</u>*.

c. Moralising. The speaker invokes the hearer's moral convictions to give additional credence to the request. For example, *If one shares a flat one should be prepared to pull one's weight in cleaning it, so get on with the washing up!*

3.6.9   Mode

This category is used to classify irony and related phenomena.

Neutral mode: Excuse me, could you give me a lift home?
Marked mode: Could I humbly beg to scrounge a lift home?

3.6.10   Type of modal

Modal verbs are significant features in requestive behaviour in any language. The set of modals is always small. Modals in the CCSARP coding data are understood as a syntactic class of verbs, e.g., *will* and *would* are classified as modal verbs, as are *can*, *could* and *should*.

3.7   Conclusion

In this chapter, a description of the context within which the study took place was given, along with a brief description of the teaching and learning practices. The participants, instruments and procedures were then discussed, along with the real life scenarios that the participants had to respond to. Thereafter the CCSARP coding framework was presented with

examples from Blum-Kulka et al (1984, 1989) as well as Nizwa University Data collected during the course of the research. In the next chapter the data will be analysed and discussed.

CHAPTER 4

Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses the data from the four sets of questionnaires administered and discusses the results with reference to existing theory and research previously conducted. Firstly, perceptions of politeness are analysed and discussed, followed by perceptions of directness. Specifically, the question of how such perceptions of politeness and indirectness are applied to requests is addressed; as well as the question of whether there is a relationship between the two with regard to requests. Blum-Kulka (1987) conducted a similar study between L2 Hebrew and L1 English speakers (cf. section 2.5.2). The question arises whether it is possible to increase politeness with an increase of indirectness. Additionally, with regard to the first research question, the question of whether patterns of politeness and indirectness are perceived similarly or differently by L1 English speakers and L2 Omani English students is addressed. Thirdly, the written responses to the five scenarios were analysed and discussed. Finally, the ratings by L1 English teachers and L2 Omani English teachers under five categories, i.e., politeness, formality, appropriateness, grammaticality, and clarity of request, are analysed and discussed. In the analysis of the ratings I interviewed the three participating Omani L2 English teachers. I asked the three teachers questions relating to the appropriateness of the written statements and asked them to explain from a cultural perspective why they deemed certain written requests inappropriate. The purpose of the interviews was to determine why Omani L2 English teachers find some of the L1 English and Omani L2 English student participants' requests inappropriate. The information can then be used to explain sociopragmatic differences to Omani L2 students, thus improving their sociopragmatic competence. I am using the subjective data gathered in the interviews with the teachers to analyse the data in this chapter in conjunction with the objective data from the questionnaires themselves.

4.2 Perceptions of politeness and indirectness

4.2.1 Situation 1 (see Appendix A: A1-1 & Appendix B: A2-1)

Table 7 below presents the situational cultural differences of L1 English speakers and Omani L2 English students of social variables influencing politeness strategy, namely social distance,

social power and ranking of imposition for the given context. These cultural differences in the perceptions of social variables were established through discussion with L1 Arabic-speaking colleagues at the time the situations were designed.

Situation 1	Requester	Requestee	Social distance	Social power	Ranking of imposition
Grandfather request (L2)	Student	Grandfather	High High status	High High respect S > H	High
Grandfather request (L1)	Student	Grandfather	Low	Medium	Medium

Table 7: Situation 1

Table 7a below, in turn, displays the results of situation 1 for perceptions of politeness and indirectness. Each strategy of request received 20 responses (ten from L1 English teachers and ten from Omani L2 English students). Responses were rated in terms of politeness from 1 (most polite) to 9 (least polite), and in terms of indirectness from 9 (most indirect) to 1 (most direct). The ten values for each category were then totalled and divided by ten to get the average for each category. The categories were then arranged from most polite to least polite, and most indirect to most direct for each category. The purpose of this arrangement was to see if there were any patterns visible. Firstly, to see if categories in terms of directness have similar or different perceptions across cultures, and secondly, to see the extent to which politeness correlates with indirectness across cultures (Blum-Kulka 1987: 131-133).

In both groups, the query preparatory (e.g., C*an you possibly talk to me on Sunday*) is perceived as being the most polite. However, the L2 Omani English students select the query preparatory 50% (1.5 – 1.0) more frequently than the L1 English speakers. Suggestory formulae and want statements are considered by both groups to be the second and third most polite strategies in this context.

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Politeness				Directness			
Situation 1				Situation 1			
Strategy	L2	Strategy	L1	Strategy	L2	Strategy	L1
Query Preparatory	1.5	Query Preparatory	1.0	Suggestory Formulae	6.8	Mild Hint	6.8
Suggestory Formulae	3.0	Suggestory Formulae	2.6	Strong hint	5.9	Suggestory Formulae	6.7
Want Statement	3.8	Want Statement	3.0	Mild Hint	5.8	Query Preparatory	6.4
Strong hint	4.7	Performative	5.4	Query Preparatory	5.3	Strong hint	5.3
Hedged Performative	4.9	Strong Hint	5.8	Hedged Performative	4.9	Performative	5.0
Performative	5.6	Mild Hint	5.9	Want Statement	4.8	Want Statement	4.3
Mild Hint	6.5	Hedged Performative	6.3	Performative	3.9	Hedged Performative	4.1
Mood Derivable	7.1	Obligation Statement	6.8	Obligation Statement	3.8	Obligation Statement	3.9
Obligation Statement	7.6	Mood Derivable	8.3	Mood Derivable	3.8	Mood Derivable	2.4

Table 7a: Perceptions of politeness & indirectness

The two most impolite strategies are the mood derivable and the obligation statement. However, the Omani L2 English student consider the obligation statement to be more impolite than the mood derivable. The obligation statement *Grandfather, you must see me on Sunday*, with the insertion of the word *must*, sounds like an order to an Omani and would be never used when speaking to a grandfather who enjoys high status and respect in the extended family group. This information was obtained through interviews with Omani people. The use of the word *must* in Omani culture is equivalent to the use of the mood derivable in a L1 English culture. In a collectivist society like Oman, the grandfather's relationship to other extended family members is asymmetrical, unlike individualist societies where the power difference is less and the relationship is more symmetrical. The obligation statement in this context, as expressed in this way, would be considered as a high FTA, or, to be more specific, an FTA threatening the positive self-image of the grandfather (positive face threat), and also an FTA threatening the negative face of the grandfather by not showing due concern for his time. The mood derivable request response *Talk to me on Sunday*, although also unacceptable, conveys less imposition. The L1 English speakers perceive the mood derivable as most impolite and see the insertion of the word *must* not as a command, but more as a word implying urgency or as a motivation/encouragement word. This is how the word *must* is used by most L1 English speakers much of the time – it does not convey an order in this context as perceived by Omani

L2 English speakers. Therefore, the insertion of the word *must* conveys different a conversational implicature to the Omani L2 English students than to the L1 English speakers.

The L2 Omani English speakers consider the strong hint *I am going to my best friend's party on Saturday* to be more polite than the mild hint *I am busy on Saturday*. This preference of the strong hint over the mild hint for politeness strategy correlates with the CCSARP data for request strategy preference. The L1 speakers also consider the strong hint to be more polite than the mild hint, but consider the performative more polite than both. The Omani L2 English students consider the performative *I am asking you to talk to me on Sunday* less polite than the mild hint. Whereas the L1 English speakers' perception of the performative is only that of a request.

The results would indicate that there is a great deal of difference with regard to perceptions of indirectness. The reason for this is directly related to the different perceptions of social variables with regard to the figure of the grandfather. Omani culture is collectivist with emphasis on the group, as opposed to the emphasis placed on the individual in English culture. The grandfather in the group enjoys seniority in the extended family due to his age. He enjoys high status and enormous respect (this will be discussed in more detail in the written response DCT section of this chapter). Although grandfathers are also respected in L1 English speaking cultures, the power distance, social distance and degree of imposition involved in making a request that is contrary to what the grandfather has requested is vastly different. In situation 1, both groups consider the mood derivable and obligation statement the most direct, and this coincides with the mood derivable *Talk to me on Sunday* and the obligation statement *Grandfather, you must see me on Sunday* being the most impolite. The suggestory formula is seen as most indirect and also second most polite by Omani L2 English speakers. For L1 speakers, the query preparatory rated most polite matches the mild hint as most indirect; this data corresponds with the CCSARP data for native English speakers (Blum-Kulka 1987:137). It must be noted that the CCSARP data combines several situations and does not look at each situation individually with regard to social variables; near the end of this section the totals for each category and situation were combined and compared against the original CCSARP data (see section 4.2.6). Omani L2 English students here again rate mild hint as more direct than Strong Hint in this situation; differing from the L1 English speakers and also the CCSARP data. For an Omani L2 English student, a mild hint in this situation is considered very impolite. Both groups consider the mild hint extremely impolite even though they also consider it

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indirect, but with different ratings. The Omani L2 English students consider the mild hint more impolite in this situation than the L1 speakers do. This would indicate that Omani L2 English students will not use the mild hint in situations where cultural factors of high social distance, high power distance and high imposition are involved.

4.2.2   Situation 2 (see Appendix A: A1-2 & Appendix B: A2-2)

Table 8 below presents the situational cultural differences of L1 English speakers and Omani L2 English students regarding social variables influencing politeness strategy, namely social distance, social power and ranking of imposition, for the given context. These cultural differences in the perceptions of social variables were established through discussion with L1 Arabic speaking colleagues at the time the situations were designed. In this situation there are no differences.

Situation 2	Requester	Requestee	Social distance	Social power	Ranking of imposition
Student request (L2)	Student	Student	Low	S = H	Medium
Student request (L1)	Student	Student	Low	S = H	Medium

Table 8: Situation 2

Table 8a below, in turn, displays the results of situation 2 for perceptions of politeness and indirectness. In both groups the query preparatory is considered to be most polite, *Can I lend your notes?* However, the Omani L2 English students select to use the query preparatory approximately 50% more frequently than the L1 speakers. This clearly indicates that, although the query preparatory is considered most polite by both groups, it has greater preference amongst the L2 Omani group. The second most polite strategy selected in this context by both groups is the want statement *I would like you to lend me your notes for a while*. For both groups, the selection of the Want Statement would indicate less concern with face in communicating with a person with equal social distance and social power. The imposition involved in this context would also show that low to medium imposition situations result in less polite strategies than high imposition situations. This contrasts with the 'grandfather' request where both groups selected suggestory formulae as their second choice, suggesting the need for more politeness and deference.

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POLITENESS				DIRECTNESS			
Situation 2				Situation 2			
Strategy	L2	Strategy	L1	Strategy	L2	Strategy	L1
Query Preparatory	1.5	Query Preparatory	1.0	Mild Hint	7.0	Mild Hint	7.5
Suggestory Formulae	3.0	Suggestory Formulae	2.6	Strong Hint	6.6	Strong Hint	6.9
Want Statement	3.8	Want Statement	3.0	Want Statement	5.0	Want Statement	6.1
Strong Hint	4.7	Performative	5.4	Obligation Statement	5.0	Suggestory Formulae	5.3
Hedged Performative	4.9	Strong Hint	5.8	Suggestory Formulae	4.8	Query Preparatory	4.8
Performative	5.6	Mild Hint	5.9	Performative	4.8	Obligation Statement	4.2
Mild Hint	6.5	Hedged Performative	6.3	Hedged Performative	4.7	Hedged Performative	4.2
Mood Derivable	7.1	Obligation Statement	6.8	Query Preparatory	4.2	Performative	3.2
Obligation Statement	7.6	Mood Derivable	8.3	Mood Derivable	3.8	Mood Derivable	2.4

Table 8a: Perceptions of politeness & indirectness

Once again, the two most impolite strategies selected by both groups are the mood derivable *Lend me your notes* and the obligation statement, *You should lend me your notes*. The mood derivable is considered least polite by the L1 English speakers and the Obligation statement is considered most impolite by the L2 Omani English students. The insertion of the word *should*, like *must*, to the Omani L2 English students implies a command or a request that cannot be refused, and is considered to be extremely impolite. This information was obtained in interviews with Omani L2 English teachers. This would be considered an FTA to the hearer's positive face.

The strong hint *I wasn't at the lecture yesterday* is considered to be the fourth most polite by the L2 Omani English students, while the L1 speakers selected the strong hint as fifth most polite. The L2 Omani English students choose this strategy approximately 25% less frequently than the L1 English speakers (4.7 – 5.8). The L1 speakers preferred the mild hint *I was sick yesterday* over the Strong Hint. In contrast, the Omani L2 English students selected the mild hint at number 7 showing that it was considered the most impolite after the mood derivable and the obligatory statement. The reason for this difference is probably the degree of ambiguity and non-reference to the specific context attached to it by the Omani L2 English students. For the L1 speakers, the conversational implicature for the mild hint to borrow the hearer's notes

would be clear, but to the less proficient Omani L2 English students it would be lacking in appropriateness and not understood as a request or, furthermore, as a request to borrow lecture notes. The L1 speaker's choice of the mild hint strategy corresponds with Brown and Levinson's theory that redressive action minimises the threat to face (Blum-Kulka 1987:140). The performative was chosen by both groups as number 6. The suggestory formula and hedged performative were rated similarly but not in the same order.

For both groups, the mood derivable *Lend me your notes* at number 9 was chosen as the most direct strategy. Likewise, both groups chose the hedged performative *I have to ask you to lend me your notes* at number 7 for directness. For number 8, the L1 speakers chose the performative *I am asking you to lend me your notes*, but the Omani L2 English students chose the query preparatory *Can I lend your notes*? This may seem strange, as for situation 1 it was chosen as the most polite and number 4 for indirectness. In situation 1, the word "possibly" was inserted as a politeness marker. Omani L2 English students will use the query preparatory and other more direct strategies, but with the inclusion of internal and external politeness markers to avoid an FTA. This will be clarified further in the written responses section of this thesis.

The mild hint *I was sick yesterday*, strong hint *I wasn't at the lecture yesterday*, and the want statement *I would like you to lend me your notes for a while* were considered the most indirect, in that order. This coincides with the original CCSARP data which placed mild hints and strong hints as the most indirect (non-conventional indirectness). This result also confirms that the most indirect strategies are not always considered the most polite; the situation and social variables play an important role in strategy selection and creation, as will be discussed below in the written response section. Off-record indirect strategies like mild hints are often used for politeness, but more so for L1 speakers than for L2 English speakers. The remaining strategies fall in the mid-range for indirectness with not too much difference in the rating.

4.2.3   Situation 3 (see Appendix A: A1-3 & Appendix B: A2-3)

Table 9 presents the situational cultural differences of L1 English speakers and Omani L2 English students regarding social variables influencing politeness strategy, namely social distance, social power and ranking of imposition, for the given context. These cultural differences in the perceptions of social variables were established through discussion with L1

Arabic speaking colleagues at the time the situations were designed. In this situation there are no differences in the social variables.

Situation 3	Requester	Requestee	Social distance	Social power	Ranking of imposition
Student request (L2)	Student	Younger brother	Low	S = H or S > H	Low
Student request (L1)	Student	Younger brother	Low	S = H or S > H	Low

Table 9: Situation 3

Table 9a below, in turn, displays the results of situation 3 for perceptions of politeness and indirectness.

POLITENESS				DIRECTNESS			
Situation 3				Situation 3			
Strategy	**L2**	**Strategy**	**L1**	**Strategy**	**L2**	**Strategy**	**L1**
Query Preparatory	1.9	Query Preparatory	2.3	Mild Hint	7.6	Mild Hint	7.7
Want Statement	2.6	Suggestory Formulae	3.1	Strong Hint	6.0	Strong Hint	7.1
Mild Hint	4.2	Strong Hint	3.3	Suggestory Formulae	6.0	Suggestory Formulae	6.6
Strong Hint	4.2	Want Statement	3.5	Query Preparatory	5.0	Query Preparatory	5.7
Suggestory Formulae	4.6	Mild Hint	5.3	Hedged Performative	5.0	Want Statement	5.1
Performative	5.8	Performative	5.7	Want Statement	4.6	Performative	4.6
Hedged Performative	6.1	Hedged Performative	5.8	Performative	4.3	Hedged Performative	4.0
Obligation Statement	7.5	Obligation Statement	8.0	Obligation Statement	3.8	Obligation Statement	2.3
Mood Derivable	8.1	Mood Derivable	8.3	Mood Derivable	2.8	Mood Derivable	1.9

Table 9a: Perceptions of politeness & indirectness

In both groups the query preparatory *Would you go to the cold store to buy some vegetables?* is perceived as being most polite. In second place, the L2 Omani English students chose the want statement *I would like you to go to the cold store to buy some vegetables.* This would indicate a preference for the word *would* or the phrase *would like* among the Omani L2 English students as a politeness strategy. The L1 speakers chose as second the suggestory formula *How about going to the cold store to buy some vegetables?* The Omani L2 English students chose

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the suggestory Formula at number 5, with a preference for the mild hint *We have no food to cook for dinner* and the strong hint *We really need some vegetables from the cold store* taking third and fourth positions, both with a rating of 4.2. In situation 1 and 2 mild hints were considered impolite, but in this instance they are considered more polite in view of the collectivist 'obligation to family' view (data obtained in interviews with Omani L2 English teachers). The degree of imposition involved here is low because of the context of a family need, and this coincides with the obligation of the individual to serve the best interest of the group in a collectivist society. Additionally, the power distance is higher for the speaker and the social distance as well as the ranking of imposition is at its lowest. The L1 speakers favoured the strong hint over the want statement and the mild hint. For L1 speakers, the mild hint was considered far less polite than the strong hint and the want statement.

In both groups, for this situational context the performative *I am asking you to go to the cold store to buy some vegetables,* the hedged performative *I must ask you to go to the cold store to buy some vegetables*, the obligation statement *You must go to the cold store to buy vegetables*, and the mood derivable *Go to the cold store to buy some vegetables* were considered most impolite, in that order. The results of these four strategies match the CCSARP data as the four most impolite as well as the most direct strategies. This would indicate that when the sociable variables are extremely low for social distance and degree of imposition, with the speaker having more social power than the hearer, then the L1 English speakers and the Omani L2 English students' choice is the same for the most impolite as well as the most polite, but differ in the middle four options of strategy.

For the scales of indirectness, both groups selected the obligation statement and the mood derivable as the most direct at numbers 8 and 9. This matches with the selections of these two groups for the most impolite. So, once again, as with situations 1 and 2, there is a correlation between the most direct and the most impolite strategies. Thus, although there is not a direct correlation between politeness and (in)directness, there is a correlation. The most indirect utterances chosen by both groups were, in the following order, mild hint, strong hint, suggestory formula and query preparatory. These four strategies match the CCSARP data for the four most indirect strategies (see Table 6).

