A Cross-cultural Pragmatic study of the Social Categories Governing Request Speech Act used in the Iraqi and Australian Academic Setting

By

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Abstract

This paper investigates the use of request across different social relations governing the Iraqi and Australian academic setting. It aims to examine the use of the main request strategies in relation to the five social categories formulating the Iraqi and Australian academic setting. Using WDCT questionnaire, quantitative data was collected from 65 Iraqi non-native and 30 Australian native speakers of English. Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) taxonomy of request was adopted to analyse data quantitatively using SPSS statistical analysis. The findings revealed that the Australian native speakers were frequently more indirect than the Iraqi non-native speakers in the social category where speakers are of lower power and solidarity. This indicates the Australian native speakers' tendency to be more polite in their requests when addressing those of higher power. Thus, the study implies better understanding of the nature of requests and the most appropriate linguistic forms for making requests from interlocutors of different social relations in academic setting.

Keywords: Pragmatics, Social Categorise, Request Speech Act

Introduction

Various approaches have been proposed to study pragmatics in different cultures or within the same culture. Amongst these approaches is the cross-cultural, which concerns the role of culture in determining which linguistic forms and expressions are appropriate to certain situations and which are not (Barron, 2003). This is because these linguistic forms and expressions may be different from one culture to another.

However, the claim regarding whether the pragmatic aspects of a language are universal or culture-specific has been controversial (Trosborg, 2010). Some scholars such as Fraser and Nolen (1981) and Searle (1969) assumed that the strategies with which speech acts are realized across different languages are universal. In other words, the strategies of one language are said to be applicable to all languages all over the world, regardless of the effects of culture. In contrast, Blum-Kulka et al., (1989) believe that speech acts can be realized and performed

differently according to cultures and societies. In the light of this, Kraft and Geluykens, (2007) argue that cross-cultural pragmatics comprises all the pragmatic aspects of language and their relativism to cultural differences. Consequently, the universality of linguistic pragmatic aspects seems inapplicable to all cultures.

In regards, speech acts are firmly established aspects in pragmatics. Among these speech acts is Request, the focus of this paper. It means "an illocutionary act whereby a speaker (requester) conveys to the hearer (requestee) that he/she wants the requestee to perform an act which is for the benefit of the speaker" (Trosborg, 1995, p. 187). Request involves various main strategies subsumed under the 'head act' of request which is, in turn, classified into direct, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect strategies and peripheral strategies (internal and external modifiers) (Trosborg, 1995). In this respect, the of direct and direct request and its subsidiary strategies is governed by various social factors (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Valencia, 2020).

Thus, request is a direct "face threatening" speech act which is important and problematic for learners as well as for native speakers of English (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This is because of its wide use in everyday interaction and the different forms by which it is performed (Blum-Kulka, 1989; Ellis, 1992; Vergara, 2020). Therefore, for learners of English to request from others in English appropriately, they must master the ways in which requests are performed and perceived according to social norms. This is for the fact that any inconsideration of either the linguistic forms or the social factors in performing requests may lead to pragmatic failure which, in turn, leads to miscommunication. Thus, as part of the Eastern society, Iraqi EFL learners might miscommunicate their requests influenced by their culture when interacted with English native speakers.

However, a great number of studies has indicated that cultural and social factors are influential in governing any communication of learners of a foreign and second language with native speakers in any social act of communication using a target language (Cohen & Olshtain, 1981; Olshtain, 1983; House, 1988; Garcia, 1989; Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Fordyce & Fukazawa, 2004; Vo & Ngo, 2021). This may be due to the limited number of studies conducted using requests in relation to power and solidarity. For example, Nemani and Rasekh (2016) investigated how the variation of speech act in a context of the inscriptions of movies is influenced by the social class and variables such as solidarity and power. The findings revealed that native language's power, solidarity, power and social class have a great effect on the variation of speech act strategies. Another study by Bastos (1996) which was conducted to examinethe role of power and solidarity in governing requests performed between the hospital staff in discourse of health. The findings showed that the staff's professional and social identities influence the variety of request strategies. However, the few numbers of studies conducted on requests associated with power and solidarity may be one of the challenges that hinder the development of using requests appropriately, especially by Iraqi EFL learners.

