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Performance of EFL Students in the Requesting Speech Act: English-Arabic Translation

By

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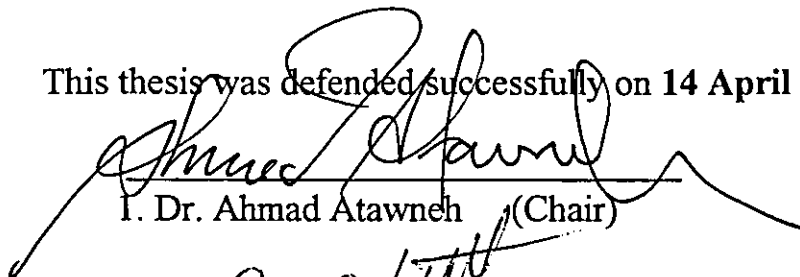
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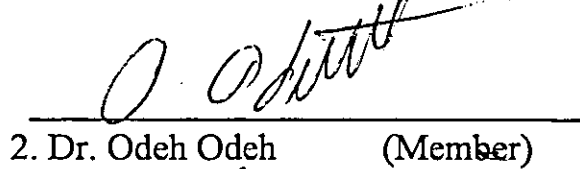Graduate School

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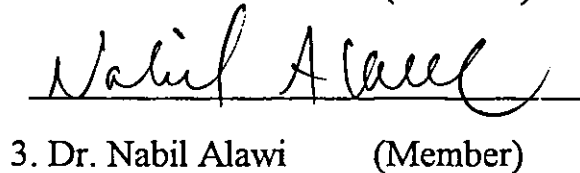English-Arabic Translation
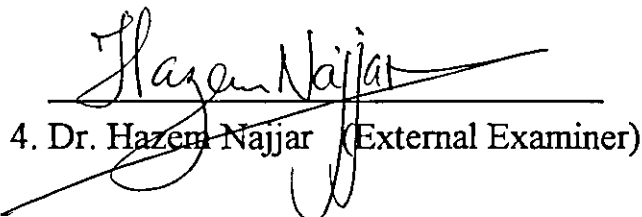

By

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DEDICATION

TO THE MEMORY OF MY MOTHER

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Finally, it goes without saying that the responsibility for this rather imperfect product is, of course, mine.

Contents

List of Abbreviations

A	Action
AL	Academic Level
AS	Assessment Test
CL	Competency Level
D	Social Distance
SL	Source Language
TL	Target Language
NSs	Native Speakers (of English)
NNSs	Non-Native Speakers
FIDs	Function Indicating Devices
FTA	Face-Threatening Act
GPA	Grade Point Average
H	High
L	Low
L2	Second Language
MC	Multiple Choice
P	Power
R	Risk (of imposition)
TT	Translation Test

Arabic Alphabet Transliterated

Alphabet	Transliteration
ا	?
ب	b
ت	t
ث	th
ج	j
ح	H
خ	kh
د	d
ذ	dh
ر	r
ز	z
س	s
ش	sh
ص	S
ض	D
ط	T
ظ	Z
ع	,
غ	GH
ف	f
ق	q
ك	k
ل	l
م	m
ن	n
ه	h
و	w
ي	y

vowels

فتحة قصيرة	a
فتحة طويلة	aa
ضمة قصيرة	u
ضمة طويلة	uu
كسرة قصيرة	i
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Thesis Abstract

Modal items are considered of the most intricate linguistic units facing translators. Although the notion of modality is universal, there might be, often, a mismatch between the modal system in one language and that in another. Such discrepancy might cause different pragmatic interpretations across cultures and languages, which, in turn, might lead to communication breakdown or pragmatic failure. In an attempt to better understand such an issue, this research explores the translatability of non-epistemic, root modals (i.e., modals used for social interaction) employed in the requesting speech act from English into Arabic. It also holds a comparison /contrast between American English and Arabic in terms of employing appropriate (modal) request strategies. Moreover, it examines whether the competency level (CL) in L2 affects appropriate performance.

The author used three kinds of questionnaires to test eighty undergraduate learners of English as a foreign language in Palestine:

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multiple choice (MC), translation (TT), and assessment (AT). The subjects chosen were of three levels: sophomores, juniors and seniors. On the other hand, twenty native Americans were chosen as a control group, particularly, with respect to the MC.

Results revealed that there was a noticeable disparity between native Americans' and Arabs' employment of modals, and therefore, of request strategies. In the TT, it was found that the politeness as evidenced in the source language (i.e., English) was not carried over in the target language (i.e., Arabic). Thus, English "would", "will", "could", and "can" were all rendered into Arabic "mumkin" or "btiqdar". On the other hand, the CL was found to be insignificant in subjects' performance. The incapability of the translators to match English politeness weights might be attributed to cultural differences, and, basically, to a flaw in the teaching process, including teachers, materials, and syllabi.

The thesis consists of five chapters: chapter one states the problem and its significance besides the purposes of the research; chapter two reviews literature on cross-cultural politeness and modality with particular focus on English and Arabic; chapter three describes subjects of the study, method and procedures; chapter four presents the results and their analysis; and, finally, chapter five gives a summary and recommendations.

Introduction

1.1 Background

It is but an inevitable consequence for the new world to bring together languages, nations, and cultures. From a practical point of view, one can recognize that in a rapidly changing world in which knowledge is expanding at an exceptional rate, information transfer depends increasingly on translation. Hence, translation has become an indispensable factor. Yet, as there are idiosyncratic features inherently characterizing each linguistic and cultural system, the task of translation cannot pass without noticeable problems. In this regard, Nida (1964: 160) argues that, "where the linguistic and cultural distances between source and receptor codes are least, one should expect to encounter the least number of serious problems". In other words, if there were a chance for problems to arise between closely related languages (as an outcome of the translation process), then their seriousness would inevitably burgeon between distantly related languages and cultures. Such problems would, in a way or another, cause misunderstanding, communication breakdown, or pragmatic failure (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983). Pragmatic failure, Thomas (1983) argues, may lead to either negative assessment of a single speaker in one particular speech event or may lead to the stereotyping of an entire cultural group.

Viewed differently and from a pragmatic viewpoint, it has been proved that while any text can translate, the translation cannot, in any sense, reproduce the exact impact of the original. There is often, Blum-Kulka, (1997) points out, a mismatch between semantic and pragmatic meanings. In other words, as the pragmatic meaning in a certain text might be encoded through language-specific pragmalinguistic means, pragmatic equivalents (i.e., expressions that carry the same pragmatic meaning potential) may not be fully provided in the target language (TL) (Blum-Kulka Olstein, 1986; Blum-Kulka, 1997; Thomas, 1983). Accordingly, the translator is challenged to find solutions for such cases. The present study explores such an issue with special focus on the speech act of requesting.

It should be borne in mind that since Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) wrote their papers about speech acts, it has been clear that the study of language must take into account the way people use it to move in the world. An utterance is an action, so it is made with some goals in mind. These goals include, for instance, getting cooperation from the audience and maintaining a good relationship with them. Cooperation can range from merely paying simple attention (if you just want to chat), to providing information (in case of questions), to performing some action (as opening the door if the speaker asks the hearer to do so). In all these cases, speech

acts must be planned by taking into account the relation between the speaker (S) and the hearer (H).

Maintaining some harmony with the hearer is just one of the multiple goals of a conversation, and therefore, the problem of maintaining that harmony can be faced from a general perspective of molding goals (Ardissono, Boella, & Lesmo, 1996). However, the features that express the choices made are rather special. While the propositional content of a sentence enables the hearer, after some rather complex inferential activity, to understand the speaker's goals, it is the form in which that propositional content is expressed that makes the utterance more or less polite. Consider the following examples:

1. Give me the keys to the office.

2. Would you give me the keys to the office?

3. Could you give me the keys to the office?

4. Do you mind giving me the keys to the office?

5. The office is closed.

As far as politeness is concerned, such examples (imperative (1), interrogative (2-4), and declarative (5)) are arranged from the more direct / less polite to the less direct /more polite (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Kasper, 1990; Leech, 1983).

At the linguistic level, indirectness and the employment of hedging devices (e.g., modals, titles of address, conditionals, etc.) have a high politeness value that effectively influences the actions of others, particularly, when the interlocutors are not equals (in terms of power and social status). According to Kapferer (1976: 9), "the ability to control the actions of others is not so much emergent from the structure of the transactional relationship itself, the patterned imbalance in the transfer of goods and services; rather it is a property of the successful management of meaning and preservation of self by a **political actor**".

On the other hand, politeness signals in one's utterances are essential to maintain successful communication and influence on others, particularly where there is a cost to the interlocutor (e.g., requests and supplication). According to Goody (1978), hesitation and high pitch are among the basic signals of politeness as they are feminine and are associated with children. Their use implies adoption of weakness. They seem to signal that "I cannot make you do what I want (because you are bigger/ stronger/ nastier/ cleverer than I am), but I still want you to do it" (Goody, 1978: 6-7).

Indeed, the issue of politeness, particularly where indirectness is employed, represents a real challenge when utterances are translated from one language into another, and, therefore, from one culture into another.

Indisputably, translation is, by definition, a communicative process that takes place within a social context (Hatim & Mason, 1990: 2). Thus, how can one make sure that politeness as exhibited in the original is transferred in translation? In other words, as House (1998: 63) points out, how can one reach "politeness equivalence" in translation?

There is no doubt that the speech act of requesting depends heavily on modals that have been shown to be difficult to render at the pragmatic level (See, for example, Atawneh, 1991; Blum-Kulka, 1997; Kasper, 1979). Hence, though the notion of modality is universal, each language has its own modal system, which, if translated into another language, may not have the exact equivalent. The challenge facing the translator, then, is how to render such idiosyncratic forms from the source language (SL) into the target language (TL). Such an issue will be addressed in this thesis.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

As using modal expressions may cause problems in some communicative situations in the mother tongue, it is no wonder, then, that it is problematic for both the foreign language learner and the translator. This is mainly because the rules of appropriateness vary across cultures. Consequently, to become effective communicators in a foreign language, learners have to acquire these rules in L2. The skillful use of modals,

which requires subtlety and sophistication even in the mother tongue, Skelton (1988) argues, is clearly part of a language user's pragmatic competence, lack of which may sometimes lead to mistakes that are more serious than, for example, grammatical errors. This is because, Skelton (1988: 38) believes, "pragmatic errors are not 'obviously erroneous' as faulty syntax; they only make the foreign language user sound, in the case of modals, more impolite or aggressive, more tentative or assertive than s/he intends to be, which then may even lead to a communicative failure".