The three middle strategies, namely the hedged performative, the want statement and the performative differ in order according to cultural preferences. However, both groups have selected these three in positions 5, 6 and 7.

The results of this situation are the closest of all situations in matching the CCSARP data. It can therefore be deduced that a situation in which the social distance is at its lowest, the degree of imposition is at its lowest and where there is equal or more social power attributed to the speaker, the results between the two groups will be most similar, according to the situations investigated in this study.

4.2.4   Situation 4 (see Appendix A: A1-4 & Appendix B: A2-4)

Table 10 below presents the situational cultural differences of L1 English speakers and Omani L2 English students regarding social variables influencing politeness strategy, namely social distance, social power and ranking of imposition, for the given context. These cultural differences in the perceptions of social variables were established through discussion with L1 Arabic speaking colleagues at the time the situations were designed.

Situation 4	Requester	Requestee	Social distance	Social power	Ranking of imposition
Student request (L2)	Student	University Instructor	Medium/high	S < H	Low
Student request (L1)	Student	University Instructor	High	S < H	Medium

Table 10: Situation 4

Table 10a below, in turn, displays the results of situation 4 for perceptions of politeness and indirectness. Situation 4 is another situation where there is a great deal of similarity between the Omani L2 English students and the L1 English speakers with regard to request strategies. In both groups, the most polite strategies selected, in the same order, were: the query preparatory *Could you give me more time for my assignment?*; the mild hint *I am so busy because my mother is ill and I have to go to the hospital every evening* and the hedged performative *I have to ask you to give me more time for my assignment*. The question of why the mild hint was selected by the Omani L2 students arises. In previous situations, the Omani L2 English students chose the strong hint over the mild hint. L1 speakers make frequent use of the mild hint; whereas L2 Omani English students find it more ambiguous in many instances

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and also find it impolite more frequently than do L1 speakers. However, for the L2 Omani student, this instance of the use of the mild hint is acceptable and appropriate. The Omani culture is a high-context society and people are expected to rely heavily on the overall situation or context to interpret messages (Guirdham 1999:60). The fact that the instructor is fully aware that the assignment is due and the fact that the student is now telling him/her that s/he spends his/her evenings at the hospital is more than sufficient to function as a request for more time.

POLITENESS				DIRECTNESS			
Situation 4				Situation 4			
Strategy	L2	Strategy	L1	Strategy	L2	Strategy	L1
Query Preparatory	1.1	Query Preparatory	2.0	Mild Hint	6.7	Mild Hint	7.6
Mild Hint	2.7	Mild Hint	2.4	Query preparatory	6.3	Strong Hint	7.1
Hedged Performative	4.3	Hedged Performative	3.0	Strong Hint	6.0	Query Preparatory	6.2
Suggestory Formulae	4.3	Strong Hint	4.1	Suggestory Formulae	5.3	Suggestory Formulae	6.1
Strong Hint	4.7	Suggestory Formulae	5.3	Obligation Statement	4.7	Performative	4.7
Performative	5.4	Performative	5.3	Hedged Performative	4.6	Hedged Performative	4.4
Want Statement	6.5	Want Statement	6.5	Performative	4.3	Obligation Statement	3.4
Obligation Statement	8.0	Obligation Statement	7.8	Want Statement	3.6	Want Statement	3.0
Mood Derivable	8.0	Mood Derivable	8.2	Mood Derivable	3.3	Mood Derivable	2.4

Table 10a: Perceptions of politeness and indirectness

In both groups, strategies selected as most impolite, in the same order, were: the performative *I am asking you to give me more time for my assignment*; the want statement *I want more time for my assignment*; the obligation statement *You should give me more time for my assignment*; and the mood derivable *Give me more time for my assignment*. It is interesting to note that the want statements in the previous three situations have been considered polite, falling in the second and third most polite positions. In situations 1-3 the want statement uses *would like* and not *want* as in this instance. This factor would indicate that the phrase *would like* is considered to be far more polite than the word *want*, which is clearly demanding something, and is perceived as such by both groups. The obligation statement is considered most impolite after the mood derivable, because the word *should* also implies compliance and places a high imposition FTA on the hearer. In this instance, the use of the word *should* is inappropriate. However, as has been shown, the appropriate use of the request strategy depends largely on

cultural differences of social variables as well as context. For example, one friend saying to another *You should let me help you* would generally be considered polite and not seen as demanding in any way.

The middle strategies for both groups were the suggestory formula *How about giving me more time for my assignment?* and the strong hint *I haven't finished my assignment*. The L2 Omani students preferred the suggestory formula over the strong hint; the Strong Hint being ambiguous and not giving a reason or explanation for the request. The L1 speakers, in contrast, preferred the strong hint over the suggestory formulae.

In both groups, the strategies rated most indirect were the mild hint (most indirect), the query preparatory, the strong hint and the suggestory formula. The only difference was that the L1 speakers preferred the strong hint over the query preparatory. However, the ratings for the query preparatory and the mild hint were very similar for the Omani L2 English students. For both groups, the want statement and the mood derivable were considered most direct.

The fact that the mood derivable was considered most direct by both groups matched the responses for the mood derivable being most impolite, again showing a correlation between directness and politeness on the one end of the scale. On the other end of the scale, the mild hint was considered most polite, in second place, and most indirect in first place by both groups, so here we find a close correlation. However, in this instance of the mild hint, reasons were given for the making of the request, whereas in situations 1-3 no reasons were given, changing the politeness perspective. The middle group on the scale of indirectness consisted of the obligation statement, the hedged performative and the performative. The hedged performative for both groups was placed at number 6, but the obligation statement and the performative were switched. The L2 Omani English students preferred the performative over the obligation statement. The word *should*, which is similar to *must*, is used and perceived as an order by the Omani L2 English students.

4.2.5   Situation 5 (see Appendix A: A1-5 & Appendix B: A2-5)

Table 11 presents the situational cultural differences of L1 English speakers and Omani L2 English students regarding social variables influencing politeness strategy, namely social distance, social power and ranking of imposition, for the given context. These cultural

differences in the perceptions of social variables were established through discussion with L1 Arabic speaking colleagues at the time the situations were designed. There are no situational cultural differences in this situation.

Situation 5	Requester	Requestee	Social distance	Social power	Ranking of imposition
Student request (L2)	Student	Waiter	Highest / Stranger	S > H	Low
Student request (L1)	Waiter	Waiter	Highest / Stranger	S > H	Low

Table 11: Situation 5

Table 11a below, in turn, displays the results of situation 5 for perceptions of politeness and indirectness.

POLITENESS				DIRECTNESS			
Situation 4				Situation 4			
Strategy	**L2**	**Strategy**	**L1**	**Strategy**	**L2**	**Strategy**	**L1**
Query Preparatory	1.2	Query Preparatory	1.3	Mild hint	7.6	Mild Hint	8.1
Mild Hint	3.7	Mild hint	2.6	Strong Hint	5.8	Strong Hint	7.1
Suggestory Formulae	4.3	Hedged Performative	4.4	Hedged Performative	5.5	Query Preparatory	6.5
Performative	4.4	Performative	4.5	Query Preparatory	5.4	Suggestory Formulae	6.2
Want Statement	4.7	Suggestory Formulae	4.9	Performative	5.2	Performative	4.1
Hedged Performative	5.3	Want Statement	5.2	Want Statement	4.9	Hedged Performative	3.9
Strong Hint	5.7	Obligation Statement	7.1	Suggestory Formulae	4.4	Obligation Statement	3.8
Mood Derivable	7.4	Strong Hint	7.2	Obligation Statement	4.1	Want Statement	3.3
Obligation Statement	8.3	Mood Derivable	7.8	Mood Derivable	2.1	Mood Derivable	2.1

Table 11a: Perceptions of politeness and indirectness

In both groups, the query preparatory *Could you give me the bill?* is considered the most polite. In second place once again is the mild hint *We would like to leave soon*. The explanation for this is that the mild hint is again considered polite by Omani L2 English speakers, as in scenario 4, because Omani L2 English students belong to a high-context culture (a culture where people are expected to rely heavily on the overall context to interpret messages). It is the waiter's job to bring the bill and the mild hint is polite in this context where the speaker

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has greater social power and the context is salient. However, the mild hint for the Omani L2 English speakers is not always appropriate if not used with a politeness marker or some sort of reference. However, in this instance the reference is clear. The use of the mild hint by L1 speakers does not relate to high-context. Both groups choose as number 4 the performative *I am asking you to give me the bill*. In situations where the speaker has greater social power than the hearer, and where the hearer is only doing his job, more direct strategies are considered polite and the FTA is minimised. In place number 3, the Omani L2 English speakers prefer the suggestory formula *How about giving me the bill?* to the L1 speakers' hedged performative *I must ask you to give me the bill*, thus demonstrating a greater degree of politeness over the L1 speakers who prefer the more direct strategy. It should be noted that generally in Oman people are more polite to waiters, even thanking them for the meal. This behaviour is directly related to their Islamic faith that teaches that all men are equal. Although they are aware of higher social power, they generally make every effort to be polite. Whereas in English speaking countries we expect the waiter to bring the bill when we are finished our meal without asking for it, and it is not expected that we thank the waiter, even though in many instances we do.

This scenario shows the greatest diversity in perceptions of politeness. The mood derivable *Give me the bill* is once again placed at number 8 in the scale of politeness by the Omani L2 English speakers and at number 9 by the L1 speakers. Omani L2 English students again consider the obligation statement *You should give me the bill* to be an order, and more impolite than the mood derivable. In contrast, the L1 speakers rate the strong hint *The bill is taking a long time* as more impolite than the obligation statement.

The want statement *I want you to give me the bill* is at number 5 for the Omani L2 English speakers and number 6 for the L1 speakers, so both groups consider it impolite. However, the want statement using the words *would like* instead of *want* may have resulted in different ratings, as discussed above.

In both groups, the mood derivable is perceived as most direct. This matches the perceptions of politeness rating where the mood derivable is placed in places 8 and 9. Both groups perceive the mild hint and the strong hint as the most indirect. This matches the politeness perception ratings where mild hints are placed second by both groups. The performative *I am asking you to give me the bill* is placed by both groups at number 5. The hedged performative *I must ask*

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you to give me the bill is placed at number 3 for indirectness by the Omani L2 English speakers and number 6 by the L1 speakers. This shows that for L2 Omani English speakers indirectness does not correlate with politeness for this strategy, because the Omani L2 English students place the hedged performative at number 6 on the politeness scale. However, for the L1 speakers, this strategy does correlate politeness with indirectness. The suggestory formula *How about giving me the bill?* is interesting. It is rated the third most direct and the third most polite strategy by Omani L2 English students, indicating a link between directness and politeness from an Omani L2 English student perspective. (This link between directness and politeness will be discussed in greater detail in the next section on written responses.) In contrast to the L2 Omani English speakers, the L1 English speakers place the suggestory formula at number 4 for indirectness and number 5 for politeness; showing a politeness/indirectness correlation. The L1 speakers consider the suggestory formula in this context more indirect than the Omani L2 English speakers. The want statement in this context is rated by the L1 English speakers as the second most direct after the mood derivable, but the Omani L2 English speakers rate it the fourth most direct.

Communicating requests in this context is clearly the most diverse of all the five situations, with variations in perception relating not only to cultural factors but also to illocutionary force connected to certain words and phrases.

4.2.6   Situation 1-5: Combined ratings for 'politeness' and 'indirectness' scales

Table 12 below presents the perceptions of politeness and indirectness scales for L2 Omani English speakers and L1 English speakers with the ratings for nine request types for all five situations combined. Strategies are listed in ascending order from 1 (most polite) to 9 (least polite), and descending order from 1 (least direct or most indirect) to 9 (most direct).

In both groups, the query preparatory was considered the most polite in any situation; the best strategy considered by most groups to mitigate an FTA. Using this strategy would be described by Brown and Levinson (1987) as an on-record FTA with redressive action. Brown and Levinson classify the query preparatory as a direct speech act (see table 8 – chapter 2). Blum-Kulka (1987:141) classifies the query preparatory along with the suggestory formula as conventionally indirect strategies. The query preparatory is used by both groups to minimise

FTAs to positive and negative face, e.g., the 'grandfather' request and the 'university instructor' requests.

POLITENESS				DIRECTNESS			
TOTALS				TOTALS			
Strategy	L2	Strategy	L1	Strategy	L2	Strategy	L1
Query Preparatory	1.5	Query Preparatory	1.8	Mild Hint	6.9	Mild Hint	7.2
Want Statement	4.1	Mild Hint	4.0	Strong Hint	6.1	Strong Hint	6.7
Suggestory Formulae	4.2	Suggestory Formulae	4.1	Suggestory Formulae	5.4	Suggestory Formulae	6.2
Mild Hint	4.5	Want Statement	4.2	Query Preparatory	5.1	Query Preparatory	6.0
Strong Hint	4.7	Strong Hint	4.8	Hedged Performative	5.0	Want Statement	4.4
Hedged Performative	5.1	Hedged Performative	5.0	Want Statement	4.6	Performative	4.3
Performative	5.4	Performative	5.2	Performative	4.5	Hedged Performative	4.1
Mood Derivable	7.6	Obligation Statement	7.6	Obligation Statement	4.3	Obligation Statement	3.5
Obligation Statement	7.9	Mood Derivable	8.3	Mood Derivable	3.0	Mood Derivable	2.4

Table 12: Combined ratings for politeness and indirectness

Both groups considered the strong hint, the hedged performative, the performative, the obligation statement, and the mood derivable to be the most impolite. The Omani L2 English speakers perceived the obligation statement as more impolite than the mood derivable, which was considered the most impolite by the L1 speakers, as discussed above. The mood derivable is described by Brown and Levinson (1987:95) as on-record without redressive action (see Figure 2); i.e., direct speech acts without internal or external mitigating devices that accord with Grice's maxims, and in so doing do not give attention to face.

Both groups perceived the suggestory formula as the third most polite. The only difference in order of preference involved the want statement and the mild hint. The L2 Omani English students rated the want statement as the most polite after the query preparatory, and the L1 speakers rated the mild hint as most polite over the query preparatory. In chapter 1 I pointed out that as an English language lecturer in Oman I communicate a great deal with Omani students. Initially, I noticed that many of them came across as being impolite and direct in making requests. For example, they make statements like *Teacher, I want a pen* or *I want my mark*. Over time, I have wondered how much of their perceived inappropriate communication

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is a caused by lack of pragmalinguistic competence and how much is cultural. In interviews with qualified Omani L2 English teachers, as made explicit at the beginning of this chapter, I have learned that the lower proficiency Omani L2 English students in the Foundation Programme think that the use of *want* is extremely polite. This is generally not corrected, because as English language instructors we understand their lack of proficiency and after experiencing this lack in the students' communicative behaviour, we just ignore it with the understanding that they have no intention of being impolite. Over a period of time, we just accept it with the understanding that the student is not being rude but simply lacking in communicative ability. Thus, to answer my own question above, I have concluded that the request forms with the use of *want* are not due to L1 transfer, but due to lack of pragmatic competence, specifically pragmalinguistic competence. Appropriate request strategies are not taught specifically and are not part of the curriculum materials used in the Foundation English Language Program. However, more advanced students with more years of exposure to the English language, such as the ones who participated in this research, do recognise the use of the word *want* without redressive action as impolite. It must be noted that in situations 1-3 the words *would like* were used for the want statement and this phrase is considered far more polite than the word *want*. This is probably the reason for the high rating of the want statement by the more advanced Omani L2 English students.

The four most indirect strategies as rated by both groups were the mild hint, the strong hint, the suggestory formula, and the query preparatory. These four strategies match the four strategies from the CCSARP data for English speakers. This result shows that when several contextual situations are combined, as with the CCSARP data (Blum-Kulka 1987:133), the results are nearly identical for this end of the scale, with the exception of the query preparatory and the suggestory formula, which were switched. Here, we also have a correlation between what is perceived as the most polite and the most indirect for the query preparatory, mild hint and the suggestory formula for both politeness and directness at the same rating level. However, it must be noted that this is only when the results for the five situations are combined, and not in specific contexts.

The most direct strategy as ranked by both groups on the other end of the scale was the mood derivable. This data also matches the CCSARP data for English speakers. The strategy ranked as second most direct is the obligation statement. The mood derivable and the obligation

statement, as the most direct selected by both groups, are also considered the most impolite by both groups. This result occurs in situations 1 and 2 as well.

The three remaining strategies, i.e., the hedged performative, the want statement and the performative are rated similarly, but the hedged performative is rated as more indirect than the want statement by the Omani L2 English students, and the hedged performative and performative are rated as more direct than the want statement by the L1 speakers. This matches the original CCSARP data. Taken together, the L1 English speakers' results are more similar to the original CCSARP data than the L2 Omani English students for the indirectness scale. With regard to the want statement: the Omani L2 English students rate it second for politeness and the fourth most direct. Here we have a connection between politeness and directness, a connection more prevalent in the Omani culture. This politeness/directness connection will be discussed in section 4.4 of this chapter.

I now turn my attention to my first research question, namely *Are patterns of politeness and indirectness perceived similarly or differently by the Omani L2 English speaking university students and L1 English speakers?* The answer to this question is clearly not "yes" or "no". Firstly, the results when combining the five scenarios for 'politeness' show a great deal of similarity, with the exception of three strategies, namely the want statement, the mild hint, and the mood derivable/obligation statement. The want statement here highlights a link between directness and politeness in the Omani culture. Secondly, the results when combining the results for 'indirectness' again show a great deal of similarity, with the exception again of three, namely the hedged performative, the performative, and the want statement, which are in different order, but have similar ratings. Thirdly*,* there is agreement on the most direct/most indirect and the most polite/most impolite strategies on the opposite end of the scale for the five different scenarios, and also with other strategies both for politeness and (in)directness. These differences are due to differences in cultural social variables, i.e., social distance, social power and degree of imposition. Differences in rating probably also occur because of the cultural differences between high- and low-context groups. Finally, probable reasons for these differences have been discussed above, but not comprehensively, as this would require a research project with a larger scope that would examine in greater detail the differences in cultural perceptions, in addition to a comparison of linguistic features and forms of use used by Omani L2 English students in everyday communication.