In the same vein, another challenge is represented by the claim that most studies have focused their studies on data collected from Arab participants from different countries but "did not specify the Arab participants' countries of origin" (Al-Momani, 2009, p. 7). This is due to the claim that all Arab people share the same Arabic language. This may lead to the behavior when using speech acts (Bodman & Eisenstein, 1988; Cohen & Olshtain, 1993; Scarcella, 1979; Umar, 2004; Al-Momani, 2009). In contrast, Al-Momani (2009) and Al-Issa (1998) maintained that it is right to say that all Arabs share the same language but not the same behavior as they speak different dialects which most of them are influenced by different

languages as a result of invasion. In this regard, the Iraqi people, as part of Arabs, might also behave differently when expressing their speech acts.

Thus, this paper imports its importance from the fact that despite requests are universal to all languages and cultures, the strategies and behavior with which requests are used are different from one culture to another and from one situation to another according to the influence of the social variables engaging these situations. Based on this, the study in hand aims to examine how requests are realized by the Australian native speakers of English and Iraqi non-native speakers of English in different situations of higher power and lower solidarity taken place in the academic setting. Thus, the paper hypothesizes that indirect request strategies are used more frequently by Australian native speakers of English (henceforth ANSE) than by Iraqi non-native speakers of English (henceforth INNSE) in situations with higher power and lower solidarity.

Therefore, the paper may add knowledge to the existing literature of requests by providing English learners with the appropriate strategies that can be used in certain situations.

Methodology

The present paper adopted the explanatory design proposed by Creswell, Plano, Gutmann and Hanson (2003) which is appropriate to collect and analyse quantitative data.

Sampling

Based on the nature of this study, the investigation of the EFL learners' ability to use requests requires the collection of two comparable sets of data: 1) Data collected from EFL learners and 2) data collected from native speakers of English. In this respect, Ellis (1994) argued that the collection of such comparable data enables the researchers "to determine to what extent learner performance differs from native-speaker performance" (p. 162). To this end, this study was carried out in two different distinct areas: a) three Iraqi public universities within the provinces of Baghdad and Anbar, and b) one Australian public university within Sydney city.

The study recruited 95 participants divided into two groups: a) 65 INNSE and b) 30 ANSE. The INNSE were recruited from three Iraqi public universities and one Australian public university. The three Iraqi universities that have been selected for the setting are located in Baghdad, the capital of Iraq and Anbar province. The INNSE were full M.A and PhD postgraduate students whose major is English while the ANSE were full M.A postgraduate students from different majors including Chemistry, physics, and math. While the INNSE group consisted of 12 female and 48 males aged between 24 and 45, the ANSE group consisted of 18 female and 12 males aged between 24 and 40. The students in the Iraqi universities are exposed to English only during formal classroom teaching. The medium of instruction during classes is English.

Nonrandom convenience sampling was used to collect data from the INNSE and ANSE. Despite being the least preferable sampling technique in collecting data, it is most commonly used, especially at the level of postgraduate research (Dornyei, 2007). One of the strong features of this sampling is that it provides researchers with the willing participants, a rich dataset, and the easiness of collecting required data (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Dornyei, 2007).

Instruments

One-method data collection was used in this paper. Written Discourse Completion Task (Hereafter WDCT) questionnaire was used for collecting pragmalinguistic data of request. Al-Momani's (2009) WDCT was adapted in the present study because it was deemed appropriate. The adapted WDCT reflects situations comparable across two different cultures: Iraqi and Australian. In addition, its situations were based on a systematic variation of the social variables that might influence the use of speech act under investigation. The situations in the present study were formulated to elicit the interactions that occurred between interlocutors of different social relations such as -power –solidarity, =power –solidarity, +power +solidarity, =power =solidarity, -power, +solidarity (henceforth –p. –sol., =p., -sol., +p. +sol., =p., =sol., -p., +sol, respectively) as distributed by Brown and Gilman (1960). The situations were created to represent symmetrical or asymmetrical social relationships and they depict the interactions between student and their classmates, students and their lecturers, students and doctors, and students and manager of university bank. All situations reflect everyday occurrences of speech acts expected to be familiar to the INNSE and ANSE. Table (1) shows the functions of the five social categories of power and solidarity in the academic discourse and the description of the fourteen situations of the WDCT questionnaire.