Indeed, there are some studies that illustrate the kind of problems foreign learners face in the use of modals. In a study on the interlanguage of German learners of English, Kasper (1979) notices that there exists a kind of modality reduction in the foreign language learner's speech. This reduction, she claims, is a "consequence of low awareness of modality as a pragmatic category" (p.276). ESL teachers, too, have found that learners appear to have difficulty in using modals in appropriate contexts. On the other hand, modal expressions are among the intricate linguistic units that non-native speakers of English (NNSs) usually face in translation. For example, Kasper (1979:275-6) explained that German students of English are not always aware of modality as a pragmatic category and often translate modal verb meanings from German into English without accounting for their different contextual implications.

Like all non-native speakers of English, Arabs seem to face difficulty when translating modal expressions in a text from English into Arabic, or vice versa. Cook (1978) states that English modal verbs present a problem for nonnative speakers because of their underlying meanings and contextual implications. This complexity is increased when one comes to render different speech acts, particularly, requesting. Such acts are governed by the parameters of social distance (D), social power (P), and the weightiness of imposition, or, risk (R), three constraints Brown and Levinson (1987) claim their universality. Hence the more distant the relation between interlocutors, and the more impositive the act on the hearer, the more indirect the request needs to be in order to guarantee the cooperation of the other party. To be sure, modal verbs are among the hedges used to alleviate the force of the imposition (Salager-Meyer, 1997; Markkanen & Schroder, 2000). Translating English modals employed in the requesting speech act into Arabic, one can assume that the politeness as apparent in the original will not be carried over in the translation. Thus, English "will", "would", "can", "could", and even "may" might mostly be rendered into "mumkin", or "btiqdar", for example.

Nonetheless, there is a great difference between the English and Arabic usages. In English, the past forms of modals – "would" and "could" – are perceived to be more polite and more considerate than their present

equivalents ("will", and "can", respectively). On the other hand, "could" conveys more politeness than does "would" (Atawneh, 1991; Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1983; Leech & Svartvic, 1975; Palmer, 1979). According to Hartmann (1980: 56), translation equivalence is "an equivalence-seeking at all levels, the syntagmatic-grammatical as well as the paradigmatic-semantic, but most important of all, within the rules of pragmatic-stylistic appropriateness". In other words, to follow Hartmann's argument, the primary concern and focus of translation should be on pragmatic equivalence. This insight is not new in translation (see, for example, Nida, 1982; Widdowson, 1978; Wills, 1982). The translator needs to exploit and combine "communicative abilities" and "linguistic skills" (Widdowson, 1978), or as Hu (1999) argues, appropriately translating the nucleus is among the most important of concerns facing translators.

Based on what has been already illustrated, the question to be asked is that how would Arab nonnative speakers of English render non-epistemic (social interactional) modals employed in the speech act of requesting from English (SL) into Arabic (TL) which lacks pragmatically exact modal equivalents? What makes up for politeness, or the pragmatic value, not fully conveyed by Arabic modals? Such questions have

motivated the current study. So the main scope of the proposed research will be on how to handle such a problematic area in translation.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to investigate the problematic areas in translating into Arabic English modal expressions employed in the speech act of requesting, and to propose ways to overcome such problems.

1.4 Aims of the Study

This thesis aims at the following:

1. Finding out what request strategies, focusing the scope on employed modals, NNSs use in comparison to NSs;

2. Investigating how non-epistemic English modals can be translated into Arabic;

3. Finding out the strategies that Arab translators adopt to compensate for any pragmatic loss that may arise due to the discrepancy between the respective modal systems; and

4. Finding out if there is any correlation between the competency level of learners and the "appropriateness" of their performance (i.e., in terms of choice of strategy and translation).

1.5 Significance of the Study

Previous researchers have investigated the domain of modals and modality in both English and Arabic from different perspectives. Thus, Palmer (1979) has provided a detailed description and classification of the modal system in English; Abdel-Fattah (1984) has investigated the syntactic and semantic features of modality in modern standard Arabic. Generally speaking, most research has gone, more or less, towards the syntax, semantics, and logic of modals more than any other linguistic field (e.g., psycholinguistics, pragmatics) related to modality, and in English more than any other language (e.g., Cross, 1986; Kiefer, 1987; Lambert & Fraasen, 1970; Leech, 1969, 1987; Palmer, 1983, 1986).

However, when the two languages (English and Arabic) are viewed together in terms of modals and modality, it becomes evident that little has been said about pragmatics, a crucial area in cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication. Previous research has revealed partial treatment of the pragmatics of modals, particularly, when translating speech acts from and into English. For example, Mohammad (1991) and El-Saaydeh (1996) have conducted contrastive studies of modality in both English and Arabic, in terms of error analysis, and the problems such an issue poses for the translator. Atawneh (1991) has provided a thorough analysis of the politeness theory with relation to the directive speech act in Arabic –

English bilinguals; yet his handling of modality is not very comprehensive. On the other hand, except for Atawneh's study (1991), most research has focused on the epistemic use of modals (e.g., logical probability, certainty, possibility) rather than the root (social interactional) use (See, for example, Meziani, 1983).

Based on what has just been mentioned, it is obvious to any observer that no thorough separate study has handled modals and modality pragmatically in speech acts from a translatability point of view. This fact has motivated the researcher to conduct such a study in two languages, namely, English and Arabic.

It is hoped that the current study will contribute to the theory and practice of translation by exploring a particular problematic area in the translation process. It also attempts to offer some insights into the nature of translating the modals employed in the requesting speech act from English into Arabic. Furthermore, the study will shed light on cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication, an area deemed indispensable to any bilingual. Based on the findings, the study will hopefully provide some pedagogical recommendations, as well as some suggestions for prospective translators.

1.6 Outline of the Study

As this chapter (chapter one) has introduced the topic of the thesis stating its aims and significance, chapter two will provide a thorough review of literature. In particular, it will deal with the speech act theory focusing on the communicative act of requesting, as it is the subject matter of the research. Moreover, it will deal with the notions of indirectness and modality (in English and Arabic).

Chapter three will deal with the methodology adopted to carry out the research: subjects, methods, and procedures. Chapter four will present the results and their discussion. Finally, chapter five will conclude the findings and come up with the recommendations.

Review of Literature

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a theoretical background on the position of pragmatics within the linguistic system; it also sheds some light on the speech act theory; it examines the speech act of requesting along the strategies used for conveying it. This chapter also discusses the modality system in both English and Arabic. Finally, it touches upon the notions of indirectness and politeness (with specific focus on requesting), relating such issues to translation.

2.2 Linguistics and Pragmatic Theory

Interest in the domain of pragmatics has increased as a reaction to the Chomskyan philosophy that language is an abstract device dismantled from the uses, users, and functions of language. Thus, researchers in many fields, particularly in sociology and ethnology (e.g., Fishman, 1971; Gumperz & Hymes, 1972) have criticized the type of linguistic analysis whose investigations are strictly limited to grammar (i.e., phonology, syntax, and semantics) independent of the circumstances in which language is used. Consequently, the field of research has been expanded to encompass what people do with words. The focus then shifted from

structure and grammar to function and communicative competence; from assembling sentences to doing things with utterances; from abstraction to contextualization (Candlin, 1985: 1).

In this regard, Malinowsky (1969: 316) points out that the fundamental function of language is not " the embodiment or expression of thought", but rather "an indispensable means of influencing the social surrounding". For him, "language in its primitive function and original form has an essentially pragmatic character", and that in general, "human speech is a mode of action, rather than a countersign of thought". Generally speaking, many would argue that the nature of language cannot be understood unless one understands pragmatics: how language is used in communication. Semanticists later realized that there can hardly be any meaning other than social meaning, and hardly can a sentence be seen as having a crystalline meaning that cannot be changed by providing a different context for it (Hymes, 1972; Tannen, 1984).

Pragmatics, in the broadest sense, is the study of linguistic communication in context, or as Mey (1993: 5) has proposed, "pragmatics is the science of language seen in relation to its users". In other words, the focus of pragmatics is on both the processes and the products of communication including its cultural embeddedness and social consequences (Blum– Kulka, 1997).

Pragmatics can be depicted as the Cinderella of linguistics as it combines within itself other linguistic branches, particularly, syntax and semantics. Considering the relation between the three systems: syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, the first is seen to identify the grammatical forms of a language, semantics pairs these forms with their potential communicative functions, whereas pragmatics reflects a trichotomous relationship which unites the linguistic form, the communicative function of such a form and the contexts in which this linguistic form can have its function (Katz & Fodor, 1963).

Viewed from their subject of study, syntax studies sentences; semantics studies propositions, while pragmatics studies the linguistic acts and the contexts in which they are performed (Stalnaker, 1972).

Lakoff (1971), among others, argues that syntax could not be separated from the study of language use. So pragmatics took its place on the linguistic map. "Its colonization", Leech (1983: 2) demonstrates, "was the last stage of expansion of linguistics from a narrow discipline dealing with physical data of speech to a broad discipline taking in form, meaning, and context".

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In essence, Leech claims that grammar and pragmatics are complementary domains within linguistics.

Crucial for pragmatics is Austin's (1962) speech act theory upon which theories of language use and politeness are built. So, the coming section will shed light on the nature of that theory.

2.3 Speech Act Theory

Speech act theory is connected with the Oxford philosopher John Austin whose ideas are expanded by John Searle (1969, 1975, 1976). Austin's *How To Do Things With Words (1962)* is widely acknowledged as the first presentation of what has come to be called speech act theory.

The theory posits that every communicative utterance in any language is actually an action, hence, a speech act, such as warning, thanking, promising, requesting, etc. It predicts that in issuing an utterance, the speaker is generally involved in three different acts simultaneously:

1. **A locutionary act (LA):** the production of sounds and words with their meanings, i.e., the act of saying something in the full sense of "say";

2. **An illocutionary act (IA)**: the issuing of an utterance with conventional force achieved in "saying"; it is the intent or the uptake of the utterance;

3. **A perlocutionary act (PA)**: the consequential actual effect achieved by "saying".

Indeed, the three acts, LA, IL, and PA, are interdependent. Hence, in uttering something, the speaker (S) says something to the hearer (H); S does something (e.g., greeting, apologizing, complaining, etc.) and by doing that something S affects H. For example, in "can you open the window?", the locutionary act is the actual utterance of the sound sequence; the illocutionary act is a request for opening the window; the perlocutionary effects are achieved when the window gets opened.