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4.3   Speech act elicitation

For this questionnaire, participants were asked to respond in writing to the same five scenarios. Ten Omani L2 English students responded in writing to five scenarios and ten L1 English teachers responded in writing to five scenarios

4.3.1   Situation 1 ('grandfather' request – Table 13)

The Omani L2 English students were different from the Omani L2 English student participants used for the 'perceptions of politeness' and 'perceptions of indirectness' questionnaires. The L1 English speakers were also a new group. In this scenario, there were ten L1 speakers and ten Omani L2 English students. Two of the L1 responses (for example, *I could not refuse my grandfather*) could not be used. The DCT required that the participants respond with a written request. The above example is not a request. The two responses that could not be used were replaced with responses given by two additional L1 English speakers, making the number of participants in each group for situation 1 equal.

Alerters

The Omani L2 English students used the title *grandfather* 75% more frequently than the L1 speakers. This would indicate a greater degree of formality, with regard to cultural norms within the Omani culture, in addressing a grandfather figure. The L1 English speakers in contrast responded 25% more frequently with endearment terms, e.g., *grandpa*. L2 Omani English students used more formal endearment terms, e.g., *my beloved* and *my grandfather*, but also less formal terms of endearment like *papa* and *baba*. The L1 speakers also used attention-getters, e.g., *hi* and *uhh*, 75% more frequently than the L2 Omani English students. These percentages reinforce that the relationship is less formal with the grandfather figure for the L1 speakers, but certainly not less affectionate. L2 Omani English students used more formal attention-getters, e.g., *al salam alikum* ("Peace be upon you"), which is a traditional Arabic greeting that is cultural and linked to the Islamic faith.

Request perspective

The preference for both groups in this category was for hearer dominance *I*. However, the Omani L2 English students also favoured the use of the speaker dominance 3-1 over the L1 speakers. The L1 speakers also favoured speaker and hearer dominance 7-6 over the Omani

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L2 English students. The L1 speakers favoured the speaker and hearer request perspective 3-0, e.g., *we*.

Request strategy

In both groups, the conventionally indirect query preparatory was the preferred strategy, but the L1 speakers used it 25% more frequently than the Omani L2 English students, e.g., *Can I*, *would you* and *Is it OK* are used by Omani L2 students and *Would you mind*, *Can we, Could we* are used by L1 speakers. These data agree with the 'perceptions of politeness' data for situation 1 in which both groups selected the query preparatory as the most polite. The L2 Omani English students also used the suggestory formula, e.g., *What about having this the day after*. In the 'perceptions of politeness' data, both groups selected the suggestory formula as the second most polite, but in this instance only the Omani L2 English students used it when eliciting written responses. This is another use of a conventionally indirect strategy to make requests, indicating efforts at face saving for high-imposition requests.

Coding strategy	Coding sub-category	L1	L2
Alerters	Title	1	4
	First name	0	0
	Endearment term	8	6
	Attention getter	3	2
	Total: Alerters	**12**	**12**
Request perspective	Hearer dominance	6	7
	Speaker dominance	1	3
	Speaker and hearer	3	0
Request strategies	Mood derivable	0	0
	Explicit performative	0	0
	Obligation statement	0	0
	Want statement	0	0
	Suggestory formulae	0	2
	Query preparatory	8	8
	Strong hint	2	0
Syntactic downgraders	Interrogative	2	1
	Subjunctive	0	0
	Conditional	1	1
	Aspect	0	0
	Conditional clause	0	0
	Cajoler	0	0
	Total: Syntactic downgraders	**3**	**2**

Lexical and Phrasal downgraders	Politeness marker	5	3
	Hedge	0	1
	Downtoner	3	0
	Total: Downgraders	**8**	**4**
Upgraders	Intensifier	0	0
	Time intensifier	0	0
	Repetition of request	0	0
	Emphatic edition	0	0
	Total: Upgraders	**0**	**0**
Mitigating supportive moves	Preparator	2	1
	Getting pre-commitment	0	1
	Grounder	9	7
	Promise of reward	0	0
	Imposition / cost minimiser	4	2
	Total: Supportive moves	**15**	**11**

Table 13: Situation 1: ('grandfather' request) – L1 English speakers versus Omani L2 English students

Lexical and phrasal downgraders

Both groups used lexical and phrasal downgraders, e.g., *please,* but the L1 speakers used them 40% more frequently than the Omani L2 English speakers. Additionally, L1 speakers used downtoners such as *possible* and *perhaps*. I believe the more frequent use of lexical and phrasal downgraders is due to lack of pragmalinguistic competence and language proficiency. The Omani L2 English students used other devices to show politeness and respect, such as, *With my respect for you* and *I know we have not gathered for a long time* used as a preparator transferred from L1.

Supportive moves

In terms of supportive moves, the L1 speakers used more than the Omani L2 English students, with the ratio being 15-11. The Omani L2 English students often did not give a reason for not being able to attend. As will be discussed in the next section, many Omani L2 English students' responses were deemed inappropriate by the L2 Omani English teachers, so possibly some responses were not honestly reported, but rather written to be perceived by L1 speakers as appropriate, e.g., *Is it okay if we meet next week, because I am a little busy with something in the university*. This response is inappropriate in Omani culture and will be discussed in section 4. It has been observed that Omani L2 English students often underuse politeness markers in the target language, even though they regularly mark their utterances for politeness in L1; nor

do they transfer available knowledge and strategies to new tasks in the target language (Kasper 2001:6). The L1 speakers also used the cost minimiser twice as much as the Omani L2 English speakers, e.g., *I am sorry*. With the Omani L2 English speakers there was no use of the word *sorry*.

4.3.2   Situation 2 ('lecture note' request - Table 14)

For situation 2 all the responses were accepted, making a total of ten Omani L2 English student responses and ten L1 English speaker responses.

Alerters

The L1 speakers used nine attention-getters in this situation, e.g., *excuse me* and *hi*. The Omani L2 students used seven attention getters, e.g., *hello*, *salam alikum, peace be upon you* and *excuse me*.

Request perspective

The L1 speakers favoured speaker dominance, with *you* used seven times in contrast with the Omani L2 English students' use of *you* five times. The Omani L2 English students favoured *you* (hearer dominance) and *I* (speaker dominance) equally, with five uses of each.

Request strategy

The favoured request strategy was once again the query preparatory. It is interesting that *can* was used six times by the Omani L2 English students, but only once by the L1 speakers. It may be that they have a preference for *can* and only have limited opportunity to use English in making requests, so they stick to the strategy that they know is polite. In contrast, the L1 speakers use the word *could* five times and the Omani L2 English students use it twice. The L1 English speakers also use the phrases *would you mind, would you mind very much* and *would it be possible*, showing greater variety when using the query preparatory. The Omani L2 English students use *would* only once, e.g., *So would you lend me your notes?* The limited use of lexis and phrases to give variety to the query preparatory is a clear indication of an English language teaching shortfall. The use of whimperatives, i.e., *can*, *would* and *could*, is more prevalent among the L1 speakers. This indicates a lack of pragmalinguistic competence amongst the L2 English speakers. Whimperatives need to be taught to Omani L2 English

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students; as well as the fact that *would* and *could* are considered more polite than *can*. The second most polite strategy as rated by both groups in this situation in the 'perceptions of politeness' questionnaire was the want statement, but it was only used by the Omani L2 English students, thus showing more variety in request strategy, e.g., *Hello! I missed the lecture and I want your notes if you can help me.* This is not a strategy that would be used by L1 speakers, as the use of the word *want* puts a greater imposition on the hearer, increasing impoliteness, and could be construed as a demand if the hearer is not listening mindfully. In both groups the reliance was heavily on indirect strategies in situations of medium to high social distance, social power and ranking of imposition.

Lexical and phrasal downgraders

The L1 speakers use politeness markers 40% more frequently than the L2 speakers. The Omani L2 English students use the word *please*. The L1 speakers also use the word *please*, but also use phrases such as *Do you think* as in *Do you think I could borrow your notes*, and *very much* as in *Would you mind very much lending me your notes, please*? Once again, this points to the need to teach pragmatics in an effort to develop communicative competence pragmalinguistically. Also, phrases such as *salam alikum*, which is often used (but with the exclusion of the politeness marker *please*) and which is a politeness marker in itself, is used as an attention-getter. In addition, native speakers once again, as in situation 1, use the downtoner *possible* to lessen the FTA and degree of imposition and increase politeness. It should be noted that although Omani L2 English speakers use less conventional politeness markers, due to pragmalinguistic competence, they do compensate with the use of supportive moves (see below).

Upgraders

In both groups, the time intensifier is used to mitigate the force of the request and to lessen the imposition. The Omani L2 English speakers use the time intensifier seven times in ten requests. The phrase *as soon as possible* is used four times, e.g., I *will finish copying as soon as possible, I will give it back as soon as possible* and *I will bring it back as soon as possible*. This use of the time intensifier indicates L1 transfer, showing that to lessen imposition and to increase the chances of the hearer granting the request, the inclusion of time as a marker of urgency and as a guarantee of returning the item borrowed quickly is important. The reason I say L1 transfer occurs is that this upgrader is not taught as part of the English language

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curriculum. This is a good example of positive transfer because in many instances L1 English speakers would prefer that the item borrowed is returned quickly, unless otherwise stated. The time intensifier used here is a perfect example of conventionalisation of a specific tactic by L2 Omani English speakers for requests in this specific context (that of low imposition among social equals). Conventionalisation occurs when a strategy used in an L1 is successful transferred to an L2. In contrast, the L1 English speakers only use the time intensifier twice, e.g., *I will give them back right away* and *I'll return them ASAP*; expressions that may confuse less proficient Omani L2 English students.

Coding strategy	Coding sub-category	L1	L2
Alerters	Title	0	0
	First name	0	0
	Endearment term	0	0
	Attention getter	9	7
	Total: Alerters	**9**	**7**
Request perspective	Hearer dominance	3	5
	Speaker dominance	7	5
	Speaker and hearer	0	0
Request strategies	Mood derivable	0	0
	Explicit performative	0	0
	Obligation statement	0	0
	Want statement	0	1
	Suggestory formula	0	0
	Query preparatory	10	9
	Strong hint	0	0
Syntactic downgraders	Interrogative	0	0
	Subjunctive	1	0
	Conditional	0	0
	Aspect	0	0
	Conditional clause	0	1
	Cajoler	0	**0**
	Total: Syntactic downgraders	**1**	**1**
Lexical and phrasal downgraders	Politeness marker	5	3
	Hedge	0	0
	Downtoner	2	0
	Total: Downgraders	**7**	**3**
Upgraders	Intensifier	1	0
	Time intensifier	2	7
	Repetition of request	0	0
	Emphatic edition	0	0
	Total: Upgraders	**3**	**7**

Mitigating supportive moves	Preparator	0	0
	Getting pre-commitment	0	0
	Grounder	9	8
	Promise of reward	0	0
	Imposition / cost minimizer	1	0
	Total: Supportive moves	**10**	**8**

Table 14: Situation 2: ('lecture notes' request) – L1 English versus Omani L2 English students

Supportive moves

For both groups, grounders are used nearly equally in this situation, with a reason being given for the request. Examples of grounders by L1 speakers are *I missed the lecture* or *I am new in this class*. Omani L2 English speakers also used *I missed the lecture* most frequently. The L1 speakers used the phrase *I am sorry*, as in the first situation, which was not used by the Omani L2 English students. Native English speakers often say that they are sorry when making requests; in contrast, Omani speakers do not feel the need to apologise when making a request if it is done politely with attention to face.

4.3.3   Situation 3 ('younger brother' request - Table 15)

For situation 3, one Omani L2 English student response could not be used because the response was not a request. To make the numbers even, one L1 speaker response was randomly removed, making a total of nine Omani L2 English student responses and nine L1 English speaker responses.

Alerters

L1 speakers used their brother's first name six times compared to only one use by the Omani L2 English students. Use of first name is a form of politeness lessening the degree of imposition on the hearer. In contrast, the Omani L2 English students used the endearment terms *bro* and *brother* instead of first name usage. The L1 speakers used the attention-getters *hi* and *hey* three times, compared with one use by the Omani L2 English students. To summarise, the L1 English speakers demonstrated more politeness in this category.

Request perspective

Both groups favoured hearer dominance in this category, with the L1 speakers using it slightly more frequently than the Omani L2 English students, with 9 compared to 7 uses. The Omani

L2 English students used speaker dominance once and speaker/hearer dominance once (e.g., *let*).

Request strategies

In this category, there was a great deal of difference between the two groups. The most favoured strategy amongst both groups was the query preparatory. This would agree with the 'perceptions of politeness' questionnaire in which both groups selected the query preparatory as the most polite. However, in this context the L1 speakers used the query preparatory 100% of the time, with *Can you go…* used four out of nine times. In contrast, the Omani L2 English students used other strategies as well. The mood derivable was used twice, e.g., *Please go to the supermarket* and *Go to the supermarket*. The want statement was used once, e.g., *Majid, I want you to go to the supermarket*. The strong hint was used once, e.g., *I need something important from the supermarket. Don't worry I will give you money. So, please go and don't be late*. These examples show that for low imposition, low social distance, and when power distance is equal or the speaker has greater power than the hearer, Omani L2 English students show a greater degree of directness and produce more direct strategies. The results confirm findings of previous studies of Arabic speakers, for example Umar (2004), Al-Ammar (2000), Imen (2012), and Al-Marrani and Sazalie (2010). The L1 speakers, in contrast, rely predominantly on conventional indirect strategies.

Lexical and phrasal downgraders

The L1 English speakers used politeness markers 25% more frequently than the Omani L2 English students, e.g., *please*.

Upgraders

Both groups used time intensifiers, but the Omani L2 English students used them twice as many times. This reinforces the conclusion drawn in situation 2 (where time intensifiers were used more than three times more frequently by L2 speakers than by L1 speakers) that this strategy is used in the first language of the L2 speakers and is being transferred to the L2 language.

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Supportive moves

In both groups, two promises of reward were used and three grounders, i.e., *I need something important from the supermarket. Don't worry I will give you money* and *Can you go to the store for me? I need some stuff for dinner. Please, I'll pay you*.

The above results for situation 3 show that Omani L2 English students use more direct strategies in situations where there is low social distance, low imposition and equal power distance or where the speaker has greater power than the hearer. However, as has been illustrated, directness does not equal impoliteness. L1 speakers use conventional indirect strategies in this context, whereas Omani L2 English students also use more direct strategies, but combine them with lexical and phrasal downgraders, upgraders and supportive moves to soften the imposition. For example, from an Omani L2 English student's perspective, use of the first name shows politeness and is used as such, e.g., *Majid, I want you to go to the supermarket to buy some vegetables* or *Please go to the supermarket*. The mood derivable used without showing attention to face in conformity with Grice's maxims is considered by both L1 and Omani L2 English students as impolite. In other words, the use of the mood derivable as a bald on-record strategy without internal or external mitigating devices is considered impolite by both L1 English speakers and Omani L2 English students in this context.

Coding strategy	Coding sub-category	L1	L2
Alerters	Title	0	0
	First name	6	1
	Endearment term	0	3
	Attention-getter	3	1
	Total: Alerters	**9**	**5**
Request perspective	Hearer dominance	9	7
	Speaker dominance	0	1
	Speaker and hearer	0	1
Request strategies	Mood derivable	0	2
	Explicit performative	0	0
	Obligation statement	0	0
	Want statement	0	1
	Suggestory formulae	0	0
	Query preparatory	9	5
	Strong hint	0	1
	Mild hint	0	1
Syntactic downgraders	Interrogative	0	0
	Subjunctive	0	0

	Conditional	1	0
	Aspect	0	0
	Conditional clause	0	0
	Cajoler	0	0
	Total: Syntactic downgraders	**1**	**0**
Lexical and phrasal downgraders	Politeness marker	4	3
	Hedge	0	0
	Downtoner	0	0
	Total: Downgraders	**4**	**3**
Upgraders	Intensifier	0	0
	Time intensifier	1	2
	Repetition of request	0	0
	Emphatic edition	0	0
	Total: Upgraders	**1**	**2**
Mitigating supportive moves	Preparator	0	0
	Getting pre-commitment	0	0
	Grounder	3	3
	Promise of reward	2	2
	Imposition/cost minimiser	0	0
	Total: Supportive moves	**5**	**4**

Table 15: Situation 3: ('younger brother' request) – L1 English versus Omani L2 English students.

4.3.4   Situation 4 ('university instructor' request – Table 16)

For situation 4, one Omani L2 English student's response could not be used and one L1 speaker response could not be used, making a total of nine Omani L2 English student responses and nine L1 English speaker responses. The responses could not be used because they were not requests. In this contextual situation, the social distance for both groups is high. In terms of power distance, in both groups the hearer has more power than the speaker. The degree of imposition is regarded as quite low by both L1 speakers and Omani L2 English students.

Coding strategy	**Coding sub-category**	**L1**	**L2**
Alerters	Title	5	5
	First name	0	0
	Endearment term	0	3
	Attention-getter	3	2
	Total: Alerters	**8**	**10**
Request perspective	Hearer dominance	6	5
	Speaker dominance	3	4
	Speaker and hearer	0	0
Request strategies	Mood derivable	0	3
	Explicit performative	0	0
	Obligation statement	0	0
	Want statement	0	0

	Suggestory formulae	0	0
	Query preparatory	6	3
	Strong hint	3	3
	Mild hint	0	1
Syntactic downgraders	Interrogative	0	0
	Subjunctive	0	0
	Conditional	0	0
	Aspect	0	0
	Conditional clause	0	1
	Cajoler	1	0
	Total: Syntactic downgraders	**1**	**1**
Lexical and phrasal downgraders	Politeness marker	3	4
	Hedge	0	0
	Downtoner	3	3
	Cajolar	1	0
	Total: Downgraders	**7**	**7**
Upgraders	Intensifier	0	0
	Time intensifier	1	3
	Repetition of request	0	0
	Emphatic edition	0	0
	Total: Upgraders	**1**	**3**
Mitigating supportive moves	Preparator	8	1
	Getting pre-commitment	0	0
	Grounder	9	7
	Promise of reward	0	0
	Imposition/cost minimiser	0	2
	Total: Supportive moves	**17**	**10**

Table 16: Situation 4: ('university instructor' request) – L1 English versus Omani L2 English students

Alerter

In both groups, the title is used five times, showing a good deal of respect towards the lecturer, e.g., *professor*. In addition, the Omani L2 English students use an endearment term three times, showing the affection they have for their instructor, e.g., *My professor, Dear professor* and *Dear teacher*. There is also use by both groups of the attention-getter (e.g., *Excuse me*), although the L1 speakers use it 33% more frequently than the Omani L2 English students.

Request perspective

For both groups. the hearer perspective has preference over the speaker perspective in this context. This places the emphasis of the request strongly on the addressee.

