

ARABIC SPEECH ACT: INVESTIGATING STUDENTS' PRAGMALINGUISTIC COMPETENCE IN REQUESTING AND APOLOGIZING EXPRESSIONS

Abdul Muid^{1*}, Anwar Sanusi², Sulhi Muhammad Daud Abdul Kadir³
1,2,3 Universitas Jambi

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*Corresponding Author:

Name:
Anwar Sanusi
Email:
anwarsanusi@unja.ac.id

Abstract

This study aimed to determine the speech act strategies of requesting and apologizing sentences in Arabic produced by Non-Native Speakers (NNS). This study used a qualitative approach with a case study design. Participants in this study were 50 students of the Arabic Language Education Study Program at Jambi University. The results of this study suggest that the most dominant request strategy is conventionally indirect (60%), especially the query preparatory sub-strategy, which is used to maintain politeness by asking questions without the impression of forcing. In addition, the direct strategy with the sub-strategy of the derivable mood (imperative) is also used, although with a lower frequency, with polite expressions such as "min faḍlika" to maintain politeness. Non-conventionally indirect strategies (5%) were also found, where speakers gave indirect hints to convey requests subtly. The apology strategy was the most frequently used (68%), followed by acknowledgment of responsibility (20%) and promise of non-recurrence (10%). The explanation or account strategy was used at a shallow frequency (2%).

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Keywords:

Apologizing; Arabic speech act; Pragmalinguistic competence; Requesting.

مستخلص البحث

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحديد استراتيجيات الأفعال الكلامية لطلب الاعتذار والطلبات في اللغة العربية التي ينتجها المتحدثون غير الأصليين. استخدمت الدراسة منهجًا نوعيًا مع تصميم دراسة حالة. كان المشاركون في هذه الدراسة ٥٠ طالبًا من برنامج دراسة تعليم اللغة العربية في جامعة جامبي الحكومية. تشير نتائج الدراسة إلى أن استراتيجية الطلب الأكثر هيمنة هي الاستراتيجية غير المباشرة التقليدية (٦٠٪)، وخاصة استراتيجية الاستفهام التحضيرية الفرعية، التي تستخدم للحفاظ على اللياقة من خلال طرح الأسئلة دون أن يكون هناك انطباع بالإكراه. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يتم استخدام الاستراتيجية المباشرة مع الاستراتيجية الفرعية للمزاج القابل للاستدلال (الأمر)، على الرغم من استخدامها بتواتر أقل، مع تعبيرات مهذبة مثل "من فضلك" للحفاظ على اللياقة. كما وُجدت استراتيجيات غير مباشرة غير تقليدية (٥٪)، حيث قدّم المتحدثون تلميحات غير مباشرة للتعبير عن الطلبات بشكل غير واضح. وكانت استراتيجية الاعتذار هي الأكثر استخدامًا (٦٨٪)، تليها استراتيجية الاعتراف بالمسؤولية (٢٠٪) ووعدهم بعدم التكرار (١٠٪). أما استراتيجية الشرح أو التقرير فقد تم استخدامها بتواتر ضئيل جدًا (٢٪).

كلمات أساسية: الاعتذار؛ الطلب؛ الفعل اللغوي العربي؛ الكفاءة التداولية.

Introduction

Arabic is a language rich in variations in forms of expression, both syntactically, semantically, and pragmatically.¹ In learning Arabic as a foreign language, students' ability to master this language is limited to aspects of grammar and vocabulary and the ability to use language appropriately according to the social and cultural context, or what is known as pragmalinguistic competence.²

The problem often encountered when learning Arabic today is inappropriate speech acts in Arabic sentences that do not comply with standard communication rules.³ In addition, the variety of Arabic language styles makes Arabic a problematic language to express in everyday communication.⁴ Another problem is more knowledge about speech acts, language style, and vocabulary.⁵ This causes non-native speaker (NNS) students to translate sentences often literally or word for word when expressing something, which results in inconsistencies between the spoken expression and the intended meaning.

Another problem was the lack of Native Speaker teachers who could validate errors or inconsistencies in native speakers' speech.⁶ As with other foreign languages, Arabic also has a variety of expressions and speech acts that have become standard in communication, both in formal and non-formal contexts.⁷

Therefore, NNS is required to have the ability to use the correct language in the proper context, which is known as pragmatic competence. Pragmatic competence refers to the ability to use two types of knowledge: pragmalinguistics

¹ Ding Yibing, Mohamad Hussin, and Mohammad Seman, "Research on the Innovation of Arabic Interrogative Sentence Teaching Strategies," *Forum for Linguistic Studies* 6, no. 4 (2024): 474, <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v6i4.6671>; Faiq Ilham Rosyadi and Muhammad Luqman Chakim, "Karikatur Al-Arabiyah Fi Hisab Twitter @cartoon_ar (Dirasah Tahliliyah Tadawuliyah)," *An Nabighoh: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab* 22, no. 02 (2020): 131, <https://doi.org/10.32332/an-nabighoh.v22i02.2005>.

² Kuchkarova Maftuna Dilmurod Kizi, "Basic Concepts and Principles of Language Communication in Pragmalinguistics," *Oriental Renaissance: Innovative, Educational, Natural and Social Sciences* 4, no. 5 (2024), <https://oriens.uz/en/journal/article/basic-concepts-and-principles-of-language-communication-in-pragmalinguistics/>.