Table 1: *WDCT Situations Based on Social Variables*

Situations	Social relations	Interlocutors	Description
S1(assignment extension)	-P, -Sol.	Student- Prof.	Student asks his/her professor for an extension of the submission deadline of his assignment.
S2 (copying notes)	-P, -Sol.	Student - Lecturer	Student asks his/her lecturer for a copy of last week's notes.
S3 (asking for medication)	-P, -Sol.	Student-Doctor	Student who is sick asks a doctor to prescribe him/her a medication.
S4 (opening an account)	-P, -Sol.	Student-Manager	Student asks a manager to open an account in a bank.
S5 (borrowing a book)	=P, -Sol.	Student-Student	Student asks another student to lend his/him a book.
S6 (joining a study group)	=P, -Sol.	Student-Student	Student asks another student to join his/her study group.
S7 (cleaning a table)	+P, +Sol.	Student-waiter	Student asks a waiter to clean a table.
S8 (postponing an appointment)	+P, +Sol.	Student-Student	Student asks another student to postpone an appointment with his/her neighbor.
S9 (driving a car)	=P, =Sol.	Student-Student	Student asks another student to try his car.
S10 (copying a notebook)	=P, =Sol.	Student-Student	Student asks another student to copy his/her notebook.
S11 (borrowing computer)	=P, =Sol.	Student-Student	Student asks a friend to lend him/her his/her computer.
S12 (getting notes back)	=P, =Sol.	Student-Student	Student asks a friend to give his/her notes back.
S13 (passing a ball)	-P,+Sol.	Student-Lecturer	Student asks his/her lecturer to pass him/her the ball.
S14 (explaining a lecture)	-p, +Sol.	Student-Lecturer	Student asks a lecturer who was a study friend previously to explain a missed class to him/her.

As shown in the above table, the first four situations focused on the relation in which the speaker is less powerful (-p) than the hearer so that the speaker cannot indicate his solidarity (-sol) with the hearer. Situations 5 and 6 reflect the relation in which the speaker and hearer have the same social power (=p) but they cannot use solidarity (-sol) with each other as they

are not familiar to each other. Situations 7 and 8 indicate that the speaker is more powerful (+p) than the hearer; thus, the speaker can use powerful language or solidarity at the same time (+sol). Situations 9-12 indicate the interaction between familiar persons of equal social power (=p) in that they can use solidarity (=sol). Situations 13 and 14 showed that although the speaker is less powerful than the hearer, the speaker can use solidarity with him as they are closer to each other, or they may be in an informal situation.

Data collection

Data collection started on 14 November 2021. Prior to the data collection, permission was sought from the various Heads of Departments of English of the Iraqi public universities under investigation. Specific instructions on how to respond to the questionnaires were given to the students in the presence of the researcher. They were given a time of 30 minutes which was ample to complete the WDCT questionnaire. As for the ANSE the data were obtained via convenience sampling from the ANSE who fit the respondents' criteria. They were friends of a friend living and studying interlanguage pragmatics in Australia.

Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential analysis using SPSS (Version 22) was used to present the results of quantitative data obtained from WDCT questionnaire. In this regard, based on Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) coding scheme, the data elicited via WDCT were analysed. For instance, in the request sequence "*Ahmed, my computer stopped working for no reason. I need your computer for a couple of minutes to finish my assignment. Is that, Ok?*" the linguistic resources consists of alerter ("*Ahmed*"), external modifications ("*my computer stopped working for no reason" and "for a couple of minutes*"), the request head act ("*I need your computer*"), and an internal modification ("*is it ok*"). Thus, the present study employed such a unit of analysis, as shown in this example, in identifying the linguistic resources included in the participants' responses.