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Request strategy

Both groups' most-used strategy is the query preparatory. However, the L1 speakers use it twice as frequently as the Omani L2 English students. In contrast, the Omani L2 English students used the mood derivable three times more than the L1 speakers. Here again the Omani L2 English students used the most direct strategy, compared to the L1 speakers who used what is considered the most polite strategy, i.e., the query preparatory, which Brown and Levinson (1987) describe as an on-record strategy with redressive action. However, when the Omani L2 English students used the mood derivable, they used it with internal modifiers, i.e., lexical and phrasal downgraders, such as *So please give me more time to submit my assignment* and *Is it possible if you give me more time to finish my assignment.* In these two examples the politeness marker *please* and the downtoner *is it possible* were probably used to show politeness and mitigate the degree of imposition of the FTA. This once again shows, as in situation 2, that the Omani L2 English students do use the direct mood derivable strategy in what they consider low imposition request contexts, in contrast to the L1 speakers who generally do not; thus demonstrating that directness does not necessarily imply impoliteness. The strong hint is also used in this situation by both groups, e.g., *Is there a possibility of postponing the submission* and *Hello professor, I know that you said my submission date is set in stone, but surely there must be some avenue available to me on compassionate grounds?*

Lexical and phrasal downtoners

In this context, both groups used the politeness marker *please*, but the L2 speakers used the politeness marker 25% more frequently than the L1 speakers. As discussed above, when the mood derivable is used it is generally used with internal or external modifiers to mitigate the force of the direct request strategy. Downtoners were used equally by both groups, e.g., *would it be possible* and *is it possible*.

Upgraders

The L2 speakers once again, as in situation 2 and 3, used a greater number of time intensifiers to increase the impact of the request. The L2 Omani English speakers used the time intensifier 66% more frequently than the L1 speakers. Examples of the time intensifier by L2 speakers are *I promise that I will submit my homework after two days from now* and *So, if you please just, few more days*.

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Supportive moves

The L1 English speakers used the preparator eight times more frequently than the L2 Omani English speakers. This indicates that whereas in L1 English culture the use of the preparator is a common way to make medium to high imposition request when communicating with those who may have higher social distance and power, it is rarely used in Omani culture. The preparator is part of what could be taught if pragmatics were part of the curriculum. Eight out of the nine L1 respondents included a grounder with the preparator. L1 speakers used the grounder twice and in these two instances used the imposition minimiser instead of a grounder. An example of a cost minimiser used by an Omani L2 English student is *Let me explain my situation and you can decide whether to give me or not*. Examples of L1 speaker use of preparator and grounder are *I hate to ask but my Mom's medical condition is quite bad, I am really sorry I haven't been able to get my assignment in yet, but my mother has been sick* and *Excuse me, Sir. I need a special favour… My mother was really sick*.

Once again we see similarities and differences in how the two groups make requests. Although there are differences, politeness is maintained by the Omani L2 English students, even with the use of the most direct strategies.

4.3.5   Situation 5 ('waiter' request – Table 17)

For situation 5, there were a total of ten Omani L2 English students' responses and ten L1 English speaker responses. In this contextual situation, the social distance for both groups is high. The speaker has more power than the hearer in both groups. The degree of imposition is regarded as low. The power distance in this instance is a reversal of situation 4 ('university instructor' request).

Alerters

In this scenario, the Omani L2 English students used the attention-getter *Excuse me* seven times and the L1 English speakers four times. The use of *Excuse me* indicates heightened politeness preceding the actual request.

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Coding strategy	Coding sub-category	L1	L2
Alerters	Title	0	1
	First name	0	0
	Endearment term	0	0
	Attention-getter	4	7
	Total: Alerters	**4**	**8**
Request perspective	Hearer dominance	4	5
	Speaker dominance	4	2
	Speaker and hearer	0	0
Request strategies	Mood derivable	1	3
	Explicit performative	0	0
	Obligation statement	0	0
	Want statement	0	0
	Suggestory formulae	0	0
	Query preparatory	8	7
	Strong hint	1	0
Syntactic downgraders	Interrogative	0	0
	Subjunctive	0	0
	Conditional	0	0
	Aspect	0	0
	Conditional clause	0	0
	Cajoler	0	0
	Total: Syntactic downgraders	**0**	**0**
Lexical and phrasal downgraders	Politeness marker	8	6
	Hedge	0	0
	Downtoner	0	0
	Total: Downgraders	**8**	**6**
Upgraders	Intensifier	0	0
	Time intensifier	0	0
	Repetition of request	0	0
	Emphatic edition	0	0
	Total: Upgraders	**0**	**0**
Mitigating supportive moves	Preparator	1	0
	Getting pre-commitment	0	0
	Grounder	0	4
	Promise of reward	0	0
	Imposition/cost minimiser	0	0
	Total: Supportive moves	**1**	**4**

Table 17: Situation 5: ('waiter' request) – L1 English versus Omani L2 English students

Request perspective

The L1 speakers in this context had an equal preference for hearer and speaker dominance. The Omani L2 English students, in contrast, used the hearer dominance *you* more than twice as often as they used the speaker dominance *I*. This would indicate the Omani L2 English students' focus on the hearer's ability to give and the L1 speakers' focus on their desire to receive.

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Request strategies

Once again, the most-used request strategy amongst both groups was the query preparatory, e.g., *Excuse me could you please bring me the bill please* and *Excuse me, can I have the bill?* The Omani L2 English students once again used the mood derivable for a low-imposition request 66% more frequently than the L1 speakers, who only used it once. In this instance, because bringing the bill is the waiter's job, less attention was given to face, with the use of the on-record strategy without redressive action. The Omani L2 English students used the mood derivable in this way, *Excuse me, the check* and *Excuse me, the bill*. The use of *Excuse me* serves as a politeness marker for the Omani L2 English students in this instance. The L1 mood derivable request was *The check, please*? The L1 speakers also used a strong hint, e.g., *Excuse me, I think we are ready for the bill.*

Lexical and phrasal downgraders

The politeness marker *please* was used 25% more frequently by the L1 speakers than by the L2 Omani English speakers in this instance, with a ratio of 8 − 6. As mentioned above, the Omani L2 English students used *Excuse me* as a politeness marker instead of *please* in some instances.

Supportive moves

In this category, the L2 Omani English students used four markers; in contrast with the L1 speakers who did not use any, e.g., *Excuse me, can I have the bill?*; *I have finished and I want to leave* and *Please we finished eating our meal. Could you bring the bill*. The Omani L2 English students' also included one instance of a compliment, *Can you bring the bill please? It was a nice meal.* The L1 English speakers also included one compliment, namely *That was wonderful. Can I have the bill please?*

All in all, if the use of *Excuse me* as a politeness marker is included, the Omani L2 English students showed a greater degree of politeness in this context than the L1 speakers.

4.3.6   Totals of all five requests (Table 18)

This table shows the combined results of all five situations in which all contexts were influenced by cultural differences in social variables, i.e., social power, social distance and

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ranking or degree of imposition placed on the hearer as a result of the request being made. The table of collated results allows for comparison between the two language groups.

Coding strategy	Coding sub-category	L1	L2
Alerters	Title	6	10
	First Name	6	1
	Endearment term	8	12
	Attention getter	22	19
	Total: Alerters	**42**	**42**
Request perspective	Hearer dominance	28	29
	Speaker dominance	15	15
	Speaker and hearer	3	1
Request strategies	Mood derivable	1	7
	Explicit performative	0	0
	Obligation statement	0	0
	Want Statement	0	3
	Suggestory formulae	0	2
	Query preparatory	41	31
	Strong hint	5	5
	Mild hint	0	1
Syntactic downgraders	Interrogative	2	1
	Subjunctive	1	0
	Conditional	2	1
	Aspect	0	0
	Conditional clause	0	2
	Cajoler	1	0
	Total: Syntactic downgraders	**6**	**4**
Lexical and phrasal downgraders	Politeness marker	25	20
	Hedge	0	1
	Downtoner	8	3
	Total: Downgraders	**33**	**24**
Upgraders	Intensifier	1	0
	Time intensifier	4	12
	Repetition of request	0	0
	Emphatic edition	0	0
	Total: Upgraders	**5**	**12**
Mitigating supportive moves	Preparator	11	1
	Getting pre-commitment	0	1
	Grounder	30	29
	Promise of reward	2	2
	Imposition/cost minimiser	5	4
	Total: Supportive moves	**48**	**37**

Table 18: Totals: (All five requests) – L1 English versus Omani L2 English students

Alerters

The use of a title when addressing those with higher social standing or social power was more prevalent among the Omani L2 English students who used the title 40% more frequently than

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the L1 speakers. This relates directly to the differences between high power distance and low power distance cultures where seniority, rank, title and age are considered more important than individual credibility. For example, in situation 1 ('grandfather' request) and situation 4 ('university instructor' request), there is a great deal more formality associated with these contextual situations by the Omani L2 English students. In contrast, first names are used more by the L1 speakers than by the Omani L2 English students; in fact, approximately 80% more frequently. In high power distance cultures, those with social status enjoy more respect than those in a low power distance culture where first names are used to address superiors in the work place. The Omani L2 English students make up for not using the first name by using an endearment term 33% more frequently than the L1 speakers. Both groups use attention-getters for communicative purposes. In many instances, the Omani L2 English students will use the attention-getter *Excuse me* as a politeness marker to soften the request, e.g., when making a request from a stranger such as a waiter (as in situation 5). The total number of alerters used by each group is equal, with 42 for each group.

Request perspective

In this category, the combined results were very similar. For both groups hearer dominance was preferred, occuring approximately 50% more frequently than speaker dominance for the combined results; however, for the individual results, context played a part and the numbers did not reflect the same results as the combined results. The main difference in this category was with regard to hearer/speaker dominance *we* which the L1 English speakers used 66% more frequently than the Omani L2 English students

Request strategy

In this category, we find that the query preparatory is the most preferred in terms of politeness across all five situations. However, the L1 speakers use it approximately 25% more frequently than the Omani L2 English students. These similarities in the use of the query preparatory are most prevalent when the speakers address those of equal or higher social status with medium to high imposition, and would apply to situation 1 ('grandfather' request) and situation 2 ('lecture notes' request). In situation 4 ('university instructor' request), the query preparatory is prevalent with the L1 speakers who regard the social distance as medium to high, but not prevalent with the L2 speakers who only use it 20% of the time, probably because they

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consider this request to be low imposition. The strong hint is used by both groups. This indicates that the strong hint is considered polite if done with attention to face.

The most noticeable difference in strategy is with regard to the mood derivable. It is used six times more often by the Omani L2 English students than the L1 speakers. Omani L2 English students use the mood derivable in contexts where the degree of imposition is low, such as in situation 3 ('younger brother' request), situation 4 ('university instructor' request) and situation 5 ('waiter' request). The mood derivable will even be used with a university lecturer when the power distance and social distance are medium to high, as in situation 4. In Omani Arab and other cultures, a greater degree of directness is acceptable between brothers because of their intimate relations, and less formality is required, e.g., *Majid, I want you to go to the supermarket to buy some vegetables* or *Can you go to the store and buy me some veggies*. The use of the mood derivable by Omani L2 English students casts doubt on the theory of the universality of politeness. Wierzbicka (1985:172) states that the use of the imperative is considered polite in many cultures (such as Polish), and the fact that indirect means are often sought is an English requirement and not universally applicable. Brown and Levinson (1987:65) state that all beings are rational and they weigh the different means to an end in utterance choice, and then choose the best one to achieve the desired goal. The Omani L2 English students would not be rational beings if they chose to be impolite when making requests, thus direct utterances are often used and considered polite as well.

Another major difference in requestive behaviour is with regard to the use of the want statement which was used twice as often by the Omani L2 English students. The L1 speakers never used it at all. The use of the want statement is considered polite in certain contexts without mitigating devices, as illustrated in the paragraph above. The use of the mild hint was discussed above in relation to high-context societies. The combined results show that for requests the Omani L2 English students use a greater variety of strategies, but not with greater communicative proficiency in the target language. Additionally, both groups' preference in making requests is for the use of indirect strategies, specifically conventionally indirect strategies.

Lexical and phrasal downgraders

The use of politeness markers was 20% more prevalent amongst the L1 speakers. As discussed above, the Omani L2 English students used other means to convey politeness and preserve face. Similarly, downtoners were used nearly three times more frequently by the L1 speakers. This can probably be attributed to a lack of proficiency in the target language with regard to pragmalinguistic competence amongst the majority of the Omani L2 English students relating to the use of *possibly* and *perhaps* as mitigating lexical devices. The L1 speakers used approximately 33% more lexical and phrasal downtoners than the L2 speakers.

Upgraders

The time intensifier was 66% more frequently produced by the Omani L2 English students than the L1 English speakers. This indicates that this is a strategy used by the Omani L2 English students in their own culture and language, because the teaching of it is not part of the curriculum. It is a good example of positive transference of semantic and syntactic formulae. Time intensifiers are used in situations 2, 3 and 4 by the Omani L2 English students, showing that this tactic is commonly used in Arabic as a mitigating strategy. In this category, more upgraders were used by the Omani L2 English students than the L1 English speakers due to the usage of the time intensifier when making requests.

Supportive moves

The most-used supportive move amongst both groups was the grounder. The grounder was used 30 times by the L1 speakers and 29 times by the Omani L2 English students. Promise of reward and cost minimiser were also used by both groups, showing that these semantic and syntactic formulae are used by many in both groups in their own cultures and languages. The striking difference here was the use of the use of the preparatory; used mainly in situation 4 by the L1 speakers. The L2 Omani English speakers only used the preparatory once in all five situations. This would indicate a preference in medium to high imposition contexts for L1 speakers to use this tactic. The L1 speakers were, in contrast, generally less restrained when making the request in situation 4. However, they did consider it a low-imposition request. The preparatory, like the time intensifier, stands out in stark contrast of usage as a difference in tactic between the L1 speakers and Omani L2 English students. The L2 English students used supportive moves more frequently than did the L1 speakers. The Omani L2 English students'

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less frequent usage of semantic and syntactic formulae can be attributed largely to a lack of proficiency in the target language.

4.4   Teacher judgements

In this series of questionnaires, three Omani L2 English teachers and three L1 English teachers had to rate the written responses to the DCT provided by the participants by answering "yes" or "no" to five questions:

1. Is the student/teacher polite?

2. Is the student/teacher formal?

3. Is the request appropriate for the situation?

4. Is the request grammatically correct?

5. Is what the student is requesting clearly understood?

The L2 Omani English teachers rated the L1 speakers' and Omani L2 English students' responses to all five scenarios and the L1 English speakers rated the L1 speakers' and Omani L2 English students' for all five situations. The ratings of the two groups were then compared.

Four Omani L2 English teachers completed the rating exercise initially. One of the L2 Omani English teachers completed the questionnaire incorrectly by placing a circle in some instances and by drawing a line through the 'y' or 'n' in other instances, making it unclear which choices he had made. It was therefore decided not to use the data he provided. This left only three L2 Omani English teacher participants and three L1 English teachers.

The results of the ratings were all converted to percentages. The L1 speakers' results for each scenario were multiplied by 3.33 to get a percentage out of 100, e.g., three participants each rate 10 responses for politeness = 3 x 10 = 30 multiplied by 3.33 = 100. In addition, some situations had only 8 or 9 responses (see the previous section above). Also, occasionally a question was missed and therefore no circle placed around the 'y' or 'n'. To convert each score for each of the five questions to 10, the following was done: 9 was multiplied by 1.1 to convert to 10 and 8 was multiplied by 1.25 to convert to 10. This was done for each of the three participants to obtain a score out of 10, and it was done for "yes" totals and "no" totals. Once

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the scores out of 10 were calculated the percentage calculations were done. For the L2 Omani English teachers the same calculations were done, with the exception of the final percentages. In this instance, the totals were multiplied by 5 to get a percentage out of 100, e.g., 2 x 10 = 20 multiplied by 5 = 100. This method then converted both groups' ratings to percentages for purposes of comparison.

4.4.1 Situation 1 ('grandfather' request)

	L1 English Responses				L2 English Responses			
	Rated by				Rated by			
	L1 Speakers		L2 Speakers		L1 Speakers		L2 Speakers	
	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no
Polite	100	0	94	6	83.3	16.7	60	40
Formal	16.7	83.3	42	58	40	60	35	65
Appropriate	87.5	12.5	87.5	12.5	83.3	16.7	55	45
Grammatically correct	91	9	87.5	12.5	27	73	85	15
Clearly understood	100	0	100	0	97	3	100	0

Table 19: Situation 1: Rating comparison table by L1 English speakers and Omani L2 English teachers

Ratings for politeness

The L1 responses were rated very polite by both groups of raters (L1 = 100; L2 = 94). However, the Omani L2 English students' responses were considered far less polite by the Omani L2 raters than the L1 raters; the Omani L2 English teacher raters judged more than twice as many responses than the L1 raters as impolite. The reason for this is linked to appropriateness and will be discussed below.

Ratings for formality

Both groups of raters considered the responses of both groups of participants to be more informal than formal. However, the L1 raters considered the L2 Omani English students' responses to be more formal than the L1 speakers' responses. This would support the collectivist view of the grandfather figure in the family as having high social status and high power distance, resulting in a greater degree of deference generally being shown by the Omani L2 English students.

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Ratings for appropriateness

In this category, the L1 responses were considered appropriate by both groups of raters. The L1 raters also considered the Omani L2 English students' responses appropriate. However, the Omani L2 raters considered nearly half of the Omani L2 English students' responses inappropriate. For example, *Grandpa, you know the gathering you told me about? It's at the same time as my best friend's birthday, and you know I helped her plan and the party's really important. Is there another time we can meet?* This Omani L2 English speaker's response is inappropriate according to the L2 raters because it would be impolite to say to your grandfather that another engagement is more important than a family gathering. For this reason, the following Omani L2 English students' response is inappropriate: *Sorry Grandfather, but I won't be able to come to your party but is it ok for you to arrange it another day?* In Omani culture this is totally inappropriate (data drawn from interviews – see introduction to this chapter). The grandfather decides when the family gathering will be and even if a family member has to miss work they must attend. With my students, they will sometimes miss a class because a family gathering is an important social function and takes priority over anything else. The following Omani L2 English students' response is appropriate: *My grandfather, I want to tell you my friend party will be at the same day of our gathering. Would you please arrange for another day to meet you?* This is polite and appropriate because more attention is given to positive face by the use of the politeness marker *please*. In this instance, *would you please arrange for another day* is a question and the grandfather will decide whether the student must attend or not. If he says s/he must attend then s/he must comply. Effective pragmatic competence in this social situation would require mindfulness with regard to 'identity meaning', which refers to proper respect for the self-image of the hearer, and 'relational meaning', which refers to the understanding of power distance and intimacy (Ting-Toomey 1998:264). For students to communicate competently, sociopragmatic rules must be understood. In the instances of Omani L2 English students' inappropriateness above, the reason for this inappropriateness would be the lack of pragmalinguistic competence and proficiency in the target language.