³ Ghaleb Rabab'ah and Dogan Bulut, "Compensatory Strategies in Arabic as a Second Language," *Poznań Studies in Contemporary Linguistics* 43, no. 2 (2007), <https://doi.org/10.2478/v10010-007-0020-5>.

⁴ Reham Abuemira, "Integrating Intercultural Communicative Competence into Teaching Arabic as a Multidialectal Language Through Telecollaboration," *Critical Multilingualism Studies* 11, no. 1 (2024), <https://cms.arizona.edu/index.php/multilingual/article/view/282>.

⁵ Anwar Sanusi et al., "Arabic Teachers Pedagogical Competence: Cultural Approach in Enhancing the Students' Communicative Skills," *Arabiyat : Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab Dan Kebahasaaraban* 11, no. 1 (2024), <https://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/arabiyat/article/view/39919>.

⁶ V Árvá and P Medgyes, "Native and Non-Native Teachers in the Classroom," *System* 28, no. 3 (2000): 355, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X\(00\)00017-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X(00)00017-8).

⁷ Ruba Hashish and Riyad F. Hussein, "Strategies Subtitlers Use in Rendering English Slang Expressions Into Arabic," *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 12, no. 4 (2022): 752, <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1204.16>.

and sociopragmatics.⁸ In line with this, Leech emphasized that pragmalinguistics is the ability of NNS to use linguistic forms and actions in conveying specific illocutionary messages. At the same time, sociopragmatics is the ability of NNS to adapt forms and actions in specific cultural contexts.⁹

Pragmalinguistic ability is an essential aspect of communicative competence. Knowledge of pragmalinguistics is needed to understand how to perform speech acts, especially in expressions of requests and apologies in a language.¹⁰ Meanwhile, sociopragmatics is knowledge about how to apply speech acts in the proper context.¹¹

A request is a form of speech generally used to convey a request in a polite and refined manner.¹² This speech act is usually directed at others to ask for help, permission, or something desired while maintaining communication ethics.¹³ Meanwhile, an apology is generally expressed when a speaker asks for forgiveness for a mistake he has made.¹⁴ These two speech acts have profound social implications and can vary significantly across cultures.¹⁵ Therefore, understanding these speech acts in Arabic becomes essential for students to achieve functional language proficiency.

However, research on the pragmalinguistic competence of NNS in using Arabic speech acts, especially in expressions of request and apology in Arabic, still needs to be completed. This is because many studies still emphasize the

⁸ Abdulkhaleq Al-rawafi, "The Pragmalinguistics of Apologizing in the Arabic Language by Non-Native Speakers," *ALSUNIYAT: Jurnal Penelitian Bahasa, Sastra, Dan Budaya Arab* 3, no. 1 (2020): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.17509/alsuniyat.v3i1.23664>.

⁹ Geoffrey N. Leech, *Principles of Pragmatics* (London: Routledge, 2016).

¹⁰ Yaseen Alzebaree and Mehmet Ali Yavuz, "Realization of the Speech Acts of Request and Apology by Middle Eastern EFL Learners," *EURASIA Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education* 13, no. 11 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.12973/ejmste/79603>; Ali Derakhshan and Ali Arabmofrad, "The Impact of Instruction on the Pragmatic Comprehension of Speech Acts of Apology, Request, and Refusal Among Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners," *English Teaching & Learning* 42, no. 1 (2018): 75–94, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42321-018-0004-6>; Bilal Ed-deraouy and Sakale Sana, "Examining Pragmatic Knowledge in Speech Acts of Request, Compliment Response, and Apology among Moroccan EFL Students," *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation* 7, no. 1 (2024): 109–22, <https://doi.org/10.32996/ijllt.2024.7.1.11>.

¹¹ Tri Pujiati, "Command Speech Acts on Health Services: A Sociopragmatics Study," *Ummul Qura Jurnal Institut Pesantren Sunan Drajat (INSUD) Lamongan* 19, no. 1 (2024): 9–26, <https://doi.org/10.55352/uq.v19i1.854>.

¹² Shoshana Blum-Kulka, "You Don't Touch Lettuce with Your Fingers: Parental Politeness in Family Discourse," *Journal of Pragmatics*, Special Issue on 'Politeness,' 14, no. 2 (1990): 259, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(90\)90083-P](https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(90)90083-P).

¹³ Herbert H. Clark and Peter Lucy, "Understanding What Is Meant from What Is Said: A Study in Conversationally Conveyed Requests," *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior* 14, no. 1 (1975): 56–72, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-5371\(75\)80006-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-5371(75)80006-5).

¹⁴ Amatullah Nabilah and Nuraziza Aliah, "Apology Strategies Expressed by the Characters in The Proposal Movie," *NOBEL: Journal of Literature and Language Teaching* 7, no. 1 (2016): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.15642/NOBEL.2016.7.1.1-14>.

¹⁵ Shoshana Blum-Kulka, Juliane House, and Gabriele Kasper, *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: Requests and Apologies* (Norwood: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1989).

phonological, morphological, or syntactic aspects of mastering Arabic, while pragmatic studies have yet to receive sufficient attention.

Al Farisi et al.'s research examined the speech act of request in Arabic. Still, it focused more on politeness strategies than on the apology strategy. The gap in this research is the need for more attention to the variation of apology expressions in the context of learning Arabic as a foreign language.¹⁶ In addition, Aboud's research discusses the speech act of apology in Arabic but focuses more on native Arabic speakers in Arab countries. This study has yet to explore the pragmalinguistic abilities of students who learn Arabic as a second or foreign language.