Austin's theory is very indicative, but he died before he was able to develop it. Searle came to build on Austin's. Indeed, Searle (1969) has distinguished between two types of rules governing linguistic realization: regulative and constitutive. The former type is concerned with conditions on the occurrence of certain forms of behavior, whereas, the latter defines the behavior itself. Searle (1969) points out that the pragmatic rules governing language usage are regulative rather than constitutive. Such rules include propositional content, preparatory, sincerity, and essential rules.

These rules can be illustrated in action by looking at "requesting" since it is the subject of the current study. In order for an utterance to count as a request, it must meet the following:

1. Propositional content conditions: S predicates a future Act (A) of H;

2. Preparatory conditions;

    1. S believes H can do A.

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

3. Sincerity condition: S wants H to do A (i.e., it concerns S's psychological state as it is expressed in the performance of an illocutionary act); and

4. Essential condition: Counts as an attempt by S to get H to do A.

On the other hand, Searle sees the utterance as consisting of two parts: a proposition and function indicating devices (FIDs) that mark the illocutionary force. Such FIDs in English include word order, stress, intonation contour, punctuation, the mood of the verb, performative verbs, and the context itself (i.e., the norms for the interaction).

Many attempts have been made to create a taxonomy of speech acts (e.g., Austin, 1962; Searle, 1976; Bach & Harnish, 1979; Wunderlich, 1980). In this research, Searle's taxonomy would be adopted. Searle (1976) proposes five macro-classes for speech acts based on the

illocutionary point, the direction of fit, the psychological state of the speaker and the propositional content of the utterance. Such classes include:

1. assertives or representatives which tell people how things are; they commit S to the truth of the expressed proposition (e.g., stating, suggesting, reporting);

2. directives which try to get H to do things (e.g., requesting, commanding, ordering, advising, recommending);

3. commissives which commit S to some future action (e.g., promising, offering, vowing);

4. expressives where S makes known his/her psychological feelings and attitudes (e.g., thanking, apologizing, blaming, congratulating, condoling) ; and

5. declaratives which make us bring changes through our utterances, i.e., which bring about correspondence between the propositional content and reality (e.g. appointing, naming, sacking, resigning).

In brief, it could be said that the Speech Act Theory makes up most, or perhaps all, of the domain of pragmatics. As Wunderlich (1977: 243) points out, "it is an extension of the theory of meaning in natural language". To be sure, natural language is the most important means of human

communication, and communication is the primary objective of language use.

As the primary concern of this study is scrutinizing the speech act of requesting in relation to politeness and translation, the next sections will touch upon this issue elaborately.

2.4 The Speech Act of Requesting

Requesting comprises a fundamental sub–category of Searle's "directives" which encompasses acts of ordering, commanding, and advising, as well. Trosborg (1994) defines requesting as an attempt by the speaker to get the hearer to do something for him/her. In other words, it is an illocutionary act whereby a speaker (requester) conveys to a hearer (requestee) that s/he wants the requestee to perform an act, which is mainly for the benefit of the speaker. The act may be a request for "non–verbal" goods and services, i.e., a request for an object, an action or some kind of service, etc., or it can be a request for verbal goods and services, i.e., a request for information (Trosborg, 1994).

The desired act is to take place post–utterance, either in the immediate future, "requests–now", or at some later stage, "requests–then", (Edmondson & House, 1981: 99). In this sense, the speech act of requesting can be characterized as "pre–event", in contrast with other speech acts such

as complaints or apologies, for example, which are "post–event": they express the speaker's expectation of the hearer with regard to a prospective, verbal or non–verbal action (Blum–Kulka, et al. 1989).

Interestingly, "requests" are considered the most frequently employed speech act, particularly, at work situations. They also form part of the complaint sequence (Clyne, 1994; Ervin–Tripp, 1973).

Like other types of directives, requests are considered to be highly impositive. According to Haverkate (1984: 107), impositive speech acts are "speech acts performed by the speaker to influence the intentional behavior of the hearer in order to get the latter to perform, primarily for the benefit of the speaker, the action directly specified or indirectly suggested by the proposition". The degree with which the requester intrudes on the requestee (i.e., degree of imposition) may vary from small favors to demanding acts (Trosborg, 1994).

2.4.1 Request as a Face -Threatening Act (FTA)

The speech act of requesting is distinguished from other acts in the sense that the act to be performed is solely in the interest of the speaker and, normally, at the cost of the hearer. Being an impositive act, a request is intrinsically a face–threatening act (FTA). Face threatening acts,

according to Brown & Levinson (1978), are those "acts which run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or of the speaker" (p.70). Thus, hearers can interpret requests as intrusive impingements on their freedom of action, or even as a show in the exercise of power; the requester may hesitate to make the request for fear of exposing a need or risking hearer's loss of face (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989: 11). S/he also runs the risk of losing face him-/herself, as the requestee may choose to refuse to comply with his/her wishes.

Linguistically, requests can be realized in the form of an imperative, a declarative, or an interrogative sentence. Lakoff (1973) suggests a hierarchy for such forms ranging from direct to indirect, with imperatives being the strongest command, and interrogatives the weakest.

Searle (1969: 66) points to the relative status of the speaker and the hearer as being a decisive condition for the felicitous performance of a request. Lack of authority is likely to invalidate orders, and if the speaker asked the hearer to perform an act that is clearly his/her own responsibility, the speech act is likely to be defective.

2.4.2 Request Strategies/Types

Several classifications of request strategies exist. Gibbs (1985), for example, classifies requests (and directives in general) into thirteen classes

on the basis of their syntactic form and/or their prepositional content.

Searle (1979) provides six categories along with the phrases that belong to

each. Yet, both Gibbs' and Searle's taxonomies have met some criticism

(See, for example, Cohen, 1996). In this study, Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989)

classification whose criterion is the strategy type used by S is adopted.

Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) recognize three main strategy types that are

subsequently divided into sub-classes of diminishing force. These types

include conventionally indirect requests, non-conventionally indirect

requests, and direct requests (impositions).

2.4.2.1 Conventionally indirect requests

The term "conventional" was introduced by Searle (1975) when he

talked about the "conventionality thesis". In Searle's words, "certain forms

will tend to become conventionally established as the standard idiomatic

forms for indirect speech acts. While keeping their literal meaning they will

acquire conventional uses..." (Searle, 1975: 76). Such forms are inherently

ambiguous; the requestive interpretation is part of the utterance's meaning

potential, and it is co–present with the literal interpretation. Due to this

pragmatic duality, Blum–Kulka (1989) points out, such strategies are

negotiable in context in specific ways. They testify to a concern for the

dislike of refusals; they combine the advantages of a prerequest and a non-admitted (off record) request proper. Potentially, speakers can deny – and hearers can ignore – the requestive interpretation. For example, if a child says to his parent, "can you mend this for me?" and the parent replies with, "not now", the child then may say, "I only wanted to know", denying any requestive intent. According to Leech (1983), conventional indirectness is related to tact: "conventional indirectness is tactful because it embeds a negative bias, making it easier for H to refuse" (p.124). But this is not necessarily true for all cultures.

For conventional indirectness, Blum-Kulka (1989) argues, the most important conventions are pragmalinguistic in nature, i.e., conventionalization, according to her, seems to act mainly on properties of the utterance. On the other hand, one can recognize that conventions of propositional content combine with the linguistic form to signal the requestive force.

As far as the "mode" of realization is concerned, the requester, in conventionally indirect requests, normally employs hearer–oriented conditions, i.e., s/he makes reference to the hearer's ability (the hearer's capacity to perform the desired act, including the inherent capacities of the requestee, both mental and physical, and the external circumstances relating to time, place, etc. of the action) or willingness (Trosborg, 1994).

Requests that are hearer–oriented convey that the hearer is in a position of control to decide whether or not to comply with the request. For this reason, such requests are generally more polite and more efficient than requests formulated on "speaker–oriented" conditions (Blum–Kulka & House, 1989; Trosborg, 1994). On the other hand, hearer-oriented requests are transparent requests and an excuse for non–compliance is generally needed. By questioning any one of these pre–conditions (i.e., ability and willingness), the requester politely conveys that s/he does not take compliance for granted and simultaneously lowers the risk of losing face him-/herself.

The hearer–based conditions, ability and willingness, appear as heavily routinized request forms. Consider the following representative examples:

a. Could you lend me some money?   (ability)

b. Can you pass the salt, please?   (ability)

c. Will you do the shopping today?   (willingness)

d. Would you lend me a copy of your book?   (willingness)

Sadock (1974) argues that in such examples, one is dealing with idioms, and thus that the interrogative item "should not be broken down but treated unanalyzed as one conventional way of conveying a request" (p.120). Furthermore, it is important to note that such examples do not

display a one–to–one relationship between linguistic form and meaning, i.e. between language form and function. In this regard, Bell (1991: 137) believes that "no simple one-to-one correlation between syntactic structure and communicative value exists nor should we expect it too". Thus, answering by a mere "yes" or "no" would be either stupid or a joke (Atawneh, 1991; Tannen, 1984).

In an ability question, the standard requestive interpretation is carried out by specific wordings: "can you" and "are you able to", though systematically synonymous linguistically, are not equivalent pragmatically. Hence, it is important to note that all indirect forms are governed by such wording conventions (van Dijk, 1997). In this regard, Blum-Kulka (1989: 5) has distinguished between two kinds of conventionality: *conventions of means* that "determine the kinds of sentences that are standardly used as indirect requests", and *conventions of form* which "specify the exact wording used".

Trosborg (1994) argues that requests querying the hearer's willingness may be embedded in expressions of appreciation, hope, etc., on behalf of the requester, e.g.,

- *I'd be grateful if* you'd send me a copy.

- *It would be a great help* if you passed me the keys.

- I *hope* you wouldn't mind giving me a hand.

Also, it could be enlarged by intensification of this condition through lexical marking:

- *Would you mind helping* me to move this table?

- *Would you be so kind as* to refrain from smoking?

Another way of asking about the hearer's willingness to do something is by making a request for permission (Trosborg, 1994; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). This involves a shift of focus alluding to the requester as the recipient of an activity instead of mentioning the requestee as the agent of the action, e.g.

- Can I have the butter, please?

- May/ Can I have a match?

Within the same vein of strategy, the requester, according to Trosborg (1994) may also place his/her interests above the hearer's (i.e., by employing speaker–based conditions), thereby the request becomes more direct in its demand. The speaker's statement of his/her intent may be expressed politely as a wish or more bluntly as a demand as in the examples below:

- I would like to have some more coffee.

- I want you to sign this for me.

- I really need a drink.