Ratings for grammaticality

Both groups of raters rated the L1 responses approximately 90% correct. The major difference here is that the L1 raters rate the Omani L2 English students' grammatical correctness at 27%, and the Omani L2 English raters rate the Omani L2 English students' responses at 85% correct.

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Clearly, the Omani L2 raters have a problem judging grammatical correctness. This is a sure indicator of the difference in grammatical competence between the Omani L2 English teachers and L1 English teachers. For example, *Is it okay if we meet next week, because I am little busy with something in the university*. This was rated as grammatically correct by the Omani L2 raters, but it is missing the indefinite article *a* before the word *little*. Another example is *Can you change the meet day? I have to be with my best friend party*. Here, the incorrect preposition is used (*with* instead of *at*), and *friend* instead of *friend's* and *meet* instead of *meeting* is used. The implications of the lack of grammatical competence amongst L2 English teachers would be incorrect usage transfer from L2 English teachers to students. According to Thomas (1983:101), pragmalinguistic failure occurs because of 'teacher-induced errors' or 'pragmalinguistic transfer'. The results here indicate how teacher induced error could occur.

4.4.2 Situation 2 ('lecture notes' request)

	L1 English Responses				L2 English Responses			
	Rated by				Rated by			
	L1 Speakers		L2 Speakers		L1 Speakers		L2 Speakers	
	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no
Polite	97	3	100	0	76.7	23.3	85	15
Formal	33.3	67.7	70	30	40	60	65	35
Appropriate	97	0	85	15	90	10	80	20
Grammatically correct	80	20	85	15	33.3	67.7	70	30
Clearly understood	97	3	100	3	97	3	100	0

Table 20: Situation 2: Rating comparison table by L1 English speakers and Omani L2 English speakers

Ratings for politeness

The ratings for politeness in this situation were similar. The request is being made by a person you do not know very well, and so the imposition is greater. Greater effort is made to be polite by both groups of speakers, and the results indicate this. The Omani L2 English students were considered slightly less polite than the L1 English speakers who enjoy greater proficiency in English.

Ratings for formality

The responses were perceived to be more formal by the Omani L2 raters group than by the L1 raters group, with a rating of approximately 66% amongst the first group compared to 33% amongst the second group. The L1 raters group perceived the responses as less formal by approximately 33% to 66%. The perceptions here were opposite for the two groups of raters, and even within the same group there was disagreement on levels of formality and informality.

Ratings for appropriateness

The responses for both groups were perceived by the L1 raters as mostly appropriate. However, the Omani L2 English raters found 15-20% of the responses inappropriate. For example, the L1 speaker response *Hi there. I had to miss yesterdays lecture, but I have noticed that you take a lot of notes. Would it be okay for me to copy yours?* was considered inappropriate. In Omani culture (as gathered from interview data), paying too much attention to another person's personal habits is disrespectful. One should not scrutinise the behaviour of others too closely. This originates from the religious beliefs and a saying by the Prophet Mohammed, which I will paraphrase, *If you want to be a good believer do not put your nose in others' affairs.* An Omani would seriously reconsider a friendship if the friend behaved in such a way. In contrast, L1 speakers use this tactic as a compliment in order to succeed in the goal of securing the lecture notes. It is important to note that a teacher may notice such behaviour as diligent note-taking because it is his/her job to do so and therefore totally appropriate. Another example by an L1 speaker considered inappropriate by Omani L2 raters is, *Excuse me, I am really sorry to ask you, but a family emergency meant I missed the lecture this morning. Would you mind very much lending me your notes please?* In Omani culture (as gathered from interview data), a person does not mention family affairs because they are personal. A male will not even mention his wife or daughter's name to a friend because asking about a male's female family members is taboo. A final example of an inappropriate request, this time by an Omani L2 English student, is *Peace be upon you. I am sorry if I bothered you. I missed today's lecture. If you have your notes can I take photos of them. It will take 5 minutes.* This is considered inappropriate because the word the use of the word *if* implies that you may be testing them to see if they will lie to you by saying they don't have their notes when you know they do. In a high-context society it is clear they have their notes, and the use of *if* would be regarded as disrespectful. For L1 speakers, it is perfectly polite and gives the speaker the option to not comply with the request. This is perfectly polite in English, but the participants

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were asked to write what they would say in a real life situation in their own language (they were asked to think about how they would respond in their L1 and write their responses in grammatically correct English).

Ratings for grammaticality

Once again, as in situation 1, the L1 responses were perceived similarly by both groups of raters as being mostly correct. The major difference was again with the Omani L2 English students' responses; the Omani L2 raters said that 70% of the responses were correct, in contrast with the L1 raters who said that only 33% were correct. Thus, twice as many Omani L2 English students' responses were judged correct by the Omani L2 raters than by the L1 raters. The results indicate that the Omani L2 English students' responses are more difficult to judge by the L2 English teachers because a more proficient knowledge of grammar is required. An example of a response judged grammatically correct was, *I missed the class today. Can I borrow your note today to copy and I will return at the end of the day*. Here *note* should be *notes*. Plural nouns are a general problem in the Foundation Program. The indication is that if Omani L2 English teachers rate this response as correct then, as Thomas (1983:101) claims, teacher-induced errors are probably occurring in the classroom.

4.4.3   Situation 3 ('younger brother' request)

	L1 English Responses				L2 English Responses			
	Rated by				Rated by			
	L1 Speakers		L2 Speakers		L1 Speakers		L2 Speakers	
	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no
Polite	83.3	16.7	75	25	63	37	67	33
Formal	20	80	25	75	33.3	67.7	33	67
Appropriate	100	0	80	20	89	11	50	50
Grammatically correct	93	7	75	25	60	40	50	50
Clearly understood	100	0	95	5	67	33	95	0

Table 21: Situation 3: Rating comparison table by L1 English speakers and L2 Omani English speakers

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Ratings for politeness

In this situation, L1 speaker responses were considered mostly polite by both groups of raters, with a 10% difference in rating. The Omani L2 English students' responses were also considered mostly polite, but not as polite as the L1 speaker responses. Recall that the mood derivable was used in this situation and considered generally impolite by L1 raters. With regard to the Omani L2 English students' responses, approximately one third of them were considered impolite by both groups. This is related to appropriateness in some respects and will be discussed below.

Ratings for formality

Both the L1 speakers' responses and Omani L2 English students' responses were rated similarly by both groups of raters. The majority were considered informal, with the L1 responses scoring slightly higher (by 10-15 %) for informality.

Ratings for appropriateness

The L1 raters rated the L1 speakers' responses 100% appropriate and the Omani L2 English students' responses 80% appropriate. Once again, the Omani L2 raters rated 20% of the L1 speaker responses inappropriate, and 50% of the Omani L2 English students' responses inappropriate. For example, the following Omani L2 English student's response was considered appropriate by the L1 raters, but not by the Omani L2 raters: *I need something important from the supermarket. Don't worry I will give you money. So please go and don't be late*. L1 English speakers find this appropriate, although they may say *don't take too long* instead of *don't be late*. Drawing from the interview data, the Omani L2 English raters find it inappropriate for two reasons. Firstly, to offer money is totally inappropriate when asking a family member to do something for the family. Secondly, the words *don't worry* imply that the hearer may distrust the speaker. A similar tactic was used by an L1 English speaker and found inappropriate by L2 raters for the same reasons; *Can you go to the cold store for me. I need some stuff for dinner. Please, I'll pay you.* Another example found inappropriate by L2 raters is *Majid, I want you to go to the supermarket to buy some vegetables*. The use of *want* is like ordering someone and is considered impolite in Omani culture, but students lacking pragmalinguistic competence think that the use of the word *want* is polite and use it in English, e.g., *I want my marks*. Direct speech acts used by Omani L2 English students and L1 speakers

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need politeness markers to show polite intent, and are used regularly, but with mitigating devices in FTA situations.

Ratings for grammaticality

The grammar was easier to rate in this situation because the majority of the responses were short, simple sentences. The L1 responses were rated with about a 20% difference between the two groups of raters; the Omani L2 raters judged 25% of the L1 speaker responses grammatically incorrect. The following was judged grammatically incorrect by L2 raters: *John can you go to the supermarket for me and pick up some veggies?* The indication here is that the L2 English raters' grammar proficiency is lower than the L1 speakers' proficiency. The Omani L2 English students' responses were rated similarly by both groups of raters − L1 English teachers would be highly unlikely to make grammar errors in the DCT.

4.4.4   Situation 4 ('university instructor' request)

	L1 English Responses				L2 English Responses			
	Rated by				Rated by			
	L1 Speakers		L2 Speakers		L1 Speakers		L2 Speakers	
	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no
Polite	85	15	67	33	96.7	3.3	74	26
Formal	26	74	67	33	48	52	56	44
Appropriate	89	11	67	33	85	15	61	39
Grammatically correct	89	11	89	11	26	74	78	22
Clearly understood	100	0	95	5	96	4	100	0

Table 21: Situation 4: Rating comparison table by L1 English speakers and L2 Omani English speakers

Ratings for politeness

The L1 raters considered the Omani L2 English students' responses to be more polite than the L1 speakers' responses. In contrast, the Omani L2 raters considered the Omani L2 English students' responses to be less polite than the L1 speakers' responses. The Omani L2 raters considered 26% of the Omani L2 English students' responses impolite. This will be discussed under appropriateness.

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Ratings for formality

The ratings of both groups for formality were similar for the Omani L2 English students' responses. However, for the L1 responses, the L1 raters judged 26% of the responses formal, and the Omani L2 raters rated 67% formal. Here we have a difference in perceptions of formality.

Ratings for appropriateness

In this situation, the L1 raters rated the L1 speakers' responses approximately 25% higher for appropriateness than did the Omani L2 English raters; likewise, the L1 raters rated the Omani L2 English students' responses approximately 25% higher for appropriateness than did the Omani L2 raters. The Omani L2 raters judged 33% of the L1 speaker responses inappropriate and 39% of the Omani L2 English students' responses inappropriate. An example of an inappropriate response is *Is it possible to give me more time to finish my assignment as my mother is ill and I need to take care of her these days*. Drawing from the interview data, this response is inappropriate according to the Omani L2 raters because of the mention of *mother*. In Omani society to talk about female members of your family to another male is *haram* or taboo. It should rather be said that a family member is ill. Even amongst good friends, a male would not ask questions about his friend's mother or sister. Information about family members is private and confidential. Information about female members has been described to me as *top secret*.

Ratings for grammaticality

As in situation 1 and situation 2, the ratings for the L1 responses for both groups are similar, and in this instance they are the same. However, with regard to the Omani L2 English students' responses, the L1 raters rate 74% of the responses incorrect and the L1 raters rate 22 % of the utterances incorrect. The indication here is that there is a major difference in grammatical proficiency between the L1 and L2 English teachers.

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4.4.5 Situation 5 ('waiter' request)

	L1 English Responses				L2 English Responses			
	Rated by				Rated by			
	L1 Speakers		L2 Speakers		L1 Speakers		L2 Speakers	
	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no
Polite	93	7	85	15	63	37	50	50
Formal	90	10	75	25	63	37	60	40
Appropriate	100	0	75	25	80	20	50	50
Grammatically correct	100	0	95	5	80	20	90	10
Clearly understood	100	0	80	20	97	3	95	5

Table 22: Situation 5: Rating comparison table by L1 English speakers and L2 Omani English speakers

Ratings for politeness

The L1 speakers' responses were rated by both groups as polite, except in one or two instances. In contrast, the Omani L2 raters rated 40% of the Omani L2 English students' responses impolite, and the L1 raters rated 37% of the Omani L2 English students' responses impolite. In the written responses section, the mood derivable was used in 30% of the responses by the L2 student participants, and this would match the ratings presented here.

Ratings for formality

The responses given by the L1 speakers were considered more formal than those given by the Omani L2 English students.

Ratings for appropriateness

In this situation, 25% of the L1 speaker responses were considered inappropriate by the Omani L2 raters, e.g., *The check, please*. It was explained in the interviews that this response is lacking an *Excuse me*. For L1 speakers, the use of the word "please" would be sufficient. The L1 raters only found two Omani L2 English students' responses inappropriate, e.g., *Hey the bill, please*. The use of *hey* is somewhat rude. This response was also found inappropriate by the Omani L2 raters.

The Omani L2 raters found 50% of the Omani L2 English students' responses inappropriate. These included the mood derivables without *please*. In interviews with Omani L2 English teachers, it was explained that educated Omanis will always use a politeness marker such as *please* with the mood derivable. However, this is not the case with much of the population, who often use the mood derivable without *please*, and it is considered polite. In this instance, the mood derivables used were rated impolite by the Omani L2 English raters and the L1 raters. This result is understandable for the L1 raters, and the L1 speakers all used please in asking for the bill, but in the case of the Omani L2 raters, the results would probably have been different if students and not teachers were used for rating. Imen (2012:102-103) did a similar study with Tunisian EFL learners, and 40% of them used the mood derivable when asking the waiter for the bill. However, they also used the word *please* in the examples shown in the paper. This would then indicate that in Oman the mood derivable is used and is considered polite, sometimes with politeness markers and at other times without, depending on social variables. In this instance, *please* was used six times by Omani L2 English students, and in three instances *please* was not used, indicating different perceptions of politeness. Umar (2004:60-61) did a similar study of requests using advanced EFL learners from Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Bahrain. The study showed that 25% of the Arab participants used the mood derivable to ask the waiter for the bill, e.g., *Where is my bill, friend*? This is additional evidence that the mood derivable is used by other Arab speakers without the politeness marker *please* and is considered polite.

Another example of an Omani L2 English student's response judged as inappropriate by the Omani L2 raters was *Please we finished eating our meal. Could you bring the bill*. In this example, even though the politeness marker *please* is used, it is still inappropriate because too much is being said. Oman is a high-context culture and emphasis is placed on the overall situation to interpret messages. The waiter can clearly see they are finished and it is not necessary to say so. In an interview it was explained that "if we say too much then it spoils the good things we have to say". From the Koran, this can be paraphrased as "If speech is made of silver then silence is made of gold".

Ratings for grammaticality

The ratings for grammaticality in this situation similar amongst L1 and L2 raters. The written responses rated were the shortest of those produced in all five situations.

Interview data

The interview data was obtained by interviewing three Omani L2 English teachers. The interview lasted approximately three hours. During this time, questions were asked mainly relating to appropriateness of written responses. It was revealed that the request data that were found to be inappropriate by L2 Omani English teachers was due to cultural social differences. There are many differences between Omani and Western culture, and this is predominantly reflected in social behaviour. Many of the differences manifested themselves in the written response DCT. The interpretations of the data gathered were confirmed by all three L2 Omani English teachers during the interview.

4.5   Conclusion

In this chapter, the data analysis and discussion connected with the three research questions associated with this study.

1. Are patterns of politeness and indirectness perceived similarly or differently by L2 English speaking Omani university students and L1 English speakers?
2. What are the differences in the way that Omani university students and L1 English speakers produce requests?
3. How do differences in (a) politeness, (b) formality, (c) appropriateness, (d) grammaticality, (e) clarity of request, manifest in requests made by Omani L2 English students and L1 English speakers, as rated by Omani English teachers and L1 English speaking English teachers.

In the concluding chapter, a summary of the main points will be presented.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

In chapter 5 the main points illustrated by this study are summarised; the contribution of the study along with its limitations are set out; the implications of this study for English language teachers, curriculum designers and material writers, as well as further directions for research, are discussed. Finally, some concluding remarks and final thoughts on the study are presented.

5.2 Summary of data analysis and discussion

In what follows, the main points from Chapter 4 that are related to the three research questions are presented in table form (Tables 22 – 27).

- Each table from table 22 – 26 summarises one situation.
- Each table is divided into three sections; one for perceptions of politeness and indirectness; one for written responses; and one for teacher judgements.
- Table 27 combines all five situations and summarises the main points for perceptions of politeness and indirectness, and for written responses only.
- Each table is divided into two columns; one for pragmalinguistic information, and the other for sociopragmatic information. The purpose of this is to show the connection between the two types of communicative competency categories.
- Numbers in the left and right columns will correspond, e.g., number 3 in the left column will correspond with number 3 in the right column. Sometimes there may be a number in the left column and the same number will not appear in the right column, and vice versa (for example, if there is not sociopragmatic data in the right column matching the pragmalinguistic data in the left column, and vice versa).

Table 22	'Grandfather' request (Summary of main findings)
Perceptions of politeness and indirectness	
Pragmalinguistic	Sociopragmatic
(1) The query preparatory is considered most polite by both groups, but used 50% more by the Omani L2 English students.	(1) In Omani collectivist culture the relationship between grandfather and other family members is asymmetrical, and the
(2) The L1 speakers perceive the mood	grandfather has greater power and status and

derivable as most impolite. The Omani L2 English students perceive the obligation statement as most impolite. (3) Both groups consider the obligation statement and mood derivable as most direct; thus, we have a correlation between impoliteness and directness on the one end of the scale. (4) Both groups consider the mild hint as being both indirect and impolite, but with different ratings.	must be respected. (3) The word *must* used in the obligation statement in this context is perceived as an order by the Omani L2 English students, and inappropriate when addressing a grandfather; the L1 speakers view the word *must* in this context as conveying urgency. The word *must* in this situation thus conveys different conversational implicatures for the L1 speakers and Omani L2 English students.
Written responses	
(1) The Omani L2 English students in the written responses used the title "grandfather" 75% more than the L1 speakers who preferred a term of endearment. (2) Both groups favoured the query preparatory, but the Omani L2 English students also used the suggestory formulae. (3) Lexical and phrasal downgraders as well as supportive moves, e.g., *please*, were used a lot more by the L1 speakers than by the Omani L2 English students.	(1) The increased use of the title "grandfather" indicates a greater degree of formality observed by the Omani L2 English speakers towards the grandfather figure. (3) It has been observed that Omani L2 English students often underuse politeness markers in the target language, even though they regularly mark their utterances for politeness in L1.
Teacher judgements – ratings	
(1) The L1 raters considered the Omani L2 English students' responses more formal than the L1 speakers' responses. (2) The L1 responses were considered appropriate by both groups; however, the Omani L2 raters considered half of the Omani L2 English students' responses inappropriate. One of the reasons for the inappropriate judgement relates to (3) under the written responses – pragmalinguistic column. (3) Both groups rated the grammatical L1 responses at approximately 90% correct. However, the L1 raters rate the Omani responses 27% correct, while the Omani L2 English raters rate the Omani responses 85% correct. Pragmalinguistic failure occurs because of teacher-induced errors or negative pragmalinguistic (grammatical) transfer (Thomas 1983:101).	(1) The formal ratings would confirm the sociopragmatic findings from the written responses, namely that a greater degree of deference is shown towards the grandfather figure in Oman, due to high social status and high power difference, as well as the degree of imposition involved in the speech act. (2) Cultural norms placing the grandfather in a position of prominence require a high degree of politeness; placing another engagement above one arranged by the grandfather, and not attending a gathering arranged by the grandfather are all inappropriate behaviours or responses in Omani culture.