Al-Rawafi et al.'s study examined the speech act of apology in English and compared it with Arabic. Still, there needed to be a more in-depth analysis of the differences. This study could be strengthened by further explaining how each strategy and speech act of apology in the two languages differ in structure and social context.¹⁷ Deveci & Hmida's study investigated how a sequence of request speech acts is realized by native English speakers and Arab university students at an English-speaking university in the UAE in their interactions with university professors via email. However, the study has not explicitly considered other factors that may influence students' pragmatic abilities, such as cultural background, previous experience with English, or daily interactions with native speakers.¹⁸

Furthermore, Surjowati's research focuses on politeness strategies used by students of the Faculty of Language and Science, Wijaya Kusuma University, Surabaya, with different regional multicultural backgrounds in Indonesia. Still, it has not examined speech acts of requests and apologies in Arabic.¹⁹

Based on the review of five previous studies, there is a significant gap related to the investigation of NNS pragmalinguistic competence, especially in the use of request and apology speech acts. This shows that further research is still needed to fill this gap, especially involving students studying Arabic as a foreign language in higher education. This study is expected to contribute significantly to developing more effective pragmalinguistic teaching methods in academic activities for Arabic language education students as NNS.

¹⁶ Mohamad Zaka Al Farisi et al., "Requesting Speech Acts: A Case Study of Arabic Education Students in Bandung:" (Fifth International Conference on Language, Literature, Culture, and Education (ICOLLITE 2021), Bandung, Indonesia, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.211119.070>.

¹⁷ Abdulkhaleq Al-Rawafi et al., "Students' Apologizing in Arabic and English: An Interlanguage Pragmatic Case Study at an Islamic Boarding School in Indonesia," *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics* 10, no. 3 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v10i3.31740>.

¹⁸ Tanju Deveci and Ikhlas Ben Hmida, "The Request Speech Act in Emails by Arab University Students in the UAE," *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies* 13, no. 1 (2017), <https://www.jlls.org/index.php/jlls/article/view/569>.

¹⁹ Ribut Surjowati, "Politeness Strategies Used by the Students with Regional Multicultural Background," *NOBEL: Journal of Literature and Language Teaching* 12, no. 1 (2021): 112, <https://doi.org/10.15642/NOBEL.2021.12.1.112-135>.

Method

This research is qualitative research with a case study design. This study uses Arabic request and apology speech acts to examine the pragmalinguistic competence of 50 Arabic Language Education students as NNS (third language acquisition) at Jambi University. The data collection instrument for this study was the Discourse Completion Task (DCT) of nine language situations on campus consisting of five request speech act situations and four apology speech act situations. The informants wrote their responses using Arabic in nine real situations. This is summarized in the following table.

Table 1. Language situation

Number	Language situation	Type
1	Borrowing notebooks and stationery	Requesting
2	Discussion activities in class	
3	Going to the toilet while studying	
4	Going to the library with friends to look for books	
5	Meeting with lecturers for academic guidance	
6	Being late to class	Apologizing
7	Not doing assignments	
8	Playing with mobile phones while studying	
9	Chatting while studying	

Next, the informant was assigned to fill out a questionnaire related to nine language situations using Arabic. In testing the instrument formulated to obtain data in this study, experts (Expert Judgment/Native Speaker) used it. In this case, after the instrument about nine activity situations on campus was constructed using Arabic, it was then consulted with an expert (NS) and then asked for his opinion on the instrument that had been compiled and the results of the expression of the request strategy that had been filled in through DCT. Then, to obtain in-depth data related to NNS, the researcher chose the request and apology strategies that had been written. The researcher also conducted in-depth interviews via WhatsApp and social media.

When analyzing data collected based on the application strategy, researchers utilize the application strategy formula from Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, developed by Blum-Kulka et al. and known as the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP).²⁰ This is outlined as follows.

²⁰ Shoshana Blum-Kulka and Elite Olshtain, "Requests and Apologies: A Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP)1," *Applied Linguistics* 5, no. 3 (1984): 196–213, <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/5.3.196>.

Table 2. CCSARP for request strategies

Request strategies	Types
Direct	Mood derivable
	Explicit performative
	Hedged performative
	Locution derivable/Obligation statement
	Want statement
Conventionally Indirect	Suggestion formula
Non-conventionally indirect	Query preparatory
	Strong hint
	Mild hint

Meanwhile, regarding the apology strategy, researchers used the apology strategy formula from Cohen & Olshtain²¹, which is as follows:

Table 3. Apology Strategies

Strategies	Types
Apologize	An expression of apology
	Acknowledgement of responsibility
	An explanation or account
	An offer of repair
	A promise of non-recurrence

The request strategies in Table 2 and the apology strategies in Table 3 form the basis of this study's analysis.

Result

Distribution of Frequency and Percentage of the Requests Strategies

Data in the form of request utterances in five real situations on campus realized by 50 Arabic language education students at Jambi University through DCT varied and consisted of three request strategies, namely (1) Direct, (2) Conventionally Indirect, and (3) non-conventionally indirect. From 50 request realizations obtained from DCT, the researcher found that students used 35% of direct request strategies consisting of 12% mood derivable, 2% explicit performatives, 12% hedged performatives, 2% obligation statement, and 2% want statement. Furthermore, students also used 60% conventional indirect request strategies consisting of a 2% suggestion formula and 28% prefatory query. Finally, the unconventional indirect request strategy category was used by 10% of students, composed of 8% strong and 2% mild hints. This is recorded in the table.