Indeed, as Trosborg (1994: 202) points out, "want–statements are normally impolite in their unmodified form. If they are softened by 'please', or some other mitigating device, they may take on the character of pleading".

However, languages may differ as to which specific linguistic expressions become conventionalized as indirect requests. In Arabic, for example, an indirect request referring to the future is standardly realized by asking about the possibility of doing something. Thus, in actual use, the Arabic equivalent to "could you pass the salt?" is, for example, "mumkin ta'Tiini ilmiliH?"

Talking specifically about the notion of conventional indirectness, Searle (1975) suggests that there are specific conventions linking indirect utterances of a given speech act type with the specific preconditions needed for the performance of the same act. The link is clearest in the case of "directives": conventions of usage allow one to issue an indirect request by either questioning the preparatory condition of H's ability to carry out the act (could/can you do x?), or by asserting that the sincerity condition obtains (I want you to do it). Such conventions have been investigated in English, French, Spanish, German, and Hebrew (Blum-Kulka, 1997).

From a semantic point of view, conventionally indirect requests, according to Leech (1983), are interpretable on two levels, literally or as requests. But, due to the pragmalinguistic conventions operating on the properties of the utterance, the illocutionary range of conventional forms essentially includes the requestive interpretation (Blum-Kulka, 1989). Therefore, the *pragmatic duality* is always present. Such duality maintains effective and safe interaction. By using conventional indirectness, the speaker may convey either a question or a request, or both, and the hearer can interpret and answer either to one level or both (Clark, 1979; Clark & Schunk, 1980).

2.4.2.2 Non–conventionally indirect requests (hints)

In such types of requests, the speaker does not state his/her impositive intent explicitly, but rather, implicitly by using hints (e.g., "It's cold in here", "The dishes need to be done", "The kitchen is a total mess", "I don't have a pen", etc.). According to Weizman (1989), non-conventionally indirect utterances are characterized by "intentional lack of transparency as regards propositional content and the illocutionary force of the intended requests" (p. 73). This lack of transparency provides the requester with an outlet, and thereby allows him/her to think:

I may prefer not to let you know just what I mean, so

that if you don't like it, I can deny (even to myself) that

I 'meant' any such thing. If I don't tell you what I want

directly, and you prefer not to give me what I want, I need

not feel rejected and you need not feel guilty, because I

never really asked for it.

(Lakoff, 1976: 162)

In other words, hints are normally not threatening to any of the two

parties, and for that reason, they are used in situations in which non–

compliance is likely, or if the requester wants to be particularly careful and

modest.

Generally speaking, non–conventional indirectness is "much more open

– ended, both in terms of propositional content and linguistic form as well

as pragmatic force" (Weizman, 1989: 78). Thus, an utterance such as "I'm

hungry", depending on the context, may be: coming from a beggar, a

request for money; from a child at bed–time, a request for prolonged adult

company; etc.

2.4.2.3 Direct requests (impositives)

The requester, in this type, makes explicit the illocutionary force of his/her utterance by using a performative statement or an imperative, thereby issuing an order (Leech, 1983; Trosborg, 1994). If the requester chooses a modal verb expressing obligation or necessity, Trosborg (1994) argues, the utterance can be interpreted as an order although presented in a weaker form as in the following examples:

- You *should/ ought* to leave now.

- You *have to* leave now (or you miss the bus).

- You *must* leave now (because I want you to).

It is important to note that imperatives and performative statements with requestive intent are very direct and usually authoritative. In their unmodified form, they would normally be impolite outside a formal context where the authoritative element is in place (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1983). The choice of a performative verb can make these statements more or less polite (e.g., ask vs. command). A performative request is usually softened by employing hedging devices (I *would like to ask* you to leave), whereas imperatives can be softened by adding tags and/or the marker "please", ("open the door, *please* "; "leave it to me, *will you*?") (Trosborg, 1994).

Considering the aforementioned three types of requests (conventionally indirect, non-conventionally indirect, and impositive direct requests), one can mention that when formulating a small request, one will tend to use language that stresses in–group membership and social similarity. When making a request that is somewhat bigger, one uses the language of formal politeness involving the conventionalized indirect speech acts, hedges, apologies for intrusion, etc. Finally, when making a request that is doubtful one should not make at all, one tends to use indirect expressions (hints/implicatures). The same holds, mutatis mutandis, for criticisms, offers, complaints, and many other types of verbal act (Brown & Levinson, 1978).

However, there are several ways in which a requester can convey the politeness of a request. Thus, an indirect request is perceived to be more polite than a straightforward order. In addition to the selection of directness level, one can soften or increase the impact of a request on the hearer by employing "modality markers" (House & Kasper, 1981). Modality markers either tone down the impact of an utterance on the hearer (i.e., downgraders), or increase the impact (i.e., upgraders). In connection with requests, only the first are relevant. Trosborg (1994) distinguishes the following types of downgraders:

1. **Syntactic downgraders** (questions of ability or willingness, past tense, negation, tag questions, conditional clause, embedding, and, ing–form).

As it was pointed out earlier, a question is often more polite than a statement. Consider:

Can you do the cooking tonight?

You can hand me the paper.

To question certain assumptions is to avoid commitment to them, and therefore, questioning them becomes a "disarming device". Statements of willingness and ability present the request in a "non–negotiable way as a future act" (Davidsen & Nielsen, 1990: 160). So the first example above is more polite than the second, which approximates an order.

As far as politeness is concerned, the requester can embed his/her request within a clause thereby conveying his/her attitude to the request, (e.g., by expressing thanks, tentativeness, hope, delight, etc.). The embedding, Trosborg (1994) points, often occurs in connection with a conditional clause (e.g., "*I wonder if you would* be able to give me a hand").

2. Lexical / phrasal downgraders include:

a. a politeness marker   (Could you close the window, *please*?),

b. a consultative device (*Do you think* you could help me with this

stuff?

c. a downtoner ("just", "simply", "perhaps", "rather", etc.),

   Could you *possibly* let us know by tomorrow?

d. an understatement (Would you wait just *a second*?),

e. a hesitator (I *er, erm, er...* I wonder if you'd *er...*), and

f. an interpersonal marker ("I mean", "you see", "you know")

   You wouldn't mind helping me, *I mean,* would you?

Given that requests are face-threatening acts, and that the use of politeness strategies is affected by various factors, it would not be an easy task for non-native speakers of English, for example, to perform requests in linguistically, socially and culturally appropriate ways. Suh (1999) argues that non-native speakers need not only have sufficient linguistic resources to encode a request, but also need to know the sociocultural rules of L2, which are involved in the choice of politeness strategies in a given situation. The same requirements, Suh (1999) points, apply to translators.

It is apparent from what has been discussed so far that the more indirect a request, the more polite it is. But what does the notion of indirectness involve? In the following section, we will discuss the issue of indirectness with particular relation to "requesting".

2.5 Notion of Indirectness

Indirectness is one of the most intriguing features of speech act performance. Most usages of daily speech, as Levinson (1983) points out, are indirect. Most often speakers do not express their intentions clearly or explicitly. Indirectness and, hence, the flouting of Gricean maxims are the norm rather than the exception.

Searle (1979: 56) defines indirect illocutions as a case "in which one illocutionary act is performed indirectly by way of performing another". For him, the interpretation of such illocutions is governed by the Gricean principle of Co-operation and by conversational maxims, as well as by speech act conventions of use. Following Searle (1975, 1979), Leech (1983: 33) indicates "all illocutions are indirect in that their force is derived by implicature". Yet, there exists a great deal of variation in their range of indirectness. The most direct illocutions are those that have the default interpretation. Indirect acts, according to Schiffrin (1994), enable the speaker to convey something while at the same time denying full responsibility for what s/he is conveying.

In fact, indirectness is employed for a reason. According to Pyle (1975: 2), indirectness is "a mechanism for dealing with conflicting intentions and desires", i.e., the speaker wants to convey X for some

reason, and wants to mask X for other reasons. For him, indirectness is employed as "to avoid imposing on the other, to avoid hurting others' feelings, to avoid reprisal from the other, to avoid implications of rejection in a refusal, and to avoid tabooed expressions" (pp. 161–162). On the other hand, indirect speech acts are employed out of politeness considerations. Thus, Searle (1975: 64) writes:

> In the field of indirect illocutionary acts, the area of
>
> directives is the most useful study because ordinary
>
> conversational requirements of politeness normally
>
> make it awkward to issue flat imperative statements or
>
> explicit performatives and we therefore seek to find
>
> indirect means to our illocutionary ends...In directives,
>
> politeness is the chief motivation for indirectness.

Similarly, Ervin–Tripp (1976: 38) suggests that indirect interrogative requests are useful because they give "listeners an out by explicitly stating some condition which would make compliance impossible".

2.5.1 Indirectness as a Cultural Value

The notion of **indirectness** has received a considerable amount of attention in cross–cultural pragmatic research. Results show that

indirectness is culture-bound. For example, the Greeks are reported to be more indirect than the Americans (Tannen, 1981), while Germans are more direct than the British (House & Kasper, 1981).

In western societies, there is a preference for indirectness in communication. With regard to requests, for example, Clark & Schunk (1980:111) assert that people most often tend to make them indirectly. This is because "flat imperatives are claimed to be awkward" (Searle, 1975: 64).

Advocates of indirectness as a signal of politeness seem to have based their observations solely on English; they believe that what seems to hold for speakers of English must also hold for speakers of other languages. However, Wierzbicka (1991: 25) argues that "it is an illusion to think that ordinary conversational requirements of politeness make it awkward to issue flat imperative sentences". What is claimed as an "ordinary requirement" is only an "English requirement" (p. 60). Moreover, it is not but a matter of fact that cultures differ widely in their interactional styles, so that whereas indirectness is the accepted polite behavior in a given situation in one culture, directness is the norm in the same situation in another. Such variation can be understood as representing cultural preferences for positive or negative styles of politeness (van Dijk, 1997).

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Breakdowns in intercultural and inter–ethnic communication may easily occur as a consequence of culturally distinct styles of interaction. Culturally determined differences in expectations and interpretations may create misunderstandings and ill–feelings (Gumperz, 1978). For example, from an English speaker's viewpoint, Polish ways of speaking may reflect "dogmatism", lack of consideration for other people, inflexibility, a tendency to be bossy and to interfere, and so on. On the other hand, from a Polish speaker's viewpoint, English ways of speaking may be seen as reflecting a lack of warmth, a lack of spontaneity, and a lack of sincerity (Wierzbicka, 1991: 50).