Table 22: Situation 1

Table 23 'Lecture notes' request (Summary of main findings)	
Perceptions of politeness and indirectness	
Pragmalinguistic	Sociopragmatic
(1) The query preparatory was perceived as the most polite by both groups, but was selected 40% more by the Omani L2 English	(2) The indication here is that medium to low social imposition, equal social distance and equal power result in less polite strategies,

students. This would indicate familiarity with *can* amongst Omani L2 English students and less confidence with other strategies.

(2) The want statement was considered by both groups to be the second most polite strategy. In this instance, the words *would like* were used and not *want*.

(3) The mood derivable and obligation statement were considered most impolite by both groups, with the Omani L2 English students selecting the obligation statement as most impolite.

(4) The Omani L2 English student participants perceived the strong hint as more polite than the mild hint, in contrast to the L1 speakers.

5) The mild hint and strong hint were selected as the most indirect by both groups. This coincided with the CCSARP data for indirectness, but not with that for politeness.

e.g., the want statement, in contrast to situation 1 where the suggestory formula was selected as the second most popular strategy.

(3) The words *should* and *must* are considered most impolite by L2 Omani English speakers as they are perceived as command words.

(4) The mild hint was considered the second most impolite for this context. The reason is the degree of ambiguity and non-reference attached to it by the Omani L2 English students, who would understand it literally and not as a hint, as the L1 speakers would. The conversational implicatures here would not be understood by the Omani L2 English students and sociopragmatic failure would be the result.

(5) Mild hints are used as strategies by both groups, but are considered far more polite by L1 speakers than by Omani L2 English students.

Written responses

(1) Attention-getters were used similarly by both groups.

(2) Both groups favoured the query preparatory as the most polite strategy; however, the L1 speakers used greater variety with the whimperative, e.g., *would you mind, would you mind very much, would it be possible*. This data demonstrates the lack of pragmalinguistic competence amongst Omani L2 English speakers.

(3) The want statement was used by the Omani L2 English students, but not by the L1 speakers.

(4) More politeness markers are used by the L1 speakers than by the Omani L2 English students.

(5) The time intensifier is used 70% of the time for requests by Omani L2 English students and only 20% of the time by L1 speakers.

(1) Omani L2 English students used religious attention getters, e.g., *peace be upon you*.

(2) The whimperative forms may be transferable, but only if a sufficient level of proficiency has been reached, otherwise transfer will not occur.

(3) The indication with the use of the want statement is that Omani L2 English students use more direct strategies in low-imposition speech acts, but include modifiers to mitigate the imposition on the hearer.

(4) Once again, as in situation 1, the Omani L2 English students compensate for lack of politeness markers such as *please* with the use of religious politeness markers, e.g., *salam alikum*.

(5) The time intensifier is a perfect example of conventionalisation of a specific tactic by the Omani L2 English speakers which is not conventionalised by the L1 English speakers.

Teacher judgements – ratings

(1) Ratings for politeness were similar for both groups. L1 speakers were rated 10-15 % more polite due to higher proficiency in the English language.

(2) The L1 raters found both groups of responses to be mostly appropriate. The Omani L2 raters found 15-20% of the L1 and L2 participants' responses inappropriate.

(3) For grammaticality, L1 and Omani L2 raters rated the L1 speaker responses as mostly correct. However, with regard to the

(1) In contexts where the social distance is higher than that between family members and the degree of imposition is medium to high, greater effort is made to be polite.

(2) In Omani culture, scrutinising or paying too much attention to another person's behaviour is considered inappropriate, e.g., *I noticed that you take a lot of notes*. In L1 culture this is seen as a compliment, but in Omani culture it is not acceptable behaviour; except in the instance of a teacher, whose job

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| Omani L2 English students' responses, the L1 raters rated 33% correct and the Omani L2 English raters rated 70% correct (see comments for situation 1 grammaticality). L2 raters will have more trouble rating L1 and L2 responses. | is to notice this kind of habit. Secondly, talking about family affairs is private and not to be shared, e.g.,… *a family emergency meant I missed today's lecture*. This is especially adhered to with regard to female members of the family. Thirdly, in Omani culture, saying *if you have your notes I would like to borrow them* when the notes are clearly visible in front of the person is inappropriate, as the hearer will think you are testing him/her to see if s/he will lie. For L1 English speakers, we use it to give the hearer optionality and to lessen the imposition with an FSA |

Table 23: Situation 2

Table 24 'Younger brother' request (Summary of main findings)	
Perceptions of politeness and indirectness	
Pragmalinguistic	Sociopragmatic
(1) Both groups perceived the query preparatory as most polite. (2) The Omani L2 English students chose the want statement as the second most polite and the L1 speakers chose the suggestory formula. (3) Strong hints and mild hints were favoured as being polite in this situation, in contrast with situation 1 where the degree of imposition was low. (4) The four most impolite strategies selected by both groups coincided with the four most impolite in the CCSARP data, i.e., the performative, the hedged performative, the obligation statement and the mood derivable. (5) Both groups chose the obligation statement and the mood derivable as the most direct strategies. The most indirect strategies chosen by both groups were the mild hint, the strong hint, the suggestory formula and the query preparatory.	(2) The indication of the preference for the want statement by the Omani L2 English speakers reinforces the position that Omani L2 English students use more direct statements in situations of low imposition. (3) The use of hints in this context is polite because of family obligation. Service and duty to family is placed above all in Omani culture. The imposition for the Omani L2 English students is also low, allowing for hints to be used as speech acts in requesting. (4) In contexts where the social variables are low for social distance, degree of imposition, and where the speaker may have greater social power than the hearer, the four most impolite strategies and the most polite strategies chosen by both groups are the same. (5) The results for perceptions of directness in this situation are the closest with regards to matching the CCSARP data. The indication would be that in this specific context several different cultures will find the greatest degree of similarity, notwithstanding sociopragmatic differences.
Written responses	
(1) The L1 English speakers favoured the use of the first name, in contrast to the Omani L2 English students who favoured a term of endearment. (2) The query preparatory was the favourite strategy for both groups, but it was used more than twice as much by the L1 speakers who	(1) More alerters were used by the L1 speakers and, from an L1 English speaker's perspective, more politeness was shown. (3) The results show that Omani L2 English students use more direct strategies in contexts with low imposition, low social distance and equal power distance or where the speaker

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used it in every response. (3) In contrast, the Omani L2 English students used other strategies, i.e., the mood derivable and the want statement. (4) L1 speakers again used more politeness markers, but the Omani L2 English students used more time intensifiers. (5) Grammaticality ratings were different, but less so due to shorter responses in this situation. The L1 raters rated the L1 responses 97% correct, but the Omani L2 raters rated the L1 responses 75% correct.	has more power than the hearer. These results have been verified in other studies of Arabic speakers, i.e., Umar (2004), Al-Ammar (2000), Imen (2012), and Sazalie (2010). (4) Directness in Omani culture does not mean impoliteness. Omani L2 English students will combine direct speech acts with internal and external modifiers to soften the imposition. Therefore, the bald on-record strategy without redress is considered impolite by both groups. However, used with mitigating supportive devices, it is considered polite. Sometimes the Omani L2 English students will use a person's first name in low social distance contexts as a mitigator of an FTA.
Teacher judgements – ratings	
(1) The Omani L2 raters rated 20% of the L1 responses inappropriate, e.g., *Can you go to the cold store . . . Please, I'll pay you.* (2) The Omani L2 raters rated 50% of the Omani L2 English students' responses inappropriate, e.g., *I need something important from the supermarket. Don't worry I will give you money.*	(1) & (2) In Omani culture offering money to a family member to do something for the family is inappropriate. Obligation, loyalty and service to family are prioritised and money is not considered. Secondly, the words *don't worry* imply the hearer may distrust the speaker and would threaten the speakers' positive face.

Table 24: Situation 3

Table 25	'University instructor' request (Summary of main findings)
Perceptions of politeness and indirectness	
Pragmalinguistic	Sociopragmatic
(1) The three most polite strategies used by both groups are the query preparatory, the mild hint, and the hedged performative, in that order. The order is the same but the sociopragmatic reasons for use are different. (2) For both groups, the performative, the want statement, the obligation statement and the mood derivable are the most impolite in that order, with the mood derivable being most impolite. (3) In this context, the mood derivable and the want statement were considered the most direct. (4) In this context, the mild hint was considered the most indirect and the second most polite, due to contextual salience of the request, as explained in the sociopragmatic column.	(1) In many contexts the Omani L2 English students find mild hints impolite, specifically in situations of high imposition and high power distance, e.g., situation 1. However, in situations where the context makes the request salient, the mild hint is considered polite in the Omani high-context society. The L1 speakers, in contrast, use the mild hint to remove the imposition of the FTA and give the hearer optionality to comply with or ignore the request. (2) In this instance, the want statement used the word *want* and not *would like* as in situations 1 and 3, where the perception of the want statement was rated more polite than in this context.
Written responses	
(1) Both groups show respect for their	(1) Omani speakers show more affection

lecturer by using titles equally. The Omani L2 English students also use a term of endearment, e.g., *My Professor* and *Dear Professor*. (2) The strategy used most by both groups is the query preparatory, but the L1 speakers use it twice the amount of times that the Omani L2 English students use it. In contrast, the Omani L2 English students use the mood derivable three times as much as the L1 speakers. (3) The strong hint is used by both groups in this situation. (4) In this instance, the Omani L2 English students used more politeness markers due to the fact that they used the mood derivable – see (2) in sociopragmatic column. Internal and external modifiers are used by Omani L2 English students when using direct strategies to mitigate the force of the imposition. (5) The supporting move 'preparator' was used in this situation eight times by the L1 speakers compared to once by the L1 speakers.	towards their lecturer than do the L1 English speakers. L1 speakers do not use terms of endearment. (2) Here again the concept that Omani L2 English students consider the direct strategies like the mood derivable as polite in low imposition situations when used with internal modifiers, e.g., *please* and *is it possible*. Thus demonstrating that in Omani culture directness does not imply impoliteness. (3) For the Omani L2 English students, hints are used in low imposition contexts where the context makes the request salient, but are considered impolite in high imposition requestive communicative contexts. (5) Here we have a perfect example of the 'preparator' being conventionalised by the L1 speakers, as a tactic for asking a favour of a lecturer, in what the L1 speakers perceive as a high imposition contextual situation. In situation 2 the Omani L2 English students gave an example of Omani L2 English students' conventionalization with the time intensifier.
Teacher judgements – ratings	
(1) Ratings for formality differed in this situation. The Omani L2 raters rated the L1 responses for formality 67%, but the L1 raters rated the L1 responses for formality 26%. From the results it would appear that conventions of formality are not clearly understood by both groups, even for L1 speakers. (2) The Omani L2 raters rated 33% of the L1 responses inappropriate and 39% of the Omani L2 English students' responses inappropriate. (3) Grammar rating is shows low to high differences. As in situation 1 and 2 the ratings by both groups of raters for the L1 responses is similar. However, the ratings for the Omani L2 English students' responses are vastly different. The reason for this relates to language proficiency.	(1) The results indicated that in L1 English western society relationships between lecturer and student are less formal than in Omani L2 English students' Omani culture. (2) The mention of the word "mother" is inappropriate in Omani culture as that information is a private family affair. Appropriate responses would be to say 'a family member", not specifying who is ill.

Table 25: Situation 4

Table 26	'Waiter request' (Summary of main findings)
Perceptions of politeness and indirectness	
Pragmalinguistic	Sociopragmatic
(1) The query preparatory and the mild hint are considered the most polite by both groups; however, the Omani L2 English	(1) This is another situation where the context makes the request salient (see scenario 4), and it is therefore acceptable for

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students select the mild hint 33% more frequently than the L1 speakers. (2) Both groups rank the performative as fourth most polite. (3) This situation shows the greatest diversity between the two groups with regard to perceptions of politeness. (4) Both groups rate the mood derivable as the most direct strategy, and both groups rate the mild hint and strong hint as the most indirect strategies.	Omani L2 English students to use hints, e.g., *We would like to leave soon.* (2) This is the only situation where the performative is perceived as being this polite. The indication is that when imposition is low; the speaker has more social power than the hearer, and where the hearer is only doing his/her job, then more direct strategies are considered polite and face threat is minimised. (4) This result reinforces the fact that Omani L2 English students consider hints as indirect, but only polite in situations where the request is made salient by the context, and not in situations of medium to high imposition as in situation 1 or 2.
Written responses	
(1) The Omani L2 English students used the attention-getter seven times and the L1 speakers used it four times. (2) The query preparatory was the preferred strategy for politeness by both groups. However, the Omani L2 English students used the mood derivable 66% more frequently than the L1 speakers. 3) In this situation, the politeness marker *please* is used more frequently by the L1 English speakers than the Omani L2 English students.	(1) The use of the politeness marker *excuse me* would indicate heightened politeness preceding the actual request. (2) The Omani L2 English students once again demonstrate the preference, in some instances, for the mood derivable in low imposition situations, e.g., *Excuse me, the bill* and *Excuse me, the check*. The attention-getter *excuse me* is here used a politeness marker. (3) The Omani L2 English students use more direct speech acts, but they are not purposely impolite (as perceived by L1 teachers), only more direct.
Teacher judgements - ratings	
(1) The Omani L2 English students used four times as many grounders as the L1 speakers.	(1) The Omani L2 English students for this context showed a greater degree of politeness than the L1 speakers, in my opinion.

Table 26: Situation 5

Table 27	Requests 1-5 (Summary of main findings)
Perceptions of politeness and indirectness	
Pragmalinguistic	Sociopragmatic
(1) The query preparatory was considered by both groups to be the most polite strategy. (2) The bligation statement with the words *must* or *should* is considered the most impolite by the Omani L2 English students, but the L1 speakers consider the mood derivable the most impolite. (3) The mild hint is considered far more polite by the L1 speakers than by the L2 speakers. (4) The want statement is considered far more polite by the Omani L2 English students than by the L1 speakers.	(1) The conventionally indirect on-record FTA is used to mitigate the imposition and to show politeness. (2) Perceptions of the words *must* and *should* are different for Omani L2 English students who consider them as commands, in contrast with the L1 speakers who perceive them as placing emphasis and importance on a speech act. (3) The Omani L2 English students only consider mild hints polite in low-imposition situations where the context makes the request

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(5) The four most indirect strategies selected by both groups, namely the mild hint, the strong hint, the suggestory formula and the query preparatory, match the CCSARP data which was compiled using data of combined situations. (6) The suggestory formula is chosen by both groups as the third most polite and third most indirect, showing a correlation between politeness and indirectness.	salient. (4) The use of the word *want* is considered polite due to lack of pragmalinguistic knowledge. More advanced students recognise the use of *want* as indicating something more like a command. The use of the words *would like* are considered polite at all times by more proficient Omani L2 English students. (5) Here we have a correlation between the most polite, the query preparatory, and the most indirect, the mild hint.
Written responses	
(1) The use of the title was far more prevalent among Omani L2 English students when addressing those with higher social standing or social power. (2) The mood derivable is used six times more frequently by the Omani L2 English students than by the L1 English speakers. (3) The want statement is used twice as frequently by the Omani L2 English students. (4) Politeness markers were more prevalent among the L1 English speakers by 20%. (5) Downtoners were used three times more frequently by the L1 English speakers than by the Omani L2 English students. (6) The time intensifier was used 66% more frequently by the Omani L2 English students. (7) The preparator was used 11 times by the L1 English Speakers and only once by the L1 English speakers	(1) In high power distance cultures like Oman, seniority, rank, title and age are considered far more important than low power distance cultures that emphasise individual importance. (2) This result casts doubt on the universality of politeness (i.e. the claim that all cultures are similar in how they show politeness) and agrees with Wierzbicka (1985) that indirect means are an English requirement and not universally applicable. The mood derivable is used in low imposition contexts such as situations 3,4 and 5. In Oman, requesting more time from a lecturer is considered to be a low-imposition request, but that does not mean less respect or politeness is conferred. (3) More directness under certain cultural conditions is considered appropriate in Arab culture. Omani people use more direct strategies than do L1 speakers to express politeness. (4) Omani L2 English students do not always use the word *please* to show politeness, but use other strategies to convey politeness and preserve the face of the hearer. (5) The Omani L2 English students lack pragmalinguistic proficiency in the use of *possibly* and *perhaps*. (6) This is a good example of positive transfer and conventionalisation of this tactic for certain requestive contexts, e.g., situation 2,3 and 4, where it is used as a mitigating force syntactic device strategy (7) The preparator is a good example of a strategy conventionalised as a tactic by L1 speakers in situation 4. The Omani L2 English students would need pragmalinguistic training to be able to use the preparatory, as it is not a strategy that is transferable from their first language.

Table 27: Situations 1-5

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5.3   The contribution of the study and its limitations

The research conducted in Nizwa on requests contributes to the body of knowledge on requests in different cultures.

Contributions

1) In comparing L1 English speakers and Omani L2 English students, the importance of culturally specific values (i.e., social distance, social power, and degree of imposition) in speech elicitation has become apparent.

2) The research has highlighted how L1 English speakers and Omani L2 English students agree on what is polite, and how they express politeness differently, e.g., direct versus indirect speech acts.

3) Perceptions of directness and politeness were measured and analysed to find similarities and differences between the two speech communities.

4) With regard to the current curriculum, the study highlighted the need to introduce pragmatics into the curriculum to develop cultural understanding, e.g., conversational implicatures using indirect strategies.

5) The study has demonstrated that some pragmatic knowledge is universal. Examples are politeness and face saving acts; the use of internal and external modifiers to lessen the imposition of a request; and the use of direct and indirect strategies depending on the context. However, although certain communicative knowledge is universal, the utterances performed may differ depending on different culturally variable perceptions of context.