Results and Discussion

Request and Social Categories in the Academic Setting

This section deliberates on the INNSE and the ANSE's requests situated in the academic setting elicited from the results of the WDCT. The analysis focused on the main strategies of request: "direct, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect" and the peripheral strategies such as: "internal and external" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). One major issue is to analyse these strategies across the five social categories which reflects the nature of the common situations in the academic setting

Table 2: *Frequency and Percentage of direct requests expressed by the INNSE and ANSE according to the five social categories in the academic setting*

Nationality	INNSE	ANSE	INNSE-ANSE
Direct strategy	N %	N %	$\chi2$
C1 (-P, -Sol)	86 (25.6%)	33 (37.5%)	1.94
C2 (=P, -Sol)	31 (9.25%)	7 (7.95%)	3.73
C3 (+P, +Sol)	48 (14.32%)	9 (10.22%)	9.67*
C4 (=P, =Sol)	91 (27.16%)	15 (17.04%)	13.95*
C5 (-P, +Sol)	79 (23.58%)	24 (27.27%)	11.94
Total	335	88	

Note. C = category, INNSE = Iraqi non-native speakers of English, ANSE = Australian native speakers of English.
*p < 0.05

For direct request strategies, as shown in Table 2, the Chi-Square analysis revealed significant differences in the use of requests in situations C3 and C4 ($\chi2$ = 9.67 and 13.95, respectively) and no significant differences in situations C1, C2, C5 between the INNSE and ANSE. Specifically, the INNSE's use of direct requests was significantly higher (14.32%) than the ANSE's in situations C3 (10.22%) and situations C4 (INNSE=27.16% & ANSE=17.04%). This suggests that the INNSE preferred to be direct when requesting from those with lower power and lower solidarity, and those with equal power and solidarity in the academic setting.

These findings mirror those of previous studies such as (Al- Momani, 2009; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010), which revealed that the NNSE tend to be higher in the use of direct requests than the NSE. This may be associated with the way in which they perceive the different social relations. In other words, the social relation between interlocutors may urge the INNSE to use direct requests in situations C3 and C4, where speakers are of higher social power than hearers or are of the same level of social power and solidarity. In such light, Economidou-Kogetsidis (2010), for instance, argued that direct strategies were more preferred in situations of equal relations between interlocutors (e.g., in a restaurant), or in situations in which the speakers are more powerful than the hearers (e.g., buying tickets). In addition, The INNSE's use of direct strategies could be due to their inadequate language competence and lack of interlangauge pragmatic awareness of using the strategies appropriate to the social relations in the academic setting.

Moreover, the findings of this study may also be explained by the cultural and situational differences between the interlocutors in the academic setting. In this respect, Al-Momani (2009) and Blum-Kulka and House (1989) argued that learners of a target language may differ in their use of speech acts (directness and indirectness) on the ground of their different cultural backgrounds.

As for the use of conventionally indirect requests, table 3 presents the results of the Chi-Square analysis of conventionally indirect requests used between the INNSE and ANSE in relation to the social relations.

Table 3: *Frequency and Percentage of conventionally indirect requests expressed by the INNSE and ANSE according the five social categories in the academic setting*

Nationality	INNSE	ANSE	INNSE-ANSE
Conventionally indirect strategy	N %	N %	$\chi2$
C1 (-P, -Sol)	161 (29.16%)	81 (25.96%)	3.50
C2 (=P, -Sol)	99 (17.93%)	50 (16.02%)	1.25
C3 (+P, +Sol)	80 (14.49%)	47 (15.06%)	5.34
C4 (=P, =Sol)	164 (29.71%)	105 (33.65%)	15.14*
C5 (-P, +Sol)	48 (8.69%)	29 (9.29%)	16.47**
Total	552	312	

Note. C = category, INNSE = Iraqi non-native speakers of English, ANSE = Australian native speakers of English.
*p < 0.05

As shown in the above table, there are significant differences in situations C4 and C5 ($\chi2$=15.14 and 16.47, respectively) between the INNSE and ANSE, but no significant

differences in the use of conventionally indirect requests in situations C1, C2, and C3. The INNSE's use of conventionally indirect requests was lower than that of the ANSE in situations C4 (29.7% and 33.65%) and C5 (8.69% and 9.29%). This indicates the INNSE's tendency to be indirect when making requests in such situations, which indicate solidarity with their interlocutors.