Blum–Kulka (1983) ascribes the obtained breakdowns resulting from directness/indirectness in intercultural communication to two main reasons: sociocultural differences and insufficient mastery of the linguistic and pragmatic means of L2. The second reason, Blum-Kulka (1983:51) argues, is due to "a lack of linguistic means, as well as to [speakers'] reluctance to express emotion directly in a language they do not fully control".

As the whole notion of indirectness is employed out of politeness, or tact motives (Blackemore, 1992), and "politeness", in its turn, is employed to "keep face", the next section will discuss the question of "face".

2.5.2 Indirectness and the Notion of Face

Every time we open our mouths, we have to consider whether what we say is likely to maintain, enhance, or damage our own *face* and consider the effect of our utterances on others. The concept of *face* ("mianzi" in Mandarin; "mentsu" in Japanese; "Chae myon" in Korean) carries a range of meanings based upon a core concept of honor. The concept was first suggested by the Chinese anthropologist Hu in 1944. The American sociologist Erving Goffman (1967) has based much of his work on interpersonal relationships on the concept of "face".

Indeed, the notion is connected with the English folk term "to lose face", in a sense of being embarrassed and humiliated. It considers politeness as ritual, and maintaining *face* in interaction is very central to the notions of politeness. Hence, those who are skilled in face–work are described as having social savoir-faire; they are, also, described as perceptive and diplomatic.

According to Goffman (1967), when people interact they are concerned with presenting and maintaining a public image of themselves, i.e., "face", which is characterized as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (p.5). In sociological and sociolinguistic terms, "face" is defined as "the

negotiated public image, mutually granted each other by participants in a communicative event" (Scollon & Scollon, 1995: 35).

Face is a paradoxical concept. On the one hand, in human interactions people need to be involved with other participants. On the other hand, they need to maintain some degree of autonomy or independence from others, i.e., to preserve a "space" within which they have freedom of action and the right not to be imposed upon (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Scollon & Scollon, 1995). In Brown & Levinson's view, social interaction is based on a balance between the satisfaction of one's own positive and negative face needs with those of other interactants.

The involvement (positive) aspect of face is concerned with the person's right and need to be considered a normal or a supporting member of society, and to be thought well of by others (Brown & Levinson, 1978). In other words, it is the "want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others" (p. 67). Involvement is shown by such discourse strategies as paying attention to others, showing an interest in their affairs, pointing out common in-group membership, or using first names.

The independence (negative) aspect of face emphasizes the individuality of the participants. It stresses their right not to be dominated or impeded by group or social values, and to be free from the impositions

of others. The person acts with some degree of autonomy and that s/he respects the rights of others to their own autonomy and freedom of movement or choice. It is shown by making minimal assumptions about the needs or interests of others, by giving others the widest range of options, or by using formal names and titles.

To adopt Brown & Levinson's (1978) argument, one can say that in the context of the mutual vulnerability of face, the speaker has two options: avoiding the face–threatening act (Do not do the FTA), or deciding to "do the FTA". If the speaker decides to do the FTA, s/he can either go "off record", in which case there is more than one attributable intention, so that the speaker can not have committed him-/herself to one particular intent, or the speaker can go "on record" expressing his/her intention clearly. In the latter case, the speaker may express his/her intentions without redressive action, i.e., "boldly on record"; the speaker may choose to employ strategies to minimize the face threat (i.e., using redressive action).

Choice of strategy depends on the speaker's estimation of the risk of **face loss**. Simply speaking, it is determined by the three contextual variables: social distance (D) between the speaker and the hearer (i.e., their degree of familiarity), the relative power (P) of speaker over the hearer, and the ranking (R) of various impositions in the given culture. All three factors

add individually to the weightiness of imposition (Wx) and form the basis

on which the speaker decides how face–threatening his/her act is and what

kind of verbal strategy is needed to counteract its weightiness (Brown &

Levinson, 1978: 81).

Politeness, then, can be defined, Trosborg (1994) argues, as a desire to

protect face–image. A speaker must be aware of the hearer's face and self-

image, and exhibit a desire to protect those "self–images" through various

strategies.

Without doubt, the realm of politeness and "face" is so wide that it

could not be compressed within the confines of this research. Suffice it to

say that most "politeness" theories (e.g., Brown & Levinson, 1987; Lakoff,

1973; Leech, 1983), despite severe criticism, equate politeness with

indirectness. As a matter of fact, conventional indirectness represents a

decisive issue in translation, a point that deserves commenting on.

2.5.3 Conventional Indirectness and Translation

Searle (1975) notes that certain forms, when literally translated to

another language, will lose their requestive potential: "the standard forms

from one language will not always maintain their indirect speech act

potential when translated from one language to another" (p.76). Yet, Searle

believes that such cross–linguistic differences are not important since they

do not constitute a challenge to the basic framework for indirect speech acts. On the other hand, opponents of the universality of conventional indirectness argue that the pragmatic non–equivalence of literal translations comprises evidence against Searle's universalistic claim (Green, 1975; Wierzbicka, 1985).

As a matter of fact, the lack of cross–linguistic equivalence among specific manifestations of conventional indirectness does matter. In all situations where languages come in contact, in translation proper (or in non–native use of a language), pragmatic adjustments have to be made between two linguistic systems (Weizman & Blum–Kulka, 1987). The absence of such adjustments results in pragmatic shifts in translation (Blum–Kulka, 1986; Weizman, 1986) and can cause serious miscommunications (pragmatic failure) in native–nonnative interactions. In other words, the pragmatic system of each language is unique. In so far as requesting is concerned, if a translator fails to perceive the need for pragmatic adjustment in translating a conventionally indirect request from one language into another, s/he will translate it literally, and the resulting expression may fail to carry the illocutionary force it had in the original. Similarly, in language learning and in the use of a second language in native–nonnative communication, "each party may fail to convey his/her

intentions due to a lack of pragmatic equivalence between expressions in two languages" (Blum–Kulka, 1989: 65).

Modal verbs are crucial in conventionally indirect requests as they refer to the topicalized preparatory condition (Blum–Kulka, 1989). They represent the unmarked form of reference: if modal verbs are replaced by non-modal semantic equivalents, the utterance becomes more explicit, more marked, and more formal (Faerch & Kasper, 1989). On the other hand, as mentioned in chapter one, each language is characterized by a unique modal system, which if rendered from one language into another, may cause a translation loss, an inevitable factor leading to pragmatic failure across languages and cultures. Hence, since "modals" occupy the central position of the current study, they will be discussed thoroughly in the coming sections, with respect to English and Arabic.

2.6 Modals and Modality

This section discusses the nature of modals and modality both in English and in Arabic. It also provides a classification of modality, a contrast between the modality system in English and that in Arabic, as well as the problems that may arise in translation due to the mismatch in the modality system in both languages.

2.6.1 Notion of Modals and Modality in English

The notion of modality, according to Palmer (1986: 2), is vague and leaves open a number of possible definitions. In any event, **modality** is defined as "the manner in which the meaning of a clause is qualified so as to reflect the speaker's judgment of the likelihood of the proposition it expresses being true" (Quirk, et al., 1985: 219). Hatim (1997) sees modality as a variety of intrinsically evaluative devices showing the speaker's attitude to both the utterance and the addressee. On the other hand, in his *Modality and the English Modals*, Palmer distinguishes between "mood" (modal items) and "modality", and argues that "mood" is a grammatical term, while "modality" is a semantic term relating to the meanings that are usually associated with mood. The relation between "mood" and "modality" is similar to that between tense and time. Quirk & Greenbaum's (1973) characterizes "mood" as that thing which relates the verbal action to such conditions as certainty, obligation, necessity, or possibility.

As far as English modals are concerned, Fitzmaurice (2000: 10) argues that in the Old English (OE) period, modal verbs such as "will", "can", "may", and "should" (<OE "willan", "cunnan", "magan", and

"sceolde", respectively) "were main lexical verbs (preterit-present verbs) which gradually lost their main-verb grammatical properties, such as transitivity and morphological marking for person and number". Consequently, auxiliary verb characteristics replaced lexical properties, and their meanings became more general and "speaker-centred" (p.11). Traugott (1989) refers to the process of the gradual shift in grammatical category and the changes in meaning as "grammaticalization" (p.35). Indeed, the meanings reflected by modals can be of different kinds: epistemic, deontic, dynamic, and existential. The coming section will shed some light on such types.

2.6.2 Taxonomy of Modality

With regard to the taxonomy of modality, Palmer (1979) recognizes the following categories:

2.6.2.1 Epistemic modality

Epistemic modality is employed to negotiate meaning. Hence, people use modals, Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1983) point out, to navigate themselves through human judgment on the basis of logical probabilities of an object or event. In other words, it refers to making judgments about the possibility or necessity that something is or is not the case. Lyons (1977: 797) defines epistemic modality as:

Any utterance in which the speaker explicitly qualifies

his commitment to the truth of the proposition expressed

by the sentence he utters, whether the qualification

is made explicit in the verbal component [...] in the

prosodic or paralinguistic component.

Epistemic modality is expressed by modal auxiliary verbs such as "may" for epistemic possibility, "must", "be bound to", "have (got) to", and "will" for necessity (however, these modals differ in terms of the degree of certainty, or confidence (Palmer, 1979: 41-48)). Interestingly, epistemic modality is not only expressed by present modal auxiliaries, but also by tentative forms (e.g., "might", "would", "should", and "could"); by adverbs (e.g., "possibly", "perhaps", "surely", "certainly", "obviously", "inevitably"); by adjectives (e.g., "possible", "certain", "sure"); by nouns (e.g., "possibility", "necessity", "certainty"); and by lexical verbs (e.g., "appear", "assume", "doubt", "suggest", "think", "look as if"). In terms of frequency, McCarthy (1991) believes that verbs and adverbs are more frequent than nouns and adjectives.

2.6.2.2 Deontic Modality

This kind of modality is basically performative, i.e., by uttering a modal, a speaker may actually give permission (can, may), make a promise

or threat (shall), lay an obligation (must, shall), or give (a brusque or somewhat impolite) command (can). "Should" and "ought to" could be used; yet, the speaker with these takes responsibility for the judgment without actually involving him-/herself in a performative action. On the other hand, some modals may be conventionally used in interrogation to ask for permission, to request someone for action, or to see if the addressee lays an obligation. Consider the following examples:

- May/might/can/could I leave now?

- May/can/could I have the salt?

- Shall I come tomorrow?