²¹ Andrew D. Cohen and Elite Olshtain, "Developing a Measure of Sociocultural Competence: The Case of Apology 1," *Language Learning* 31, no. 1 (1981): 113, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1981.tb01375.x>.

Table 4. Distribution of Frequency and Percentage of the Requests Strategies in Arabic

Request Strategies	N	Percentage (%)
Direct	15	30
Mood derivable	7	14
Explicit performatives	1	2
Hedged performatives	5	10
Obligation Statement	1	2
Want Statement	1	2
Conventionally indirect	30	60
Suggestion formula	2	4
Query preparatory	28	56
Non-conventionally indirect	5	10
Strong hint	4	8
Mild hint	1	2
Total	50	100

Table 4 shows that the highest category of Arabic request strategy used by NNS in five campus activity situations is conventionally indirect with a query preparatory sub-strategy of 60%. At the same time, the least used Arabic request strategy is non-conventionally indirect, with a mild hint type of 2%. Thus, conventionally indirect with a query preparatory sub-strategy is the most widely used request strategy by Arabic language students at PTN in Jambi Province during campus activities.

Direct request in Arabic

Direct request is the second most widely used strategy by NNS. This strategy reaches 30%. Of the 50 students who used this strategy, there were 15 utterances. NNS used the direct request strategy with the sub-strategy of mood derivable as many as seven utterances, explicit performatives one utterance, hedged performatives five utterances, obligation statement one utterance, and want statement one utterance. Thus, the direct request sub-strategy NNS often uses is the mood derivable (imperative). The sub-strategy is related to the grammatical mood of the verb in the utterance, which marks its illocutionary force as a request. Based on the results of the document study, the use of the sub-strategy of mood derivable used by NNS is in the form of imperative and often occurs in situations of discussion activities in the classroom (situation 2), such as the utterances below:

Table 5. The sub-strategy of mood derivable used by NNS is in the form of imperative

Speech 1	ارْفَعْ صَوْتَكَ قَلِيلًا، لَمْ أَسْمَعْ مَا تَقُولُ Raise your voice a little! I didn't hear what you said.
Speech 2	مِنْ فَضْلِكَ ارْفَعْ صَوْتَكَ! Please raise your voice!
Speech 3	كَبِّرِ السُّؤَالَ! Repeat the question!

Speech 4	ارْفَعْ يَدَكَ قَبْلَ أَنْ تَتَحَدَّثَ! Raise your hand before speaking!
Speech 5	اسْتَمِعُوا بِإِتْبَانٍ! Listen carefully!

Students tend to use this sub-strategy because the imperative form is easier to understand in a direct, assertive, and straightforward context. This also reflects a culture of communication that is often direct, especially in formal or academic situations. This is in line with the results of interviews with NNS, which show that using imperative sentences makes their messages more straightforward to understand, especially in situations requiring a quick response, such as group discussions or when they want to clarify something. One student said, "Direct sentences like this help me to convey my meaning without confusion." In addition, although imperative sentences sound direct, in Arabic culture, polite expressions such as *min faḍlika* (please) maintain politeness, even when using commands.

One student commented, "Even though we use commands, we add polite expressions to maintain politeness in speaking." Another important thing in the direct request strategy, especially in the sub-Explicit performative, where NNS uses it in a situation of asking permission to go to the toilet th, the lecturer with the utterance *أستاذن أريد أن أذهب إلى الحمام*. I used this utterance. At first, I was a little hesitant because I was not a native Arabic speaker. I expressed this utterance because I heard from my peers who always asked permission to go to the bathroom using this utterance.

Conventionally indirect in Arabic

This strategy is the first strategy that NNS most widely uses. The use of this strategy reaches 60%. Each NNS uses this strategy in as many as 30 utterances. The conventionally indirect request strategy consists of the Suggestory formula and query preparatory. The conventionally indirect request strategy with the sub-suggestion formula is used by NNS twice. At the same time, the query preparatory sub-strategy is used by NNS in as many as 28 utterances. This sub-strategy is related to the utterance referencing a preparatory condition such as ability, willingness, or the possibility of the act being performed as conventionalized in a given language.

Thus, NNS often uses the query preparatory sub-strategy of the two sub-strategies above rather than the suggestion formula. In addition, conventionally indirect speech acts with the query preparatory sub-strategy are widely used in language situation number one, namely borrowing notebooks and stationery, where NNS expresses it using interrogative sentences when communicating with peers and the opposite sex, namely:

Table 6. The Conventionally indirect used by NNS in the form of interrogative in borrowing notebooks and stationery

Speech 1	هل يمكنني أن أستعير دفترَكَ؟ Can I borrow your book?
Speech 2	هل تملك قلمًا لأستعير؟ Do you have a pen I can borrow?
Speech 3	متى يمكنني أن أعيده دفترَكَ؟ When can I return your book?
Speech 4	هل يمكنك أن تُعيرني ممحاةَكَ؟ Can you lend me your eraser?
Speech 5	أين يمكنني أن أجد دفترًا للدراسة؟ Where can I find notebooks for studying?