A plausible explanation for this finding can be sought in the INNSE's social consideration in being less indirect with their close friends. These findings concur with those of most previous studies (Al-Momany, 2009; Chen, 2001; Schaure, 2009) which indicated that the native speakers of English tend to be more conventionally indirect in making requests than the non-native speakers of English. This may be attributed to the ANSE's attempt to be more polite in certain situations of the academic setting even with their close friends and certain cultures. In this case, it could be that the INNS felt that politeness could be achieved by the use of direct requests, which would also make their requests clearer and more understandable.

As for the non-significant results of the conventionally indirect requests in relation to some social relations, they are in line with the findings of most previous studies (Al-Gahtani & Alkahtani, 2012; Félix-Brasdefer, 2007) which demonstrated that there was similar use of conventionally indirect requests between native speakers of English and non-native speakers of English. This may be explained by what is emphasised by Blum-Kulka (1987, p. 131) who arguesd that "politeness is defined as the interactional balance achieved between two needs: the need for pragmatic clarity and the need to avoid coerciveness".

Third, regarding the non-conventionally indirect request strategies, the Chi-Square analysis used to investigate the strategies used by INNSE and ANSE in relation to the identified five social relations in the academic setting.

Table 4: *Frequency and Percentage of non-conventionally indirect requests expressed by the INNSE and ANSE according the five social categories in the academic setting among*

Nationality	INNSE	ANSE	INNSE-ANSE
Non-conventionally indirect strategy	N %	N %	$\chi 2$
C1 (-P, -Sol)	13 (56.52%)	6 (30%)	.576
C2 (=P, -Sol)	0 (0%)	3 (15%)	6.712*
C3 (+P, +Sol)	2 (8.69%)	4 (20%)	3.64
C4 (=P, =Sol)	5 (21.73%)	0 (0%)	1.92
C5 (-P, +Sol)	3 (13.04%)	7 (35%)	7.63*
Total	23	20	

Note. C = category, INNSE = Iraqi non-native speakers of English, ANSE = Australian native speakers of English.
*p < 0.05

As indicated in Table 4, the analysis revealed significant differences between the INNSE and ANSE's use of non-conventionally indirect strategies in situations C2 and C5 ($\chi 2^=6.712$ and 7.63), but not in situations C1, C3, C4. The above table also indicates that the ANSE's use of these strategies was higher than the INNSE's in situations C2 (15% and 0 %,) and C5 (35% and 13.04%).

The finding is in tandem with those of some previous studies (Schauer, 2009; Hill, 1997), which revealed that the native speakers of English tend to be non-conventionally indirect in their requests rather than the non-native. This means that the INNSE tend to be clear with unfamiliar interlocutors as in situations C2, and with those with higher power and higher

solidarity as in situations C5. A plausible explanation for the findings of this study could be due to the INNSE's attempt to make their requests transparent and avoid ambiguous non-conventional indirect requests which are less polite than the other request head act strategies. In addition, the nature of the Iraqi academic context characterized by the focus on the grammar of the linguistic forms isolated from their pragmatic use (Harb, 2015), could have influenced the INNSE's responses in avoiding ambiguity in their requests. Therefore, the INNSE's attempt to use more direct request strategies suggests their commitment to be explicit, which is more appropriate as the use of non-conventionally indirect strategies of requests are considered less polite than conventionally indirect strategies (Blum-Kulka, 1987).

In addition, the non-significant use of non-conventionally indirect strategy of request in situations C1, C3, and C4 across the two groups of speakers supports the findings of Trosborg (1995), which revealed a similar use of non-conventionally indirect requests by both learners and native speakers of a target language.

All in all, inconsistencies in the findings of the current study may be attributed to the limited pragmalinguistic knowledge of language learners about the requests used in a target language or to the transfer of pragmatic aspects from the first language to the target language (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). In other words, the INNSE whose major is English might have rich vocabulary and mastered, to a certain extent, grammatical and linguistic aspects but not the social norms of English. This suggests their inadequate mastery of the appropriate use of the linguistic aspects according to the social norms in the academic context.