As indicated earlier, such examples are used to convey asking for permission, requesting, and laying an obligation on the part of the speaker by the addressee, respectively. It should be borne in mind that asking for permission should not be interpreted in the sense that the hearer is in a position to hold it back, but, rather, as Palmer (1979: 66) points out, "it is sought as a matter of courtesy and civility". Indeed, it is odd for permission to be refused; yet, it is considerate and polite to ask for it. On the other hand, and, as the second example above reflects, asking permission may imply that the addressee should take action in order for the relevant event to take place. In crude terms, it is a request to act.

2.6.2.3 Dynamic Modality

Dynamic modality expresses possibility ("can/could", "will/would", "be able to" in both neutrality and ability/willingness senses), and necessity ("must", in the sense 'it is necessary for me/us that...', "have (got) to"("have got to" belongs to a colloquial style)). It is subject–oriented or circumstantial. In contrast to other types of modality, it bears no involvement of the speaker in the judgment expressed by the modals used.

Both dynamic "can" and "will" are used in interrogation with "you", not merely to ask whether the person addressed is able or willing to carry out the action, but also as a request that s/he do so:

Can / could you just remind me?

Will / would you ring me?

It could be perverse for someone to reply "yes" and then take no action at all on the grounds, Palmer (1979) explained, "that he was certainly able to and that that was all that was asked" (p.87).

2.6.2.4 Existential Modality

Besides the three types of modality mentioned above, Palmer (1979) identifies a fourth type, i.e., existential modality. For him, such type can be defined in terms of "some" and/or "all". Thus, Palmer has offered "Lions

can be dangerous" as an example, which is different from the epistemic "Lions *may* be dangerous". His example does not imply that "it is possible that lions are dangerous", but, rather, "it is possible for lions to be dangerous", in the sense that "some lions are dangerous" (Palmer, 1979: 152). Moreover, not only does "can" have the meaning of "some", but "sometimes", as well (e.g., "the weather can (sometimes) be unpleasant" vs. "(some) Roses *can* be mauve"). When meaning "all", existential modality is conveyed through "must" (e.g., Scientific results *must* depend on a rather specialized form of history).

Harris, McLaughlin, & Still (2000) have categorized modality into three types: the existential, the epistemic, and the 'ground or root' level. Their taxonomy is similar to, but clearer than Palmer's. Hence, while Palmer's explanation of the existential level is ambiguous and circumlocutory to some extent, they clarify it as one that predicates the existence of a situation (e.g., "that *is* a chair", "lions *are* dangerous", "Tom *lives* in London", etc.). On the other hand, they collapsed Palmer's deontic and dynamic categories into one class, "root" or "ground" modality.

Similarly to a great extent, Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1983), and King (1996) have classified modals (and modality) into two kinds, root (social interactional) and epistemic (logical probability). Virtually all

modals have both logical and social functions, which could be achieved through auxiliary verbs, lexical verbs, and adjectival, adverbial and nominal modal phrases. It is important to note that modal items acquired root (deontic) meaning before the epistemic one (Fitzmaurice, 2000).

Since the spirit of this research handles modality in the requesting speech act (i.e., root modality), a word is worth saying in this regard.

2.6.3 Requests and Modals

Modals that have a social interactional function are illocutionary and interpersonal rather than propositional (Mollering & Nunan, 1995). They require that a person using them properly take into account the characteristics of the social situation (Celce–Murcia & Larsen–Freeman, 1983). Such modals are used to express human control over events in terms of permission, obligation, and volition. Social norms are expressed through the use of these modals. So an appropriate modal for the situation must be chosen in relation to the status and the relationship between the interlocuters (power, distance, etc.). For example, a secretary may ask her boss, "*May* I leave now?" The "*may*" is used to receive permission since the boss has control over the situation. In response to the query, the boss says, "No, we *should* discuss certain points". "*Should*" functions as a marker of obligation to the meaning of the sentence.

One major system in the social use of modals entails making requests. These can be requests of a general nature, or can be specific requests for permission. Among the various English modals, "can" and "will", as pointed out earlier, are highly or conventionally employed for such a purpose. On the other hand, although historically both present and past forms of modals can be used in making requests, only the present forms are likely to be used in responses to requests. The reason is that past forms are considered more polite and less presumptuous than the present, and, therefore, the person making the request will often use the past to soften or mitigate the request (Quirk, 1990). The respondent does not want to make the response sound conditional, which is a possible result of the past form (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1983). So s/he uses the present form.

Semantically speaking, there is a subtle difference between "can/ could" and "will/would" in making requests. The former seems to imply "is this possible?" while the latter seems to query the willingness of the person being addressed (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1983).

When asking for permission, the use of either "may" or "can" is significant. The greater the listener's degree of formal authority, the more likely is the use of "may". In the majority of situations, in America at least,

there is a lack of defined formal authority, and "can" tends to be widely used.

Generally speaking, the motivation for the use of (root) modals is the desire to save face, either the hearer's or the speaker's. Although Brown & Levinson (1987: 67) say that it is possible to distinguish between acts that primarily threaten the hearer's face and those that threaten the speaker's own face, they admit that the latter acts are also potential threats to the hearer. Thus, in their discussion of politeness and the ways to express it, it is the hearer's face–wants that get emphasized. It is, however, possible to work at the other side of the coin and emphasize their importance for the speaker's own face.

2.6.4 Modal system in Arabic

As aforementioned, the notion of modality is universal; yet, the modal system differs from one language to another. Hence, as it is the case with English, Arabic employs modal items that display social and logical meanings. Such meanings are conveyed through different parts of speech such as lexical verbs (e.g., ?mkana, wasi'a, qadira, lazima, wajaba, taHattama, ?iHtamala, ?inbaghaa, ?istaTaa'a, ta'ayyana), particles (e.g., qad, la'alla, 'asaa, rubbamaa), and phrases (e.g., laa budda, min alwajibi, min almumkini, min almafruuDi, min allaazimi, min almuta'ayyani, min

alDaruuri, min almuHattami, min al jaa?izi, fi/bi maqduurika, fi/bi imkaanika, fi/bi stiTaa'atika, fi/bi was'ika) (Abdel-Fattah, 1984; Farghal & Shunnaq, 1999, Khalil, 1999). It is important to note that of the many items expressing modality in Arabic, Abdel-fattah (1984: 18) argues that only *verbs* are considered *true modals*.

Arabic modal items have certain characteristics that distinguish them from other verbs. According to Abdel-Fattah (1984: 6-7), Arabic modal verbs have no imperative forms, and they cannot co-occur, particularly, when there is contradiction in their meaning. For example, the following sentences are considered odd in Arabic:

1. yajibu yajuuzu ?an tadrusa. (You must can study).

2. min almuta'ayyani yanbaghi ?an tadrusa.(You have to ought to study).

3. min almuHtamali labudda laka ?an tadrusa.(You may must study).

However, where there is no contradiction in meaning, it is possible for Arabic modals to co-occur, e.g.,

1. qad yajuuzu thalika. (That might be possible).

2. rubbamaa yajibu ?an taf'ala thalika. (Perhaps, you must do that).

As mentioned in section 2.6.2, modality can be epistemic, deontic, or dynamic. Epistemic modality in Arabic is expressed through "wajaba"*, "?ufturiDa"*, and "la budda", for necessity and obligation; "jaaza"*, "?mkana"*, ?iHtamala"*, "rubbamaa", "la'alla", and "'asa", for possibility. On the other hand, deontic modality can be conveyed through "wajaba"*, "ta'ayyana"*, "inbagha", "taHattama"*, "?ifturiDa"*, "lazima"*, and "'alaa", for obligation and necessity; "wasi'a"*, "qadira"*, "?istaTaa'a"*, and "jaaza"*, for permission. As far as dynamic modality is concerned, it could be said that it is expressed through "laa budda" besides the items used deontically (except for "'alaa") for obligation and necessity to convey the same notions. On the other hand, it is expressed through the items used deontically for permission to convey ability (Abdl-Fattah, 1984).

In fact, the modal system in Arabic is different from that in English. Thus, according to Atari (2000), English modals are grammaticalized whereas Arabic ones are lexicalized*. On the other hand, in English, the past forms of certain modals may have present or future reference but with "probability gradience" (Khalil, 1999: 228). For example, "might", when logically used, Khalil points, shows less probability than "may", a fact

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* asterisk (*)above the modal means that the derived modal phrases of the same item are also included.
* Dr. Omar Atari, proffesor of Applied Linguistics and Translation, King S'uud University (personal communication).

could not be captured in Arabic, which renders both "may" and "might" by "qad", or "rubbamaa".

On the other hand, some Arabic modals do not have the clear-cut distinctions in meaning that characterize English modals. For example, obligation in English is carried through "must" and "have to", where "must" reflects an imposition by the speaker, whereas, "have to", by an external factor. Yet, Arabic uses, for example, "yajibu", "yalzamu", "laa budda", and "'laika" to express such obligation, but, without indicating the source of imposition as it is the case with English (Khalil, 1999: 169).

For the purposes of the research, it is quite important to point to modals in colloquial Arabic. As Atawneh (1991) points out, "modal employment is similar to a great extent in both colloquial and Modern Standard Arabic" (p.75). In both varieties, "mumkin" is the most highly employed modal, followed by "qadira/btiqdar", then "?istaTaa'a /btistaTii". Though the three modals are "semantically synonymous", particularly in requesting contexts, Atawneh argues, it is difficult to predict the motivation for preferring one to another.

When talking about degrees of formality or politeness conveyed by modals, it could be pointed out that whereas English provides such scales through "will/would", "can/could", "may/might", Arabic uses "?mkana" or

"qadira" (or their different (spoken) derivations) as an equivalent of the English modals. Yet, as is said in chapter one, Arabic modals do not reflect the politeness embodied in English, particularly with respect to the past forms; therefore, pragmatic loss in translation becomes inescapable.

Once again, past modal forms, in English, convey more diffidence and thus more politeness than their present counterparts (Palmer, 1979; Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1983; Quirk et al., 1985). Yet, as Arabic has no past forms, such politeness, Atawneh (1991) points out, could be expressed through the use of conditional verbal modals (e.g., "law tiqdar" (if you can), "law tistaTii" (if you can), "min faDlak" (if you can do it as a favor), "law mumkin" (if you can), and "idhaa fii furSa" (if there is a chance). The closest English equivalents for such expressions are "please" and "if you can". This fact, as Atawneh (1991) and Scarcella & Brunak (1981) argue, may account for the overuse of such forms by Arab learners of English in expressing their polite requests. In other words, it could be said that Arab speakers, in expressing polite requests in English and no matter how great the distance – horizontally and vertically – between interlocutors, most often tend to use expressions (most frequently interlarded with "please") different from those of the native speakers' use for the same situation*. Arabic speakers, from the point of view of, at least,

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* Horizontal distance is a measure of distance between social groups; vertical distance reflects power relationship connected with status, power, seniority, and authority (Bell, 1991).