Furthermore, based on the documentation study, the researcher also found that the conventionally indirect request strategy with the preparatory query sub-strategy was found when they went to the library with friends to look for books and met with lecturers for academic guidance.

The situation of going to the library with friends is expressed in the following utterances:

Table 7. The Conventionally indirect used by NNS in the form of interrogative in library

Speech 1	أين أجد هذا الكتاب؟ Where can I find this book?
Speech 2	هل هذا الكتاب موجود؟ Is this book available?
Speech 3	هل وجدت الكتاب الذي نتحدث عنه؟ Have you found the book we were looking for?

Meanwhile, in situations where you meet with lecturers for academic guidance, this is expressed in the following statements:

Table 8. The Conventionally indirect used by NNS in the form of interrogative in academic guidance

Speech 1	هل يمكنك توضيح هذه النقطة؟ Can you explain this point?
Speech 2	متى يمكننا أن نلتقي للجلسة القادمة؟ When can we meet for the next meeting?

Furthermore, based on the interview results regarding using interrogative sentences when borrowing notebooks and stationery, one NNS said that when I communicate with peers, especially those I am familiar with, I may use more casual

language. However, the phrase "هل يمكنني" (interrogative) can still be used because it gives the impression of respect and is not too pushy. When talking to the opposite sex, especially those I do not know well, I prefer to use this phrase because it maintains politeness and avoids misunderstandings. In addition, the NNS added that this sub-strategy is essential because it allows us to ask something without sounding pushy or direct. When borrowing notebooks or stationery, this phrase gives the other person space to politely refuse if they do not want to lend their item. So, by using "هل يمكنني", I feel that my request sounds more polite and gives the other person a choice.

Non-conventionally indirect

This strategy is the strategy that is least used by NNS. The use of this strategy reaches 5%. Each NNS uses this strategy five times. The non-conventionally indirect request strategy consists of two parts, namely, strong hint and mild hint. The non-conventionally indirect request strategy with a muscular hint sub is used by NNS four times. Meanwhile, the mild hint sub-strategy is used by NNS once.

Thus, of the two substrategies above, NNS often uses the strong hint substrategie rather than the mild hint. Furthermore, based on the documentation study, the researcher found that the expression of request with a strong hint is widely used when requesting to go to the toilet during learning. This sub-strategy is related to the utterance, in which the locution refers to relevant elements of the intended illocutionary.

NNS often uses the word "behind" (الوراء) in this request situation. In other words, NNS does not directly mention the intent and purpose of "going to the back". In addition, NNS often uses non-conventionally indirect request expressions when borrowing notebooks and stationery. This is, among other things, expressed in the following expression:

Table 9. The non-conventionally indirect used by NNS in the form of interrogative learning activities

Speech 1	عَفْوًا يَا أَسْتَاذُ، هَلْ يُمَكِّنُنِي أَنْ أَذْهَبَ إِلَى الْوَرَاءِ لِحَظَّةٍ؟ Excuse me, ustaz, may I go to the back for a moment?
Speech 2	هَلْ لَدَيْكَ وَرَقَةٌ؟ Do you have any paper?

Based on utterance 1, the speaker uses الوراء إلى, which means behind. The speaker does not directly state his intention and purpose that he wants to go to the toilet to relieve himself to the lecturer. Based on the interview results, NSS uses this phrase because, in Indonesia, NSS usually uses words such as "going to the back" to express that he wants to go to the toilet, so he translates the expression into Arabic. Meanwhile, utterance 2 describes an expression of request in which notebooks and stationery are borrowed. The expression in example 2 also does not

directly express his intention and purpose, namely wanting to borrow a pen from the speech partner.

Distribution of Frequency and Percentage of the Apologizes Strategies

Data in the form of requests in four real situations on campus realised by 50 Arabic language education students through DCT varied and consisted of five apology strategies, namely (1) Expression of an Apology, (2) Acknowledgement of Responsibility, (3) Explanation or Account, (4) Offer of Repair, and (5) Promise of Non-Recurrence. From 50 requests from DCT, the researcher found that students used 68% of the types of apology strategies consisting of expression of an apology, 10% acknowledgement of responsibility as much as 20%, explanation or account 2%, and 10% promise of non-recurrence. This is recorded in the table.

Table 10. Distribution of Frequency and Percentage of the Apologize Strategies in Arabic

Apologise Strategies	N	Percentage (%)
Expression of an apology	34	68
Acknowledgement of responsibility	10	20
Explanation or account	1	2
Offer of repair	-	-
Promise of non-recurrence	5	10
Total	50	100

Table 5 shows that the highest category of Arabic request strategy used by NNS in four campus activity situations is an expression of an apology, as much as 60%. Meanwhile, NNS did not use the explanation or account type of apology strategy or offer of repair.

Expression of an Apology

This expression of an apology strategy is the most widely used strategy by NNS. This strategy is related to using words or direct expressions to apologise. The use of this strategy reached 68%. Of the 50 students who used this strategy, there were 34 utterances. NNS often used the expression of an apology strategy in language situations such as being late to class, not doing assignments, and chatting while studying:

Table 11. Expression of an apology

Speech 1	آسِفٌ عَلَى التَّأخِيرِ، أَعْتَذِرُ حَقًّا Sorry I'm late, I'm really sorry.
Speech 2	آسِفٌ، نَسِيتُ إِكْمَالَ الْوَأَجِبِ Sorry, I forgot to do my homework.
Speech 3	آسِفٌ، لَمْ أَقْصِدِ الْإِزْعَاجَ Sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt

Utterance 1 describes an apology utterance to a lecturer when being late to class. Utterance 2 relates to an apology for forgetting to do an assignment.