Internal Modifiers across The Five Social Categories common in Academic Setting
Regarding the use of internal modifiers across the five social categories, table 5 displays the distribution of internal modifiers used by the INNSE and ANSE.

Table 5: *Frequency and Percentage of internal modifiers expressed by the INNSE and ANSE according the five social categories.*

Nationality	INNSE		ANSE		INNSE-ANSE
Internal modifiers	N	%	N	%	X^2
C1	571	36.98	220	31.11	22.580
C2	265	17.16	122	17.25	10.493
C3	213	13.79	98	13.86	10.463
C4	367	23.76	216	30.55	13.698
C5	128	8.29	51	7.21	8.875
Total	1544		707		

Note. C = category, INNSE = Iraqi non-native speakers of English, ANSE = Australian native speakers of English.
*$p < 0.05$

As shown in the above table, the Chi-Square test of independence revealed no significant differences between the INNSE and the ANSE in the use of internal modifiers across all social categories. This means that the INNSE were similar to the ANSE in their use of internal modifiers. This finding is consistent with those of most previous studies (Barron, 2003; Faerch & Kasper, 1989), which indicated a similar use of internal modifiers by the learners and native speakers of a target language. Table 6 presents the use of lexical downgraders (a type of internal modifiers containing words and expressions used to decrease the illocutionary force of a request), across the five social relations by the INNSE and the ANSE, as revealed by the Chi-Square analysis.

Table 6: *Frequency and Percentage of lexical downgraders expressed by INNSE and ANSE according the five social categories*

Nationality	INNSE		ANSE		INNSE-ANSE
Lexical downgraders	N	%	N	%	X^2
C1	435	36.37	162	29,03	16.972
C2	191	15.96	95	17.02	5.125
C3	176	14.71	77	13.79	11.289
C4	284	23.74	177	31.72	21.710*
C5	110	9.19	47	8.42	7.533
Total	1196		558		

Note. C = category, INNSE= Iraqi non-native speakers of English, ANSE = Australian native speakers of English.
*$p < 0.05$

As shown in table 6, the Chi-Square test of independence revealed a significant difference between the INNSE and the ANSE's use of lexical downgraders only in C4, but not in the other social categories (C1, C2, C3, and C5). The ANSE seem to use more lexical downgraders than the INNSE in their requestive behaviour in the situations of C4. This indicates the INNSE's tendency to underuse the lexical downgraders in situations where interlocutors are of equal power and solidarity, which is consistent with the findings of previous studies (Hendriks, 2008; Woodfield, 2008) which revealed a high frequency of the use of lexical downgraders by native speakers of English rather than the learners of English. This finding could be attributed to the choice of lexical downgraders used, which are situationally and culturally dependent. It is also likely due to the INNSE's inability to use the appropriate words and/or expressions. Therefore, their pragmatic knowledge could have been restricted only to what they have been taught in the classroom, to the extent that they could not use a wide variety of internal modifiers but limited their use to 'politeness markers'. In addition, the social relations reflected in the situation could have influenced their choice not to mitigate their requests with those who are of less or equal power.

As for syntactic downgraders, the results of the Chi-Square comparisons in Table 7, revealed no significant differences between the INNSE and ANSE across all the social categories.

Table 7: *Frequency and Percentage of the syntactic downgraders expressed by the INNSE and ANSE according the five social categories*

Nationality	INNSE		ANSE		INNSE-ANSE
Syntactic downgraders	N	%	N	%	X^2
C1	77	32.21	28	28.00	2.747
C2	54	22.59	22	22,00	2.243
C3	27	11.29	16	16.00	0.734
C4	64	26.77	31	31.00	5.511
C5	17	7.11	3	3.00	2.494
Total	239		100		

Note. C = category, INNSE = Iraqi non-native speakers of English, ANSE = Australian native speakers of English.
*$p < 0.05$

The above results mean that there is a similarity in the use of syntactic downgraders by both groups. Both groups seem to underuse the syntactic downgraders, which is in tandem with

the findings of previous studies (Barron, 2003; Göy et al., 2012; Hendriks, 2008; Schauer, 2009). A plausible explanation for the current findings could be the INNSE's attempt to be more polite and to express their requests positively (Schauer, 2006) with hearers of high power.