Americans are seen to use more direct requesting strategies in terms of modal employment, a point which makes them sound aggressive particularly when addressing their superiors or strangers.

In conclusion, it could be said that there is no one–to-one semantic or pragmatic correspondence between the modal system in Arabic and that in English. Such a lack of correspondence poses a challenge for English-Arabic translators. Thus, the question to be asked is how would translators (in our case, Arab non-native speakers of English) render SL modals that display politeness gradience into TL where such gradience is missing while at the same time attempting to keep the same pragmatic impact? This question will be tested empirically with respect to the speech act of requesting in the coming chapters.

Chapter Three

Research Design

3.1 Research Questions

Taking into account the hypothesis set in chapter one, that, the mismatch in the modal system between English and Arabic causes pragmatic failure as well as translation problems, the current research tests this hypothesis by attempting to answer the following questions:

1. What request strategies (focusing on employed modals) Palestinian NNSs of English employ in comparison to American NSs?

2. How do NNSs render non-epistemic English modals employed in requesting into Arabic?

3. How do EFL translators compensate for the pragmatic loss that may arise due to the mismatch between the respective modal systems?

4. Is there any correlation between the competency level of learners and the appropriateness of their performance?

As a means to answer these questions, two samples of subjects were chosen, NNSs and NSs, and data were collected by administering three kinds of tests as appears in the coming sections.

3.2 Subjects

The subjects chosen for the study were a selected sample of 80 Palestinian undergraduate students of English at An-Najah National University, Nablus, Palestine. The sample consisted of three groups: 26 sophomore students, 27 juniors, and 27 seniors. The subjects were chosen according to their Grade Point Average (GPA) in English, except for the sophomores, as they were beginners in the English major. Specifically speaking, only students whose GPA was above seventy were selected, in order to spare any chance for the exceptionally low achievement to affect the results.

A small number of students within the whole sample (4 students) lived in the U.S.A., for a period of time, ranging from 2 months to ten years. One lived in Germany for ten years. Of the 80 subjects, 15 were males: 4 sophomores, 3 juniors, and 8 seniors. It is important to note that students studied English for a period ranging from 9 to 17 years throughout their lives. 547647

On the other hand, a secondary sample of 20 native speakers of American English (NSs) was chosen. Some of the subjects were enrolled in a course of Arabic as a Foreign Language at Bir Zeit University, others were enrolled in academic programs at the Arab American University,

Palestine, whereas, others were professors of English at An-Najah National University, Bethlehem University, and the Arab American University. Indeed, such a group was chosen as a control group to show the trend in the behavior of native speakers in their choice of politeness strategies, and, therefore, of modals employed in requesting.

3.3 Data Collection

In gathering the data, three kinds of tests were used: a multiple-choice test (MC), a translation test (TT), and an assessment test (AT).

3.3.1 Multiple Choice Test

The MC test consisted of eight situations embodying the three variables that politeness theorists deem essential in determining the choice of a politeness strategy in making a certain request (e.g., Brown & Levinson, 1978). These variables include power of the requestee over the requester (P), social distance between the interlocutors (D), and the risk of the imposition (R).

In terms of content, the situations depicted reflect everyday occurrences of the type expected to be familiar to speakers across American and Arab cultures. The situations were as follows:

S1   A student asks his /her professor to lend him /her umbrella.

S2   A student asks a passerby about the time.

S3   A person asks his /her close friend to lend him /her JD1000 to pay as a deposit before signing a contract.

S4   A student asks his /her roommate to clean up the room the latter had left in a mess the night before.

S5   A shopper asks an unfamiliar passerby to help him /her with some of the grocery bags.

S6   A student asks the conference chairperson to open the window.

S7   A new employee asks his / her boss for a ride home.

S8   A secretary asks her boss to lend her NIS1000.

Regarding the situational variation, the items, as what has just been pointed to earlier, vary in terms of the participants' role relationship (i.e., P and D), as well as R, as follows:

Table 1: Distribution of Power, Distance, and Risk in the requestive situations*

Situation #	Bases Determining Politeness		
	Power	**Distance**	**Risk**
1. Umbrella	H	L	L
2. Time	L	H	L
3. JD 1000	L	L	H
4. Room	L	L	L
5. Grocery	L	H	H
6. Window	H	H	L
7. Lift	H	H	H
8. NIS 1000	H	L	H

* H = High; L = Low

Following Brown and Levinson's (1978) definition, Distance is low if the interlocutors are close friends, family members, kinsmen, colleagues at work, etc; high, if they are strangers and not familiar with each other. Social Power is considered low if the requestee has no obvious control or influence on the requester such as a friend, a relative, or, a colleague; high, if the requestee is in a position to influence the speaker's life, as to withhold a service or make it difficult to get, or s/he can hurt or punish if his/her face wants are not met. As regards Risk, it is assumed to be low if the requested thing is of the 'free goods' type, such as asking for directions or time, etc.; high, if it costs the requestee something s/he cannot afford. It is important to stress that in cases of too risky situations, the speaker may not be able to do the face-threatening act; silence will be the result.

Each of the devised situations was followed by seven options for the respondent to choose from, and an eighth, but blank option was left to be filled out if none of the provided options appealed to the respondent. The seven options provided were the same for the eight situations. They varied just in mentioning the requested thing. As a matter of fact, and, since the major focus of the study is on modals, conventionally indirect request strategies, except for the third option (being a direct request tailed with a modal hedge) were provided as options, as in the following example:

(Situation 1)

"It is raining heavily. You are talking to a distinguished professor about your academic problems. After the talk, you want to borrow an umbrella from her/him because you know that s/he has two umbrellas in her/his office. What would you say to request that s/he give you an umbrella?"

a) Would you lend me an umbrella?

b) Can you lend me an umbrella?

c) Lend me an umbrella, will you?

d) Should you lend me an umbrella?

e) Could you lend me an umbrella?

f) I'd appreciate it if you could lend me an umbrella.

g) Will you lend me an umbrella?

h) ……………………………………………………………………

- **Multiple Choice Test: Rationale for Choice**

The ultimate aim of the MC test is to specify the situations where each of the provided options is used focusing the light on the employed modals, with holding a particular comparison between Palestinian NNSs of English and American native speakers (NSs) in terms of their performance such a test.

3.3.2 Translation Test

The Translation Test consisted of five English sentences embodying different ways of requesting an item (an umbrella), without defining the situation or the identity of the requestee. The respondents' job was to translate such requests into every day (spoken) Arabic. The sentences offered for translation were

a) Would you lend me your umbrella?

b) Can you lend me an umbrella?

c) Lend me an umbrella, will you?

d) Could you lend me an umbrella?

e) Will you lend me an umbrella?

- Translation Test: Rationale for Choice

The main purpose of the translation test is to see how politeness gradience inherent in English modals could be rendered into Arabic. Interestingly, the researcher deemed it necessary to see how "will" will be translated when it is attached to an imperative direct strategy, and when it is part of the conventionally indirect one (less forceful).

3.3.3 Assessment Test

The assessment test was based on the results of the translation test. The yielded translations of "would", "will", "can", and "could", i.e., the Arabic equivalents, were given to a sub-sample of the NNSs (32 subjects out of the 80) to be rated on a politeness scale of 5 where 1 represents the lowest point and 5 the highest. Each item was to be rated independently of all other expressions. Indeed, such items were offered contextualised as follows:

.... fii majaal tiftaH ilbaab?

.... mumkin tiftaH lbaab?

.... btiqdar tiftaH ilbaab?

.... minfaDlak tiftaH ilbaab.

.... mumkin tiftaH ilbab, law samaHt?

.... ma'alish tiftaH ilbaab.

.... minfaDlak, mumkin tiftaH ilbaab?

.... bistiTaa'tak tiftaH ilbaab?

.... fiik tiftaH ilbaab?

.... minfaDlak, btiqdar tiftaH ilbaab?

.... law samaHt tiftaH ilbaab.

As a matter of fact, though the aforementioned expressions were transliterated here, they were given to subjects in the *Arabic alphabet*; yet, the instructions were provided in English.

- Assessment Test: Rationale for Choice

The AT was meant mainly to examine how native speakers of Arabic rate Arabic modals and modal-like expressions, and, consequently, to connect the results of such rating to the hypothesis laid out in the earlier chapters.

3.4 Procedures

The study was carried out in classroom. Thus, the researcher went to the classrooms where subjects were available, distributed the questionnaires, read with them the instructions, and explained clearly and simply what they were going to do. The researcher got a positive feedback from students that they understood their task well. As a matter of time, it took subjects 15 minutes to fill out the MC questionnaire.

With regard to the NS group, the researcher asked her professors at Bethlehem, Bir Zeit, and, the Arab American Universities to distribute the

questionnaire and explain to the subjects what and how to answer it*. The responses were received after two weeks.

Two weeks after the MC test, the TT was administered to the same subjects. Once again, the researcher explained to students what they were going to do, and, stressed translating into SPOKEN, NOT standard, Arabic. At the first glance, students were puzzled because, first, they found it strange to translate into every day Arabic (they were accustomed to using standard Arabic); second, they thought there were no differences among the provided sentences when rendered into Arabic. The researcher assured them and asked them to rethink carefully about the English modals being employed. It took respondents almost 18 minutes to finish the test. Three days later, the AT was administered. Suffice it to say that subjects had a clear understanding of every thing they were asked to do with respect to filling out the three questionnaires.

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* The experiment was conducted during Al-Aqsa Intifada, which made it difficult for the researcher to reach NSs due to the closure imposed on the Palestinian territories.

Results and Discussion

Before presenting the results, it is worth mentioning again that the Arab NNSs of English were divided into three groups: sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Such a stratification was meant to examine and measure the influence of the competency level, if there is any, on the respondents' performance, particularly, with respect to the MC and the TT tests. Equally important to note is that in tabling the results, only the first (modal) items of the provided options under each situation were presented. On the other hand, an analysis of the relative frequency of the items was performed, and only the obtained percentages are introduced.

4.1   Multiple Choice Test

This section presents and discusses, in the first part, results of the Arab non-native subjects on the basis of their academic level; in the second part, it checks results of the first part against NSs' responses in a comparative /contrastive manner.