Utterance 3 relates to a situation where a student apologises for chatting while studying after being reprimanded by his lecturer.

Acknowledgement of Responsibility

This strategy is the second most used strategy by NNS. The use of this strategy reaches 20%. Of the 50 students who used this strategy, there were 10 utterances. This strategy is related to the Acknowledgement of responsibility for mistakes made, which can be in the form of a full acknowledgement of mistakes or reduction of responsibility, for example: "It's my fault" (هذا خطأي) or "I didn't mean to" (لم أقصد). NNS often use the strategy of acknowledging responsibility in language situations such as being late to class and not doing assignments, such as the utterances below:

Table 12. Acknowledgment of responsibility

Speech 1	هَذَا خَطْأِي لِأَنِّي لَمْ أَكْمِلِ الْوَاجِبَ It's my fault because I didn't complete the assignment.
Speech 2	عُذْرًا، تَأَخَّرْتُ. هَذَا خَطْأِي بِالْكَامِلِ Sorry, I'm late. This is entirely my fault.

Promise of Non-Recurrence

The promise of non-recurrence is the third most frequently used strategy by NNS. The use of this strategy reached 10%. Of the 50 students who used this strategy, there were five utterances. This strategy is related to the apologist committing themselves to not having the offence happen again, which is situation-specific and less frequent than the other strategies. NNS often use the promise of non-recurrence strategy in language situations such as being late for class, playing with a cell phone while studying, and not doing assignments, such as the utterances below:

Table 13. Promise of non-recurrence

Speech 1	أَعِدُّكَ أَنِّي لَنْ أَفْعَلَ ذَلِكَ مَرَّةً أُخْرَى I promise I won't do it again.
Speech 2	أَعِدُّكَ أَنِّي لَنْ أَلْعَبَ بِالْمُهَاتِفِ أَثْنَاءَ الدَّرْسِ مَرَّةً أُخْرَى I promise I won't play with my cell phone again while studying.
Speech 3	أَعِدُّكَ أَنِّي سَأَقُومُ بِإِحْضَاءِ الْوَاجِبِ فِي الْوَقْتِ الْمُنَاسِبِ فِي الْمُسْتَقْبَلِ I promise to complete assignments on time in the future.

The promise of non-recurrence had the third-highest percentage in almost all situations. This suggests that even though NNSs apologised, they may have been reluctant or unsure about committing that the mistake would not be repeated. Thus, these data indicate that NNSs use a variety of apology strategies in Arabic, with a strong tendency to apologise directly but less inclined to make a solid commitment to not repeating the mistake.

Explanation or Account

Explanation or account has the lowest percentage, where one NNS expresses this utterance. This strategy is related to the speaker describing the situation that caused them to commit the offense, which this speaker uses as an indirect way of apologizing. The explanation is intended to set things right. NNS uses explanation or account in situations of being late for class, such as the utterance below:

Table 14. Explanation or account

Speech 1	أَعْتَذِرُكَ يَا أُسْتَاذُ، جِئْتُ مُتَأَخِّرًا إِلَى الْفَصْلِ، كَانَتِ الشَّوَارِعُ مُزْدَحِمَةً جَدًّا
	I apologize, Ustaz. I came late to class because the road was very congested.

This utterance shows that the speaker provides a reason or explanation for their delay by highlighting the external conditions that caused the violation, namely traffic jams on the road.

Discussion

Request Strategy

The requested strategy in Arabic communication is one form of speech act often used in various contexts, especially in academic environments such as on-campus—first, direct strategy. In this strategy, the mood derivable sub-strategy is the second most dominant sub-strategy used by NNS, at as much as 14%, especially in the imperative form. This is in line with the results of Hammani's study, which found that the request strategy in Arabic used by NS uses a lot of direct requests with the mood-derived sub-strategy (imperative).²²

This sub-strategy of derivable mood reflects the grammar in which the mood of the verb indicates the illocutionary force of the utterance as a request or command. The imperative form, as seen in the following utterances: اِرْفَعْ صَوْتَكَ قَلِيلًا (Lower your voice a little) and كَرِّرِ السُّؤَالَ (Repeat the question). According to Blum-Kulka, the direct request form through the imperative is easier to understand because of its concise and precise nature, especially in formal or academic situations that require a quick and accurate response. The imperative emphasizes a sentence structure that eliminates doubt and clarifies the speaker's intention.²³

Although imperative sentences seem firm, NNS students also show cultural understanding in maintaining politeness. The use of expressions such as *min faḍlika* (please) in requests, even in the context of commands, still maintains polite communication. This is in line with what Leech stated, where politeness can be

²² Hammani Mohamed, "Request Strategies and Level of Request Directness in Moroccan Arabic and American English," *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science* 24, no. 8.8 (2019).

²³ Shoshana Blum-Kulka, "Indirectness and Politeness in Requests: Same or Different?," *Journal of Pragmatics* 11, no. 2 (1987): 131, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(87\)90192-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(87)90192-5).

maintained even through commands as long as politeness markers accompany it.²⁴ The NNS interviewed also admitted that using polite expressions helped them maintain social relationships in academic discussions. This shows that although the imperative form is often used, politeness remains important in formal interactions, especially in Arabic language culture.