As for the use of upgraders across the two groups of speakers, the results of the Chi-Square analysis are displayed in Table 8

Table 8: *Frequency and Percentage of upgraders used by INNSE and ANSE across five Social Categories in academic setting*

Nationality	INNSE		ANSE		INNSE-ANSE
Upgraders	N	%	N	%	X^2
C1	59	54.12	30	61.22	0.815
C2	20	18.34	5	10.20	3.115
C3	10	9.17	5	10.20	0.766
C4	19	17.43	8	16.32	3.632
C5	1	0.91	1	2.04	0.321
Total	109		49		

Note. C = category, INNSE = Iraqi non-native speakers of English, ANSE = Australian native speakers of English.
*p < 0.05

As highlighted in the above table, there are no significant differences in the use of upgraders when mitigating requests between the INNSE and ANSE. This means that the INNSE were similar to the ANSE in their use of upgraders across all the five categories of social relations, which reflects the developing pragmatic knowledge of the INNSE. Specifically, both groups tended to underuse the upgraders in their requests. This finding is similar to that of Schauer (2009), which indicates less frequent use of upgraders by native speakers and learners of a target language.

To sum up, the results suggest that the INNSE seemed to be able to use the internal modifiers in mitigating requests in a way close to that of the ANSE. However, there was no evident use of a variety of internal modifiers. In addition, the INNSE's restricted pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge could have caused them to overuse the politeness marker 'please' and underuse the other devices of internal modifiers.

External Modifiers across the Five Social Categories common in Academic Setting
For further results, the Chi-Square test was used to examine the use of external modifiers within the social categories governing requests in the academic setting.

Table 9: *Frequency and Percentage of External modifiers used by the INNSE and ANSE within the five social categories common in the academic setting*

Nationality	INNSE		ANSE		INNSE-ANSE
External modifiers	N	%	N	% χ^2	
C1	576	32.83	253	29.79	87
C2	270	15.39	132	15.54	76.5*
C3	262	14.93	124	14.60	81
C4	431	24.57	233	27.44	102
C5	215	12.25	107	12.60	96

Note. C = category, INNSE = Iraqi non-native speakers of English, ANSE = Australian native speakers of English.
*p < 0.05

As demonstrated in Table 9, the Chi-Square analysis revealed significant differences between the INNSE's of external modifiers and the ANSE's in situations C2, but no significant differences in the use of others. The non-significant results which demonstrated both groups' tendency to follow a similar pattern in the use of external modifiers in situations C1, C3, C4, and C5 provide support to the findings of several previous studies (Achiba, 2003; Economidou-Kogetsidis & Woodfield, 2012; House & Kasper, 1987; Trosborg, 1995) which indicate a similar use of external modifiers between learners of a target language and native speakers of that language. This might be due to the INNSE's developed pragmatic knowledge which enables them to choose their external modifiers effectively in accordance with the social relations between interlocutors in those situations and governs them to support their requests in a way that makes them convincible. Jorda (2008) and Trosborg (1995) suggested that advanced learners are more qualified, and more similar to the natives in the use of request external modifiers than the intermediate.

As for the significantly different results, the table indicates that the ANSE used more external modifiers than the INNSE did in situations C2 (15.39% and 15.54%, respectively). This finding suggests that the choice of external modifiers might be governed by the relationships between interlocutors in different situations. Hence, the INNSE might not be aware of the unfamiliar relation between interlocutors in those situations. This finding is in line with those of several previous studies (Barron, 2003; Otcu & Zeyrek, 2008; Safont-Jorda and Alcon-Soler, 2012) which indicate that native speakers of English use external modifiers in their requests more frequently than non-native speakers of English did, ascribing this to the culture. However, some other previous studies (Félix-Brasdefer, 2004; Pan, 2012) showed contrastive results, in that learners were frequent in using external modifiers rather than native speakers when requesting from others, intending to compensate their lack of pragmatic knowledge, which influences them in not using their requests appropriately.