Limitations

This research project was of limited scope and had several limitations. Firstly, only six teachers were used to rate the responses. Secondly, the number of participants was only 50. Higher numbers would have been better, but the limited availability of suitably proficient students prevented this.

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5.4 Implications of this study for English language teachers, curriculum designers and material writers

This study has shown that pragmatic competence is necessary in order to communicate successfully in the target language. Students of a second language who wish to communicate successfully in a target language need to practice mindfulness (the state of staying aware and paying close attention to cultural differences), as well as understand the cultural norms of that speech community and "attune to the other's assumptions, cognitions and emotions" (Ting-Toomey 1998:268). In House (1996:227), the author (speaking on the work of Langer) states that much of what is considered thoughtful and creative talk is done on 'automatic' (where no thought is necessary – similar to the experience of driving after having done so for many years) and is characterised by 'mindlessness'. Students' pragmatic awareness must therefore be developed in the classroom, because to be communicatively competent requires substantial sociolinguistic development.

Are sociolinguistic and pragmalinguistic competencies simply developed while learning vocabulary along with lexical and grammatical knowledge? Does pragmatic knowledge develop while learning to read, write, listen and speak, or is pedagogic intervention in the classroom necessary? In Bouton (1993:157), it is claimed that Keenan's (1976) research has shown that individuals from different cultures understand implicatures differently from the same utterance and in the same context. The study of requests in Nizwa has shown that this statement is true, e.g., the obligation statement with the use of *must* and *should* carries different conversational implicatures to Omani L2 English students than it does to L1 English speakers. The illocutionary force of *must* and *should* is seen as that of a command by Omani L2 English students, rather than stressing importance or urgency as it is perceived by L1 speakers. Keenan (in Bouton 1993:159) further claimed that in cross-cultural interaction, the use of implicatures was a likely barrier to effective communication. Conversational implicature is not taught in the EFL classroom generally and it should be. Many students in Nizwa struggle to get a good TOEFL score. Implicature questions are numerous in the TOEFL test, but students are never taught implicature except by what they may pick up independently studying TOEFL materials or by chance.

Bouton (1993:157-167) researched conversational implicature to determine how long it would take students immersed in the target culture to acquire proficiency. The study used a

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multiple choice implicature test completed by 436 international students at the University of Illinois. The same students were tested 17 months later, and it was discovered that the same implicatures that they had not understood when first tested, they still did not understand, and none of the implicatures had been mastered (Bouton 1993:166). Another group was tested 4.5 years later and they were found to have mastered the implicatures, except for a few linked to cultural understanding (sociopragmatics) that had not yet been acquired (Bouton 1993:167). The study shows that learning in the area of sociopragmatics is slow when not deliberately taught. In later studies, Bouton showed that intervention in the classroom does help learners acquire proficiency in producing and interpreting implicatures. The indication is that instructional intervention is necessary and may facilitate the acquisition of L2 pragmatic ability (Kasper 2001:8). Pragmatic competence (sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic) is predominantly missing from EFL curriculums, even though the empirical study and the recommendations of the leaders in this field of education insist that it should be included.

Badovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (in Kasper 2001:44) reported that ESL students in host environments showed a higher pragmatic awareness than EFL students in a foreign environment; in contrast, Hungarian EFL students showed a greater grammatical awareness than ESL students. This is attributed by Bardovi-Harlig et al. (1998) to the cross-cultural interaction experienced in the host setting. However, in Kasper (2001:444), a replication study by Niezgoda and Röver suggests that when students are highly motivated and well prepared, and when teachers are trained to teach using a communicative approach, then high pragmatic and grammatical awareness may result. The implications here are that (1) EFL students need classroom instruction in pragmatics because they do not enjoy immersion in the target culture and therefore have very little opportunity to acquire implicit pragmatic awareness (studies show that even immersion in the target culture is not sufficient for the acquisition of pragmatic proficiency without explicit classroom instruction); (2) teachers using the communicative approach will have greater success, consequently; and (3) teachers should be trained to teach communicatively. In Gass and Mackey (2012:150), Bardovi-Harlig states that there are two factors that play a role in better, faster and more efficient L2 pragmatic acquisition, namely environment and instruction. Environment is not possible for EFL students in a foreign country, so deliberate effective instruction is the key to success.

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This study has demonstrated that many L1 English speaker communicative acts have been rated as inappropriate by Omani L2 English students, when in fact they are perfectly appropriate in the target language/culture; and, vice versa, numerous Omani L2 English students' utterances have been deemed inappropriate, e.g., direct speech acts. Again, pragmalinguistic and sociolinguistic knowledge is needed to develop communicative competence and to avoid miscommunication. To accommodate this need would necessitate efficient and effective classroom instruction. This, in turn, would necessitate pragmatic materials designed to be incorporated into the curriculum, which would call for teacher training not only in the new materials, but in teaching pedagogy. The specific pedagogy and instruction methods needed to teach would need to be considered by material writers when designing new materials. Furthermore, all material design and instruction pedagogy would need to be based on the findings of empirical research data.

Additionally, this study has brought to attention the difference between high-context and low-context societies where, in the former, not everything that needs to be understood is explicitly stated, but individuals are expected to interpret requests using the context of the situation (Guirdham1999:60). This cultural difference can also lead to miscommunication or perceptions of speech acts as inappropriate. EFL learners need to understand the cultural differences so that they can adapt their communicative strategies to be more explicit in certain contexts. Once again, classroom instruction would help to develop the pragmatic competence and communicative ability of English language students.

Textbook writers need to consciously explore methodology and include materials that will stimulate pragmatic awareness, and that will develop pragmatic competence. Krisnawati (2011:112) reports that Bardovi-Harlig (2001), Jordan (1992) and Saville-Troike (1992) found that ESL and EFL curriculums should provide materials that teach students the socio-cultural rules of the target language. Krisnawati (2001:113) goes on to report that according to Kasper (in Rueda (2006)), pragmatic instruction needs to fulfill three functions: (1) it must expose students to appropriate target language input; (2) it must raise students' pragmatic awareness; and (3) it must arrange authentic opportunities to practise pragmatic knowledge (pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic). The practise of authentic language in different meaningful contexts, using different cultural variables such as degree of imposition, social and power distance, is crucial in developing communicative competence.

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Finally, the myth that pragmatics can only be taught after students have acquired a solid foundation of L2 grammar and vocabulary is dispelled by empirical research. Wildner-Bassett (1994) and Tateyama et al. (1997) showed that pragmatic routines such as request strategies and speech act modification techniques are teachable to low-proficiency foreign language learners (Kasper (1996)). Kasper (1996) states that the communicative actions that take place in a language classroom do not provide the pragmatic competence learners need to communicate in the outside world.

5.5   Further directions for research in this topic

Further directions for research projects on this topic would be, firstly, to research cross-cultural form-function mapping to determine if forms and strategies for requests used in L1 English exist in L1 Arabic. If the same forms do not exist in L1 Arabic, what forms and strategies are used, and how do they differ? This type of research would require deeper ethnographic linguistic research and would be of great assistance to material and curriculum designers. Secondly, doing applied research in classroom teaching pedagogy for teaching pragmatics is suggested. In other words which instructional approaches may be most effective? This will then form a part of the material design and content of materials and textbooks to teach English with the inclusion of pragmatics. Thirdly, requests could be further researched by investigating the request production of different socio-cultural contextual situations to reveal further cultural perception differences, thus adding to the body of knowledge relating to general socio-pragmatic differences between L1 English speakers and Omani L2 speakers of English.

In considering the second option above regarding which instructional approaches may be most effective in the classroom, much empirical research has been conducted. For example, House (1996: 230) did research to determine the effectiveness of explicit versus implicit instruction in teaching pragmatic fluency. The research results determined that (1) those learners that had been given explicit pragmatic instruction (information concerning the use and function of routines) proved to be superior in their speech act utterances than those who did not receive this information, i.e., they used a more specialised range of discourse lubricants and strategies; and (2) negative transfer was more noticeable in the group that received implicit instruction. Therefore, the inclusion of metapragmatic information by explicit teaching methodology increases pragmatic fluency.

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Research in this area would need to be based on the findings of previous empirical studies (as illustrated in the example above), as well as possibly introducing new instructional approaches by building on existing knowledge and developing new ideas or pedagogy of EFL teaching and learning.

5.6 Concluding remarks and final thoughts

It is hoped that this study will inspire further studies in linguistics and that this limited-scope research project will be a stepping stone for those who want to research investigate this area further; hence adding to understanding of how these two cultures differ in their use of language, particularly from a pragmatic perspective. In looking to the future, this consideration of linguistic and pragmatic differences will lead to new ideas, new pedagogy, new teaching approaches, new materials/text books, and new theories of English language instruction that will enable more effective teaching and learning in the EFL classroom.

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Appendix A: Perceptions of politeness

Name: **Nationality**   **Date:**

Instructions: Below is a real life situation (situation 1). There are nine responses to this situation. Read the situation and the nine responses. Then number the responses 1 -9. Number 1 is the most polite and number 9 is the least polite.

Situation 1:

Your grandfather is having a special family gathering on Saturday. He has sent a message that he wants you to be there because he wants to talk to you about something important. You got the message today. On the same day as your grandfather's party is your best friend's birthday party. You have helped her prepare for a long time and he / she expects you to be there too. You want to request / ask your grandfather if you can arrange to see him on a different day. What will you say

1-9

1	How about talking to me on Sunday?	
2	I must ask you to talk to me on Sunday.	
3	Talk to me on Sunday.	
4	I am going to my best friend's party on Saturday.	
5	I am asking you to talk to me on Sunday.	
6	Can you possibly talk to me on Sunday?	
7	I am busy on Saturday..	
8	I would like to talk to you on Sunday.	
9	Grandfather, you must see me on Sunday.	

Number 1 – 9 / 1 is most polite / 9 is least polite

A1-1

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Name: **Nationality**   **Date:**

Instructions: Below is a real life situation (situation 2). There are nine responses to this situation. Read the situation and the nine responses. Then number the responses 1 -9. Number 1 is the most polite and number 9 is the least polite.

Situation 2:

You missed a lecture this morning. It was an important lecture and you want someone to lend you their notes. You are new in the class so you don't know anybody really well, but you must ask / request someone if you can borrow their notes to copy. What will you say?

1-9

1	I was sick yesterday.	
2	Lend me your notes.	
3	I would like you to lend me your notes for a while.	
4	I am asking you to lend me your notes.	
5	I wasn't at the lecture yesterday.	
6	Can I lend your notes?	
7	I have to ask you to lend me your notes.	
8	You should lend me your notes.	
9	How about lending me your notes?	

Number 1 – 9 / 1 is most polite / 9 is least polite

A1-2

148

Name: **Nationality**   **Date:**

Instructions: Below is a real life situation (situation 3). There are nine responses to this situation. Read the situation and the nine responses. Then number the responses 1 -9. Number 1 is the most polite and number 9 is the least polite.

Situation 3:

You want your younger brother to go to the supermarket / cold store for you to buy some vegetables. What will you say to him?

1-9

1	I would like you to go to the cold store to buy some vegetables.	
2	Go to the cold store to buy some vegetables.	
3	Would you go to the cold store to buy some vegetables?	
4	We have no food to cook for dinner.	
5	I must ask you to go to the cold store to buy some vegetables.	
6	How about going to the cold store to buy some vegetables?	
7	We really need some vegetables from the cold store.	
8	I am asking you to go to the cold store to buy some vegetables.	
9	You must go to the cold store to buy vegetables.	

Number 1 – 9 / 1 is most polite / 9 is least polite

A1-3

Name: **Nationality**   **Date:**

Instructions: Below is a real life situation (situation 4). There are nine responses to this situation. Read the situation and the nine responses. Then number the responses 1 -9. Number 1 is the most polite and number 9 is the least polite.

Situation 4:

You have an assignment to hand in on a specific date. Your university instructor has already given you extra time to complete the assignment. All the other class members have already handed in their assignments. Your mother has been ill and you think that you should get more time for your assignment. Your professor has already told you that he will not give you more time. You want to ask your professor for more time. What will you say?

1-9

1	How about giving me more time for my assignment?	
2	I have to ask you to give me more time for my assignment.	
3	Give me more time for my assignment	
4	I haven't finished my assignment.	
5	I am asking you to give me more time for my assignment.	
6	Could you give me more time for my assignment?	
7	I am so busy because my mother is ill and I have to go to the hospital every evening.	
8	I want more time for my assignment.	
9	You should give me more time for my assignment.	

Number 1 – 9 / 1 is most polite / 9 is least polite

A1-4

150

Name: **Nationality**   **Date:**

Instructions: Below is a real life situation (situation 5). There are nine responses to this situation. Read the situation and the nine responses. Then number the responses 1 -9. Number 1 is the most polite and number 9 is the least polite.

Situation 5:

You have a nice meal in a restaurant. Now you want the waiter to bring you the bill. What will you say to him?

1-9

1	I want you to give me the bill.	
2	We would like to leave soon.	
3	I must ask you to give me the bill.	
4	Give me the bill.	
5	Could you give me the bill?	
6	The bill is taking a long time.	
7	How about giving me the bill?	
8	You should give me the bill.	
9	I am asking you to give me the bill.	

Number 1 – 9 / 1 is most polite / 9 is least polite

A1-5

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Appendix B: Perceptions of indirectness

Name: **Nationality**   **Date:**

Instructions: Below is a real life situation (situation 1). There are nine responses to this situation. Read the situation and the nine responses. Then number the responses 1 -9. Number 1 is the most direct and number 9 is the most indirect (least direct).

Situation 1:

Your grandfather is having a special family gathering on Saturday. He has sent a message that he wants you to be there because he wants to talk to you about something important. You got the message today. On the same day as your grandfather's party is your best friend's birthday party. You have helped her prepare for a long time and he / she expects you to be there too. You want to request / ask your grandfather if you can arrange to see him on a different day. What will you say?

1-9

1	How about talking to me on Sunday?	
2	I must ask you to talk to me on Sunday.	
3	Talk to me on Sunday.	
4	I am very busy on Saturday.	
5	I am asking you to talk to me on Sunday.	
6	Can you possibly talk to me on Sunday?	
7	I am going to my best friend's party on Saturday.	
8	I would like to talk to you on Sunday.	
9	Grandfather, you must see me on Sunday.	

Number 1 – 9 / 1 is most direct / 9 is the most indirect (least direct)

A2-1

152

Name: **Nationality**   **Date:**

Instructions: Below is a real life situation (situation 2). There are nine responses to this situation. Read the situation and the nine responses. Then number the responses 1 -9. Number 1 is the most direct and number 9 is the most indirect (least direct).

Situation 2:

You missed a lecture this morning. It was an important lecture and you want someone to lend you their notes. You are new in the class so you don't know anybody really well, but you must ask / request someone if you can lend their notes to copy. What will you say?

1-9

1	I was sick yesterday.	
2	Lend me your notes.	
3	I would like you to lend me your notes for a while.	
4	I am asking you to lend me your notes.	
5	I wasn't at the lecture yesterday.	
6	Can I lend your notes?	
7	I have to ask you to lend me your notes.	
8	You should lend me your notes.	
9	How about lending me your notes?	

Number 1 – 9 / 1 is most direct / 9 is most indirect (least direct)

A2-2

153

Name: **Nationality**   **Date:**

Instructions: Below is a real life situation (situation 3). There are nine responses to this situation. Read the situation and the nine responses. Then number the responses 1 -9. Number 1 is the most direct and number 9 is the most indirect (least direct).

Situation 3:

You want your younger brother to go to the supermarket / cold store for you to buy some vegetables. What will you say to him?

1-9

1	I would like you to go to the cold store to buy some vegetables.	I
2	Go to the cold store to buy some vegetables.	
3	Would you go to the cold store to buy some vegetables?	
4	We have no food to cook for dinner.	
5	I must ask you to go to the cold store to buy some vegetables.	
6	How about going to the cold store to buy some vegetables?	
7	We really need some vegetables from the cold store.	
8	I am asking you to go to the cold store to buy some vegetables.	
9	You must go to the cold store to buy vegetables.	

Number 1 – 9 / 1 is most direct / 9 is the most indirect (least direct)

A2-3

154

Name: **Nationality** **Date:**

Instructions: Below is a real life situation (situation 4). There are nine responses to this situation. Read the situation and the nine responses. Then number the responses 1 -9. Number 1 is the most direct and number 9 is the most indirect (least direct).

Situation 4:

You have an assignment to hand in on a specific date. Your university instructor has already given you extra time to complete the assignment. All the other class members have already handed in their assignments. Your mother has been ill and you think that you should get more time for your assignment. Your professor has already told you that he will not give you more time. You want to ask your professor for more time. What will you say?

1-9

1	How about giving me more time for my assignment?	
2	I have to ask you to give me more time for my assignment.	
3	Give me more time for my assignment	
4	I haven't finished my assignment.	
5	I am asking you to give me more time for my assignment.	
6	Could you give me more time for my assignment?	
7	I am so busy because my mother is ill and I have to go to the hospital every evening.	
8	I want more time for my assignment.	
9	You should give me more time for my assignment.	

Number 1 – 9 / 1 is most direct / 9 is most indirect (least direct)

A2-4

155

Name: **Nationality**   **Date:**

Instructions: Below is a real life situation (situation 5). There are nine responses to this situation. Read the situation and the nine responses. Then number the responses 1 -9. Number 1 is the most direct and number 9 is the most indirect (least direct).

Situation 5:

You have a nice meal in a restaurant. Now you want the waiter to bring you the bill. What will you say to him?

1-9

1	I want you to give me the bill.	
2	We would like to leave soon.	
3	I must ask you to give me the bill.	
4	Give me the bill.	
5	Could you give me the bill?	
6	The bill is taking a long time.	
7	How about giving me the bill?	
8	You should give me the bill.	
9	I am asking you to give me the bill.	

Number 1 – 9 / 1 is most direct / 9 is the most indirect (least direct)

A2-5

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Appendix C: Written responses

Name: **Nationality**   **Date:**

Instructions: Below are five real life scenarios. Please read them carefully and then write what you would say in real life.