In addition to the derivable mood, the explicit performatives sub-strategy is also used by NNSs, although in smaller numbers. In this case, one of the NNSs uses the utterance *أَسْتَأْذِنُ أَسْتَاذًا، أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَذْهَبَ إِلَى الْحَمَّامِ* (I beg your permission, Ustaz, I want to go to the toilet) as a more explicit way to ask for permission. Schmidt and Richards stated that the explicit performative strategy is often used by NNSs who are not confident in their language skills. Hence, they tend to imitate utterances learned or heard from other speakers.²⁵

However, the expression in the language situation of asking permission to go to the toilet using explicit performative does not match the speech uttered by NS. NS uses interrogative more in the situation of asking permission to go to the toilet as follows: *إِذَا سَمَحْتَ يَا أَسْتَاذًا، هَلْ يُمَكِّنُنِي الْخُرُوجَ إِلَى دَوْرَةِ مِيَاهِ* (If you allow me, sir, may I go out to the bathroom?). According to the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson, there are two main strategies in speech acts: positive politeness and negative politeness.²⁶ In this case, NNS tends to use negative politeness, emphasizing avoiding coercion towards the interlocutor. Using the question form, NNS indirectly avoids ordering the lecturer or considering himself equal to the lecturer regarding the right to decide on actions. This aligns with pragmalinguistics, which shows that interrogative sentences can soften requests and maintain social hierarchy.

Searle emphasizes this by stating that the speech act of request can be classified as a directive speech act, which aims to influence the interlocutor's actions.²⁷ However, it is essential to understand how social power plays a role in communication. In the relationship between students and lecturers, lecturers have a higher social power position (power differential). Lecturers act as academic authorities who have the power to grant permission, while students are in a lower position in the educational social structure. Therefore, students use interrogative sentences to adjust to this power imbalance. By asking questions, students acknowledge the lecturer's power and allow the lecturer to grant authorization. This shows respect for existing social norms and power hierarchies.

According to the theory developed by Fairclough on power and language, choices in language often reflect and maintain power relationships. However, it is

²⁴ Leech, *Principles of Pragmatics*.

²⁵ R. W. Schmidt and J. C. Richards, "Speech Acts and Second Language Learning," *Applied Linguistics* 1, no. 2 (1980): 129, <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/l.2.129>.

²⁶ Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (Cambridge University Press, 1987).

²⁷ Schmidt and Richards, "Speech Acts and Second Language Learning."

essential to understand how social power plays a role in communication. In the relationship between students and lecturers, lecturers have a higher social power position (power differential). Lecturers act as academic authorities who have the power to grant permission, while students are in a lower position in the educational social structure. Therefore, students use interrogative sentences to adjust to this power imbalance. By asking questions, students acknowledge the lecturer's power and allow the lecturer to grant authorization. This shows respect for existing social norms and power hierarchies. According to the theory developed by Fairclough on power and language, choices in language often reflect and maintain power relationships.²⁸ In this case, interrogatives function as language tools based on social status and politeness in interaction.

Second is the conventionally indirect request strategy used by NNS. This strategy is dominant, with a frequency of use that reaches 60% of all request utterances produced by NNS. The conventionally indirect strategy is divided into two main sub-strategies: suggestive formula and query preparatory. Based on the data, NNS uses the query preparatory sub-strategy 28 times more than the suggestion formula, which is only used twice.

Conventionally, indirect speech acts reduce threats to the interlocutor's face. In this case, the query preparatory sub-strategy maintains the interlocutor's opposing face, namely, the right not to be forced or disturbed.²⁹ Phrases such as هل يمكنني (Can I...) allow the interlocutor to politely decline the request without losing respect. This reflects the NNS's efforts to maintain politeness in interactions with peers or interlocutors of higher social status, such as lecturers.

The preparatory query sub-strategy contains interrogative elements related to the preparatory condition, such as the ability, willingness, or possibility of the action being carried out by the interlocutor. Wagner's description of negative politeness aims to minimize the burden on the interlocutor. Thus, the use of phrases such as هل يمكنني emphasizes the condition and ability of the interlocutor rather than forcing the action. This is one way that NNS demonstrates an awareness of pragmatism in managing interpersonal relationships.

Third, the last strategy in requests is the non-conventionally indirect strategy. This strategy is the least used by non-native speakers (NNS) in Arabic. This strategy is only used by 5%, with each NNS using this strategy five times. The non-conventionally indirect strategy is divided into two sub-strategies, namely strong and mild hints, with strong hints being the more frequently used sub-strategy. In this context, NNS often uses the word "belakang" (الوراء) in speech when asking permission to go to the toilet, which shows indirectness in stating the intention directly. A strong hint is a speech act that does not directly convey a

²⁸ Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

²⁹ Anna Trosborg, *Interlanguage Pragmatics: Requests, Complaints, and Apologies* (Walter de Gruyter, 2011).

request but gives a reasonably clear hint to the interlocutor. For example, the phrase "Excuse me, Ustaz, may I go to the back for a moment?" (Excuse me, Ustaz, may I go to the back for a moment?) uses an indirect hint with the phrase إلى الوراء (to the back) without explicitly stating that the speaker wants to go to the toilet. The NNS in this context relies on the cultural understanding that "go to the back" is often understood as an implicit reference to going to the toilet in Indonesian. In pragmatics, indirectness is usually associated with maintaining politeness and good social relations.³⁰ This indirectness act is often used to avoid the impression of being pushy or aggressive in a request. This non-conventionally indirect strategy is relevant in positive politeness, where the speaker tries to maintain a good relationship with the interlocutor by not expressing their intentions directly.³¹

Thus, this study also underlines the importance of cultural awareness in language use. NNS adapted indirect phrases from Indonesian into Arabic, reflecting how linguistic strategies can be influenced by cultural background.