The findings of this study can be explained in that the INNSE may not be fully aware of the various types of external modifiers used by the ANSE when requesting from others as they may lack the opportunity of communication with native speakers of English. Furthermore, the influence of the Arabic language and the Iraqi culture may influence the INNSE not to use external modifiers with unfamiliar interlocutors. In addition, the findings may be ascribed to the social relationship between interlocutors that may influence their use of requests differently from the native speakers.

To summarise, the analysis of the external modifiers used by the INNSE and ANSE revealed similarities as well as significant differences between both groups. The findings indicated that the INNSE followed a pattern similar to that of the ANSE in the overall use of external modifiers, and in the preference of some strategies, namely 'grounder' and 'alerters'. On the other hand, the analysis revealed significant differences between both groups in their use of external modifiers by strategies and within the five social categories. These differences may be attributed to the differences of social situations which influence interlocutors to perceive the social variables differently in accordance with their culture.

Conclusion

This paper concerned the investigation of requests used by the INNSE and ANSE in the academic setting across different social categories. The major findings showed that the Iraqi non-native speakers of English approximated the Australian native speakers of English in their use of direct requests strategies in relation to some social categories. This suggests that both

groups shared similar sociopragmatic competence. On the other hand, both groups perceive the social relations and situations of different categories in academic setting differently.

Concerning the use of conventionally indirect requests, it indicates that the Australian native speakers seemed to use more conventionally indirect requests than the Iraqis in situations where interlocutors are of equal power and solidarity, and in those, where the respondents have higher power and solidarity than the addressees. This concludes that the social relations between the interlocutors in academic setting play an important role in the way the requests were made with. In this respect, Felix-Brasdefer (2005) stated that indirectness is related to politeness, and they are in leaner relation, meaning that their scope is dependent on whether the relationship between interlocutors is formal or informal which, in turn, is determined by the social power and degree of the familiarity between interlocutors. Thus, it can be inferred that the Australian native speakers of English were more polite in their request than the Iraqis, as the latter may have limited linguistic forms of conventionally indirect strategies.

As regards the non-conventionally indirect request strategies used in situations across the five social categories, the results indicate that both groups of speakers showed similarity in the use of the strategies in situations where interlocutors are of equal power and solidarity, unequal power and solidarity, or the speakers have more power over but no solidarity with the addressees. This may be associated with the possibility of the Iraqi's awareness of the pragmatic aspects that govern the appropriate use of non-conventionally indirect strategies in a way similar to that of the Australian. This is in tandem with Song (2012) who emphasised that learners could communicate successfully with their interlocutors using a target language if they are aware of the social and cultural factors as well as the politeness strategies of that target language.

The findings also showed a tendency of high preference for the use of "lexical downgraders" over "syntactic downgraders" and „upgraders" in mitigating requests among the INNSE and ANSE. In this regard, Hassall (2001) explained that it may be challenging for learners of a target language to combine the lexical and syntactic downgraders in the use of requests as they might have not developed their grammatical knowledge. On the other hand, the infrequent use of external modifiers by the INNSE infers that the choice of external modifiers might be governed by the relationships between interlocutors in different situations. Hence, the INNSE might not be aware of the unfamiliar relation between interlocutors in those situations.

However, the paper contributes to the repository of scholarly work on cross-cultural pragmatics in terms of updated knowledge on requests made in relation to power and solidarity by two distinct cultural groups: the INNSE and ANSE. It serves as a lens for a better understanding of the nature of requests and the most appropriate linguistic forms for making requests from interlocutors of different social relations in academic setting. Thus, this paper implies that instruction can also highlight the role of social variables, power and solidarity in the use of appropriate request strategies in English politely. In this sense, EFL learners could be informed on the use of the conventionally indirect request strategies as reflecting polite uses and the use of internal and external modifications in mitigation and intensifying their requests from people with higher power than them such as their teachers.

All in all, the paper was confined to investigating one type of speech act, i.e., requests used by the INNSE and ANSE in the academic setting. Thus, it would be useful to carry out future studies that compare the use of other speech acts, such as refusal, apology and compliment by similar groups of speakers. Such studies would reveal how speech acts are formulated and perceived by the identified communities.

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