Situation 1:

Your grandfather is having a special family gathering. He has sent a message that he wants you to be there because he wants to talk to you about something important. You got the message today. On the same day as your grandfather's party is your best friend's birthday party. You have helped her prepare for a long time and he / she expects you to be there too. You want to request / ask your grandfather if you can arrange to see him on a different day. What will you say?………………………………………………………………………………………………

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Situation 2:

You missed a lecture this morning. It was an important lecture and you want someone to lend you their notes. You are new in the class so you don't know anybody really well, but you must ask / request someone if you can borrow their notes to copy. What will you say? …………………………………………………………………………………

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Situation 3:

You want your younger brother to go to the supermarket / cold store for you to buy some vegetables. What will you say to him? …………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

Situation 4:

You have an assignment to hand in on a specific date. Your university instructor has already given you extra time to complete the assignment. All the other class members have already handed in their assignments. Your mother has been ill and you think that you should get more time for your assignment. Your professor has already told you that he will not give you more time. You want to ask your professor for more time. What will you say?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

Situation 5:

You have a nice meal in a restaurant. Now you want the waiter to bring you the bill. What will you say to him?

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Appendix D: Teacher Judgements / Response rating

Instructions: For each written response please answer 'yes' or 'no' to the five questions

Situation 1: Your grandfather is having a special family gathering. He has sent a message that he wants you to be there because he wants to talk to you about something important. You got the message today. On the same day as your grandfather's party is your best friend's birthday party. You have helped her prepare for a long time and he / she expects you to be there too. You want to request / ask your grandfather if you can arrange to see him on a different day. What will you say?

Grandpa, you know the gathering you told me about? It's at the same time as my best friend's birthday, and you know I helped her plan and the party's really important. Is there another time we can meet? **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	My grandba, my best friend has a party at the same day that you ask me to come. With my respect for you, I will see you in another day if you don't mind. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
Grandfather could you delay that for another day. If it is important, can I come and see you today instead of tomorrow. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	My best friend's birthday is on the same day, would you mind if I was a bit late or perhaps we could have the family gathering the next day? **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
Granny, I'm afraid I am not available today. I have an important engagement to go to. Can I possibly take a rain check on this, and meetup with you next week? **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	my grandfather's I want to tell you that my friend party will be at the same day of our gathering. Would you please arrange for another day to meet you? **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
Papa, your gathering is on the same day as my best friend's party. Can we please meet earlier in the day so I can see you both? **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	My beloved, my friend is having a party in the family gathering. I know we have not gathered for a long time but can I be in my friend's birthday party? **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
Is it okay if we meet next week, because I am little busy with something in the university. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	Hi grandpa! I'm calling because I am so sorry I just won't be able to make it for our family reunion. I made these plans a long time ago and spent a lot of time and money on this. Is there any way I could come and see you either the day before or the day after your party please? **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n

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Instructions: For each written response please answer 'yes' or 'no' to the five questions.

Situation 1: Your grandfather is having a special family gathering. He has sent a message that he wants you to be there because he wants to talk to you about something important. You got the message today. On the same day as your grandfather's party is your best friend's birthday party. You have helped her prepare for a long time and he / she expects you to be there too. You want to request / ask your grandfather if you can arrange to see him on a different day. What will you say?

Sorry Grandfather but I won't be able to come to your party but is it ok if you arrange it for another day. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	Papa can I see you another day – otherwise I could come but I will be very late. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
Grandad, I'm sorry but I can't make it on that day. I have an important appointment, but I can come any other time that suits you. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	Hey grandfather (Baba). What about having this the day after? Because I have got something else to do and it's quite important too?! **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
Al Salam Alikum my Grandfather. I am so sorry I can't attend to your special gathering. Could you please arrange on other day please. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	I'm afraid I have a function I can't get out of Papa. Could I come see you next week rather? **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
Hi Grandad, I got your message. Look, I'm really sorry but I'm committed to something else of long standing that day. Could we do it, the next day Please? **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	can you change the meet day? I have to be with my best friend party. My lovely grandfather I'm beside you every time so we can talk every time but not today because I have to be with my best friend. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
uhh, grandfather, it is a great idea to have a family gathering but today is my best friend's birthday. I'm sorry, really really sorry, I can not come today. I promise you to see you on a different day. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	Grandpa would it be OK with you if I came to see you tomorrow instead of today? I already promised Kathy I would help her with a birthday party. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n

Instructions: For each written response please answer 'yes' or 'no' to the five questions.

Situation 2:
You missed a lecture this morning. It was an important lecture and you want someone to lend you their notes. You are new in the class so you don't know anybody really well, but you must ask / request someone if you can borrow their notes to copy. What will you say?

Excuse me, can I borrow your notes. I missed the lecture this morning. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	Excuse me, I've been absent and am wondering if I can borrow your notes. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
Sorry for bothering, but can I have your note book because I didn't come in our previous class. I will finish copying as soon as possible. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	I missed the lecture this morning and I would like to know what was said. Would you mind if I copied your lecture notes? **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
Excuse me, how are you? My name is Phil, and I'm new in this class. I just missed this morning's lecture due to a personal matter. Could I possibly borrow your notes? **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	Excuse me my college, could you please lend me your notes to copy it because I am a new in this class. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
Hello (Salam Alikum) how are you? I am with you at the 9:30 lecture and I missed this morning class. So would you lend me your notes? I will give it to you back as soon as possible? **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	Hi there. I had to miss yesterdays lecture, but I have noticed that you take lots of notes. Would it be okay for me to copy yours? **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
Could you please lend me your notes and I will give it back to you as soon as possible. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	Excuse me, I am really sorry to ask you, but a family emergency meant I missed on the lecture this morning. Would you mind very much lending me your notes please? I am so sorry to ask and will gladly lend you my notes if you ever miss a class. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n

Instructions: For each written response please answer 'yes' or 'no' to the five questions.

Situation 2:
You missed a lecture this morning. It was an important lecture and you want someone to lend you their notes. You are new in the class so you don't know anybody really well, but you must ask / request someone if you can borrow their notes to copy. What will you say?

I missed the class today. Can I borrow your note today to copy and I will return at the end of the day. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	Hi, I'm Robin. I missed the lecture this morning. Could I borrow your note to copy or photocopy please? I'm a bit worried about what I missed. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
Peace be upon you. I am sorry if I bothered you. I missed today's lecture. If you have your notes, can I take photos of them. It will take 5 minutes only. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	Hi there, my name is Sandra and I'm new to this class. I had something really important to do today and so I missed the last class. Do you think I could borrow your notes and I'll return them ASAP. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
My name Zeyana and I am with you in these class and I have missed the last class, can you give me your notes and I will return it for you tomorrow? **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	Excuse me, I realize you don't really know me, and I'm being horribly forward by asking this, but would you mind lending me your lecture notes? **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
Excuse me cam I mak a copy from your notes, please. I will bring it back to you as soon as possible. Thank you for your help. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	Hi, I'm Ray, I'm new, and I stuffed up this morning and missed the lecture. Is there any chance I could borrow your notes please? **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
Hello ! I missed the lecture and I want your notes if you can help me. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	Excuse me, I'm new in class and I missed the lecture yesterday. Would it be possible for me to borrow your notes? I will give them back right away. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n

Instructions: For each written response please answer 'yes' or 'no' to the five questions.

Situation 3:
You want your younger brother to go to the supermarket / cold store for you to buy some vegetables. What will you say to him?

Hi, Darwin. Can you go to the grocery store and get some vegetables for lunch? **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	Can't use (Oman)
Borther, could you go to the suq? We need you to pay some vegetable for us. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	Hi Nev, Can you pop down and grab some veges for me? **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
Could you go to Lulu and pick up some veggies later? **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	If you are not doing anything right now, would you go to the store and get some vegetables? **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
please go to the supermarket and but for me cold store? And I will give you the money and buy whatever you want for you. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	Majid, I want you to go to the supermarket to buy some vegetables. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
Can you go to the store for me? I need some stuff for dinner. Please, I'll pay you. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	Go to the supermarket I need some vegetables. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n

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Instructions: For each written response please answer 'yes' or 'no' to the five questions.

Situation 3:
You want your younger brother to go to the supermarket / cold store for you to buy some vegetables. What will you say to him?

David, will you please run to the store for me? I'm busy in the kitchen making dinner and realize I need some vegetables. **(1)** Polite **y** **n** **(2)** Formal **y** **n** **(3)** Appropriate **y** **n** **(4)** Grammatically Correct **y** **n** **(5)** Clearly understood by you **y** **n**	Would you mind going to the supermarket to buy some vegetables. **(1)** Polite **y** **n** **(2)** Formal **y** **n** **(3)** Appropriate **y** **n** **(4)** Grammatically Correct **y** **n** **(5)** Clearly understood by you **y** **n**
Dude! are you free to go to the supermarket to get me some vegetables, please? Much appreciate if you could. **(1)** Polite **y** **n** **(2)** Formal **y** **n** **(3)** Appropriate **y** **n** **(4)** Grammatically Correct **y** **n** **(5)** Clearly understood by you **y** **n**	Yo bro lets hang out together and go to the souq too! How about now?! **(1)** Polite **y** **n** **(2)** Formal **y** **n** **(3)** Appropriate **y** **n** **(4)** Grammatically Correct **y** **n** **(5)** Clearly understood by you **y** **n**
John can you go to the supermarket for me and pick up some vegies please? **(1)** Polite **y** **n** **(2)** Formal **y** **n** **(3)** Appropriate **y** **n** **(4)** Grammatically Correct **y** **n** **(5)** Clearly understood by you **y** **n**	Could you please bother to do a favorite to me and go to supermarket to buy some vegetables for me please. **(1)** Polite **y** **n** **(2)** Formal **y** **n** **(3)** Appropriate **y** **n** **(4)** Grammatically Correct **y** **n** **(5)** Clearly understood by you **y** **n**
Hey, John, can you get some veggies for me? please. **(1)** Polite **y** **n** **(2)** Formal **y** **n** **(3)** Appropriate **y** **n** **(4)** Grammatically Correct **y** **n** **(5)** Clearly understood by you **y** **n**	I need something important from supermarket. Don't worry I will give you a money. So, please go and don't be late. **(1)** Polite **y** **n** **(2)** Formal **y** **n** **(3)** Appropriate **y** **n** **(4)** Grammatically Correct **y** **n** **(5)** Clearly understood by you **y** **n**
Can you go to the store to buy me some vegies? **(1)** Polite **y** **n** **(2)** Formal **y** **n** **(3)** Appropriate **y** **n** **(4)** Grammatically Correct **y** **n** **(5)** Clearly understood by you **y** **n**	Are you busy John? Could you please go to the shops and get some vegetables for dinner? Can you pick your favorites and buy yourself a treat at the same time OK? Thanks! **(1)** Polite **y** **n** **(2)** Formal **y** **n** **(3)** Appropriate **y** **n** **(4)** Grammatically Correct **y** **n** **(5)** Clearly understood by you **y** **n**

Instructions: For each written response please answer 'yes' or 'no' to the five questions.

Situation 4:
You have an assignment to hand in on a specific date. Your university instructor has already given you extra time to complete the assignment. All the other class members have already handed in their assignments. Your mother has been ill and you think that you should get more time for your assignment. Your professor has already told you that he will not give you more time. You want to ask your professor for more time. What will you say?

Dr. Khalid , you know I hate to ask, but my mom's medical condition is quite bad and I could really use another extension on the paper. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	Dear professor, I know that you said you will not give me anymore time but let me explain my situation so you can decid whether to give me or not. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
My lovely mother was really sick and I have to be with her because I'm her only daughter that I can be with her, so please give me more time to submit my assignment. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	I'm really sorry I haven't been able to get my assignment in yet but my mother has been sick and I just haven't had time to finish it. Would you please grant me a further extension of just a couple of days to finish it? **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
Could you please professor give me an extra time because my mother sick and I can not concentrate on my assignment please. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	Excuse me, Sir. I need a special favor. I need more time on this. My mother was really sick, and I had to care for her. On passionate grounds, could you please give me more time to complete this assignment? Thanks **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
Excuse me sir! I really need this extra time, I have been busy because my mom is ill and no one is around to help but me! So, if you please just, few more days. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	Can't use (USA)
Okay I'm in a bad situation. My mom has been ill and I'm having problems finding time to get this together. Can you help me at all on this somehow? **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	Is it possible if you give me more time to finish my assignment as my mother is ill and I need to take care of her these days. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n

Instructions: For each written response please answer 'yes' or 'no' to the five questions.

Situation 4:
You have an assignment to hand in on a specific date. Your university instructor has already given you extra time to complete the assignment. All the other class members have already handed in their assignments. Your mother has been ill and you think that you should get more time for your assignment. Your professor has already told you that he will not give you more time. You want to ask your professor for more time. What will you say?

I know that you have already stated that we couldn't have more time, however, I wouldn't ask if I didn't really need more time. I think I told you my mom is really sick and I had to look after her. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	Would it be possible if you give me more time. I am passing through a difficult time my mother is very sick and I will be glad if you can. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
I am sorry I have not done the assignment yet. If there is a possibility of postponing the submission I would submit it as soon as I finish. All of that because I had some social circumstances. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	I know you said you wouldn't give me extra time, but as you know my mother is very ill and she depends on my care. Please would you consider giving me another extension? I'll make sure I get it done this time. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
My professor can you give me more time for my assignment to finish it because I have circumstances and I will promise to take you on the exact time and if you want to give me further assignment it is OK! **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	Excuse me, Professor, do you have a minute? I am here about the extension for the assignment which you gave me. I know you said that there would not be any more extensions given, but is there any way you would reconsider please? My mother has been in hospital and it has been very hard on me and I did not finish my assignment so could I have one more day please? **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
Hello professor, I know that you said my submission date is set in stone, but surely there must be some avenue available to me on compassionate grounds? **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	Dear teacher, please I need more time because my mother is sick and nobody with her. I should take care of her. I promise that I will submit my homework after two days from now. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
Can't use (Oman)	I'M SORRY Dr. Brown I have not been able to complete my assignment because my mother is sick. I was wondering if it would be possible for me to hand my project in next Monday? (Arlene USA) **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n

Instructions: For each written response please answer 'yes' or 'no' to the five questions.

Situation 5:
You have a nice meal in a restaurant. Now you want the waiter to bring you the bill. What will you say to him?

Excuse me, could I have the bill please? **(1)** Polite **y** **n** **(2)** Formal **y** **n** **(3)** Appropriate **y** **n** **(4)** Grammatically Correct **y** **n** **(5)** Clearly understood by you **y** **n**	Excuse me sir, could you please give me the bill if you don't mind. Thank you! **(1)** Polite **y** **n** **(2)** Formal **y** **n** **(3)** Appropriate **y** **n** **(4)** Grammatically Correct **y** **n** **(5)** Clearly understood by you **y** **n**
Excuse me. Could you please bring to me the bill please?! **(1)** Polite **y** **n** **(2)** Formal **y** **n** **(3)** Appropriate **y** **n** **(4)** Grammatically Correct **y** **n** **(5)** Clearly understood by you **y** **n**	May I have the check, please? **(1)** Polite **y** **n** **(2)** Formal **y** **n** **(3)** Appropriate **y** **n** **(4)** Grammatically Correct **y** **n** **(5)** Clearly understood by you **y** **n**
Could you get me the check please? **(1)** Polite **y** **n** **(2)** Formal **y** **n** **(3)** Appropriate **y** **n** **(4)** Grammatically Correct **y** **n** **(5)** Clearly understood by you **y** **n**	Excuse me, can you give me the bill? **(1)** Polite **y** **n** **(2)** Formal **y** **n** **(3)** Appropriate **y** **n** **(4)** Grammatically Correct **y** **n** **(5)** Clearly understood by you **y** **n**
Excuse me, the check. **(1)** Polite **y** **n** **(2)** Formal **y** **n** **(3)** Appropriate **y** **n** **(4)** Grammatically Correct **y** **n** **(5)** Clearly understood by you **y** **n**	Excuse me, I think we're ready for the bill. **(1)** Polite **y** **n** **(2)** Formal **y** **n** **(3)** Appropriate **y** **n** **(4)** Grammatically Correct **y** **n** **(5)** Clearly understood by you **y** **n**
That was wonderful. Can I have the bill please? **(1)** Polite **y** **n** **(2)** Formal **y** **n** **(3)** Appropriate **y** **n** **(4)** Grammatically Correct **y** **n** **(5)** Clearly understood by you **y** **n**	Excuse me, can I have the bill? I have finished and I want to leave. **(1)** Polite **y** **n** **(2)** Formal **y** **n** **(3)** Appropriate **y** **n** **(4)** Grammatically Correct **y** **n** **(5)** Clearly understood by you **y** **n**

Instructions: For each written response please answer 'yes' or 'no' to the five questions.

Situation 5:
You have a nice meal in a restaurant. Now you want the waiter to bring you the bill. What will you say to him?

The check, please? **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	Can you bring me the bill please? It was a nice meal. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
hey the bill please! **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	Excuse me, could you please bring me my bill? Thanks! **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
Could you please bring me the bill because I am waiting the bill please. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	Can I have the bill please? **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
Please we finished eating our meal. Could you bring the bill. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	Excuse me, can we please have the bill? **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n
Would you bring the check please? **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n	Excuse me, the bill. **(1)** Polite y n **(2)** Formal y n **(3)** Appropriate y n **(4)** Grammatically Correct y n **(5)** Clearly understood by you y n

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Appendix E: Ethical clearance

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

An analysis of the speech act realization of requests by Omani Students at Nizwa University, including perceptions of indirectness and politeness.

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Perry Hessenauer for a MA General Linguistics degree thesis.

1. **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The aim of the research is to investigate perceptions of politeness and indirectness in requests, and to investigate the production of requests for different situations by Omani students and Native English language teachers. Furthermore the research hopes to provide insight for teachers of English on how to teach functions, specifically requests.

2. **PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

1) Sign the consent form.

2) Fill out the questionnaire/s.

3) Spend 20-30 minutes with the researcher.

3. **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

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The participants will not experience any or be exposed to any potential risks or discomfort by taking part in this study.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Participants will not benefit personally by taking part in the research.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Participants will not receive payment for participation in this study.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained and only the researcher will be able to identify the participants. The questionnaire will only be used for the thesis and shared with the Department of General Linguistics at Stellenbosch University.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Perry Hessenauer – researcher, or Mrs. Kate Huddlestone – supervisor.

Perry Hessenauer   Kate Huddlestone

perry@unizwa.edu.om   katevg@sun.ac.za

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9.   **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

10. **Participant Confidentiality**

You may not discuss the questions and answers with anyone for 3 weeks. The reason is that not everybody will be doing the discourse completion test (DCT) on the same day. Confidentiality is important to ensure accurate raw results.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to me Perry Hessenauer in English. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study.

_____

Name of Subject/Participant

_____

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

_____   _____

Signature of Subject/Participant or Legal Representative   Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document. *H*e/she was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English and no translator was used.

_____   _____

Signature of Investigator   **Date**

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