Apology Strategy

This study found five types of apology strategies: expression of an apology, acknowledgment of responsibility, explanation or account, the offer of repair, and promise of non-recurrence. The results showed that the expression of an apology strategy was the most dominant strategy used by NNS, reaching 68%. On the other hand, the Explanation or Account strategy was only used once, and the Offer of Repair strategy was not used at all.

First, expressing an apology is the most frequently used strategy, with a percentage of 68%. This strategy includes the use of direct expressions such as "أسف" (sorry) or "أعتذر" (I apologize). According to Blum-Kulka et al., using direct apologies is a form of expressive politeness where the speaker admits the mistake firmly and transparently.³² In speech, speakers use direct expressions to convey guilt clearly, whereas direct apologies mitigate threats to the opposing face of the interlocutor. Second is the acknowledgment of responsibility strategy, which is used as much as 20% and is the second most frequently used strategy. Acknowledgment of Responsibility is a strategy in which speakers explicitly acknowledge responsibility for their mistakes, for example, by saying "هَذَا خَطْئِي" (this is my fault). This full acknowledgment of responsibility shows the speaker's

³⁰ Jonathan Culpeper, Michael Haugh, and Dániel Z. Kádár, eds., *The Palgrave Handbook of Linguistic (Im)Politeness* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-37508-7>.

³¹ Indawan Syahri, "Resemblance of Indirectness in Politeness of EFL Learners' Request Realizations," *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics* 3, no. 1 (2013): 148, <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v3i1.197>.

³² Shoshana Blum-Kulka, Juliane House, and Gabriele Kasper, *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: Requests and Apologies* (Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1989).

desire to affirm their mistakes and indirectly confirms that they are aware of the impact of the action.

According to Goffman, in remedial work, acknowledgment of responsibility is an integral part of repairing relationships damaged by mistakes. In speech, speakers use direct expressions to convey guilt clearly, whereas direct apologies mitigate threats to the opposing face of the interlocutor. Second is the acknowledgment of responsibility strategy, which is used as much as 20% and is the second most frequently used strategy. Acknowledgment of Responsibility is a strategy in which speakers explicitly acknowledge responsibility for their mistakes, for example, by saying "هَذَا خَطْئِي" (this is my fault). This full acknowledgment of responsibility shows the speaker's desire to affirm their mistakes and indirectly confirms that they are aware of the impact of the action. According to Goffman, in remedial work, acknowledgment of responsibility is an integral part of repairing relationships damaged by mistakes.³³

Third, 10% of NNS used the Promise of Non-Recurrence strategy. This strategy ensures that the mistake will not be repeated in the future and shows the speaker's commitment to improving their behavior. According to Olshtain and Cohen, promises not to repeat mistakes are often used when the mistake is severe or can potentially disrupt critical social relationships.³⁴ This strategy can calm the interlocutor by assuring that a similar situation will not happen again. Fourth, the explanation or account strategy. This strategy is the least used, only 2%.

Explanation or account is a strategy in which the speaker provides a reason or explanation for the error. According to Fraser, this strategy can defuse mistakes by providing context that may make the violation more understandable. However, overusing this strategy can be interpreted as an attempt to avoid taking full responsibility for the error. Therefore, this strategy is usually only used in particular situations.

Conclusion

Based on the study's results, the request strategy in Arabic has several approaches used by 50 Arabic Language Education students at Jambi University in various contexts, especially in academic environments. The most widely used strategy is the conventionally indirect strategy (60%), which includes the query preparatory sub-strategy, where speakers use interrogative sentence forms to maintain politeness and avoid the impression of being pushy. Meanwhile, the direct strategy with the mood-derivable sub-strategy (imperative) is also used at a lower frequency. Using polite expressions such as "min faḍlika" indicates an effort to maintain politeness in the interaction. In addition, the non-conventionally

³³ Dennis Brissett and Charles Edgley, *Life As Theater: A Dramaturgical Sourcebook* (Chicago: Transaction Publishers, 2005).

³⁴ Cohen and Olshtain, "Developing a Measure of Sociocultural Competence."

indirect strategy (5%) shows that speakers subtly use indirect instructions to express requests without reducing respect for the interlocutor. Overall, the request strategy in Arabic reflects a high level of pragmatic and cultural awareness in maintaining social relationships. Then, in the apology strategy, the expression of an apology is the most dominant strategy (68%), where speakers directly express an apology through expressions such as "أسف" or "أعذر". This strategy is followed by acknowledging responsibility (20%), where the speaker explicitly admits the mistake. The promise of non-recurrence (10%) is used as a commitment not to repeat the error.

In comparison, explanation or account is the least used strategy (2%), usually to provide reasons or context for the error made. The researcher hopes that the results of this study can contribute to learning Arabic pragmatics in universities. Therefore, further researchers are also expected to examine the factors that influence the choice of request strategies in Arabic, such as family background, socio-economic background, and level of Arabic proficiency.

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