4.1.1 Non-Native Speakers' Responses

- Situation 1: (P=H   D=L   R=L)

"It is raining heavily. You are talking with a distinguished professor about your academic problems. After the talk, you want to borrow an umbrella from him/her because you know that s/he has two umbrellas in his /her office. What would you say to request that s/he give you one?"

The situation reflected a salient presence of power of the requestee over the requester, a collapse of the social distance bridge between both interlocutors, and a low weightiness of the imposition extremity.

Responding to such a situation, the majority of the three groups had opted for the item "I'd appreciate it if you'd lend me an umbrella". None had chosen the imperative form; very few had gone for "should you...", "will you...", and "can you...". For more illustration, consider Table 2 below:

Table 2: S1: Frequency Distribution (percentages), choice of strategy based on AL

Academic Level (AL)	Request Strategies								
	would	can	command	should	could	I'd	will	other	Total
Sophomore	15.4	3.8	-	-	19.2	46.2	-	15.4	100
Junior	22.2	3.7	-	3.7	7.4	55.6	3.7	3.7	100
Senior	22.2	3.7	-	-	11.1	55.6	-	7.4	100

As the table shows, "would..." occupied the second preference, after "I'd appreciate...", for both juniors and seniors; "could..." was the second for sophomores. With respect to other choices, "can..." had an equal low weightiness for the three groups; similarly had the imperative form, but, with a zero score; "should..." and "will..." were opted out by both sophomores and seniors, but, opted for slightly by juniors.

As regards responses under "other", 15.4% of sophomore respondents provided expressions as "May you give me an umbrella?" "Could I borrow your umbrella?", "Would you mind lending me an umbrella?" or silence (cannot make a request). Juniors and seniors' responses were of the "would you mind..." type. As it is evident, sophomores scored highest in this category.

- Situation 2: (P=L   D=H   R=L)

"You are on your way to college and you are a bit late. You have left your watch at home. A person (your age) wearing a watch passes by. You want to know what time it is. What would you say to that person?"

Unlike the first situation, social power was low, but distance was high, with the third variable being constant. Consequently, students' responses had changed as well. Let's consider Table 3 below:

Table 3: S2: Frequency Distribution (percentages), choice of strategy based on AL

Academic Level	Request Strategies								
	would	can	command	Should	Could	I'd	will	other	Total
Sophomore	34.6	19.2	7.7	-	15.4	-	3.9	19.2	100
Junior	29.6	22.2	7.4	-	7.4	11.1	7.4	14.9	100
Senior	25.9	25.9	7.4	-	18.6	11.1	3.7	7.4	100

The table shows a significant shift of choice from situation 1: the "would..." form became the first preference for sophomores, juniors, and seniors; "can...", the second. Such a shift may have been due to the change in power relationships. A high P in situation 1, with low D and R, yielded maximum politeness strategy, "I'd...". Yet, in situation 2, an absence of hearer's (H) power over the speaker (S), but with a salient presence of D, yielded slightly less "polite" strategy. True, both "I'd..." and "would..." queried the hearer's willingness to carry out the desired act as compliance-gaining strategies. Yet the former conveyed more politeness considerations as it is embedded in expressions of appreciation on behalf of the requester (Trosborg, 1994). Based on this finding, one could say that social power was more important than social distance in determining the politeness value.

Concerning the selection of other strategies, the imperative form, in contrast to situation 1, had some weight being almost equal for the three groups (7.4%). "Should..." continued to be opted out; "will...", to be

opted for, but with low weightiness. Concerning the category of "other", respondents provided examples of the type "Excuse me / please / hi, what's the time?", "Is it okay if you tell me what time it is?", "Would you mind telling me what time it is?".

In terms of frequency, "would..." had a higher employment among sophomores, descending among juniors and seniors, respectively. The same observation can be applied to 'can...', but, in the opposite direction. Unlike situation 1, "could..." was employed more frequently by seniors (18.6%) than by sophomores and juniors (7.4% and 15.4%, respectively).

- Situation 3: (P=L   D=L   R=H)

"You found a house for rent; but you do not have the JD 1000 required as a deposit before you can sign the contract. What would you say to request a close friend to lend you that sum of money?".

What distinguished this situation from previous ones was that it involved a great liability towards non-compliance due to the high extremity of the imposition (R). It was not of the 'free goods' type, but rather, of the highly costing to H. Nontheless, H's identity in terms of P and D (being L) may have lessened such an extremity, and, therefore, such non-compliance. Politeness strategies employed were expected to vary accordingly. For an illustration of results, consider Table 4:

Table 4: S3: Frequency Distribution (percentages), choice of strategy based on AL

Academic Level	Politeness Strategies								
	Would	can	command	should	could	I'd	will	other	Total
Sophomore	3.8	46.2	11.5	-	7.7	15.4	11.5	3.9	100
Junior	3.7	22.2	-	-	33.3	40.8	-	-	100
Senior	7.4	22.2	14.9	-	11.1	25.9	11.1	7.4	100

The difference in the choice of strategy was very apparent among the three groups. Sophomores' first choice was the "can..." form (46.2%); juniors and seniors', the "I'd..." (40.8% and 25.9%, respectively). As a matter of fact, unlike the feature of willingness inherent in employing "I'd...", "can" (and "could") queried H's ability, physically and mentally, to perform the desired action. At any rate, juniors' second best choice was "could..."; seniors', "can...".

Unlike the first two situations, "would..." was rarely employed by the three groups, so was the imperative form, "should...", "will..." and "other" categories. With respect to "other", the suggested expressions were "I really need JD 1000, would you lend me this sum?" or silence (as sophomores did).

Interestingly, the three situations discussed so far had one characteristic in common, that is, of the three variables determining politeness (P, D, R), two were kept low; the third, high. Results showed that there was only a slight difference in the performance of the three

groups with respect to the first two situations (high P, high D, respectively),

but, significant, in the third (high R), particularly, between sophomores on

the one hand, and, juniors and seniors, on the other.

- Situation 4: (P=L   D=L   R=L)

"You are a student sharing a room with another person (your age) for

more than three years. You both have agreed that each one of you will

clean the room every other day (each his /her turn). But, when it was your

roommate's turn, you came back to find the room very messy. What would

you say to request that your roommate clean it?".

Politeness theories expect low indirectness in such a situation due to

the influence of LOW P, D, and R. Direct request strategies can be applied

without hesitation. Subjects' responses are illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5: S4: Frequency Distribution (percentages), choice of strategy based on AL

Academic Level	Politeness Strategies								
	Would	can	command	should	could	I'd	will	Other	Total
Sophomore	23.1	3.9	30.7	7.7	15.4	11.5	7.7	-	100
Junior	3.7	11.1	33.3	-	11.1	3.7	29.7	7.4	100
Senior	-	11.1	29.7	14.8	3.7	3.7	33.3	3.7	100

Looking at the presented figures, one can easily see, as expected, the

high rate of the "command" category at the expense of other options. In

crude terms, the imperative form was sophomores' and juniors' first

choice, and, seniors' second best (after "will..."). There was a significant

discrepancy in subjects' responses with regard to other strategies. Thus, "would" was frequently used by sophomores; rarely by juniors, but, never by seniors. "Should" had the reverse equation: little recurrence with sophomores; slightly more, with seniors; but none with juniors. As opposed to the junior-senior group, "will" was rarely employed by sophomores. The rest of the categories had low weightiness, so they were not significant enough to elaborate on.

- Situation 5: (P=L   D=H   R=H)

"You are carrying several bags full of groceries on your way back home from shopping. An unfamiliar person (your age) passes by. What would you say to request that person to carry some of the bags with you?".

Replying to such a situation, the three groups varied significantly in terms of the strategy employed. The majority of sophomores opted for "I'd appreciate..." (34.6%); juniors, "would..." (29.6%); whereas, seniors, "can..." (33.3%) as it appears in Table 6 below:

Table 6: S5: Frequency Distribution (percentages), choice of strategy based on AL

Academic Level	Politeness Strategies								
	would	Can	command	should	could	I'd	will	other	Total
Sophomore	15.4	15.4	3.9	-	19.2	34.6	-	11.5	100
Junior	29.6	14.9	-	7.4	25.9	7.4	7.4	7.4	100
Senior	7.4	33.3	3.7	-	22.2	18.6	3.7	11.1	100

"Could…" as the table shows, occupied the second position with almost approximate frequency for the respective groups. The rest of categories did not have considerable weight for the subjects. Nevertheless, it is of some value to note that under 'other", students employed expressions such as "I wonder if you could help me …", "can you give me a hand, please?", "Please, can you help me?", or silence (just one case).

- Situation 6: (P=H   D=H   R=L)

"You are in a conference room. It is too hot inside. What would you say to the conference chairperson who is sitting next to you, and whom you did not know before, to open the window next to him/her?".

This situation, though it had two high variables, differed from its preceding ones in terms of the distribution of such high values. As a result, subjects' prior choices had changed. Consider Table 7 below.

Table 7: S6: Frequency Distribution (percentages), choice of strategy based on AL

Academic Level	Politeness Strategies								
	would	Can	command	should	could	I'd	will	other	Total
Sophomore	42.3	3.9	3.9	-	19.2	11.5	7.7	11.5	100
Junior	14.8	7.4	-	-	7.4	40.8	3.7	25.9	100
Senior	18.6	-	-	-	25.9	33.3	7.4	14.8	100

Homing in on the majority of responses, it is clear that, unlike situation 5, "would…" had been sophomores' option (42.3%); "I'd…", juniors and seniors' (40.8% and 33.3%, respectively). The influence of the

competency level was present, particularly, between sophomores on the one hand, and, the other two groups, on the other. The other strategies were rarely employed except for "could" (for sophomores and seniors) and "other" ones. Regarding responses under "other", one encountered the following expressions: "Is it okay if you open the window?" "Would you mind opening the window?", "Excuse me, would you open the window, please?", or silence (one case).

- Situation 7: (P=H D=H R=H)

"You are a new employee at a big company. Your house is on your boss' way. What would you say to request that boss, with whom you have no personal relationship, give you a lift?".

This situation was completely the opposite of situation 4 vis-à-vis the distribution of P, D and R values. It was of the highly risky and critical situations. The results are shown in Table 8 below.

Table 8: S7: Frequency Distribution (percentages), choice of strategy based on AL

Academic Level	Politeness Strategies								
	would	Can	command	should	could	I'd	will	other	Total
Sophomore	7.7	7.7	3.8	-	15.4	46.2	3.8	15.4	100
Junior	22.2	-	3.7	-	25.9	33.4	3.7	11.1	100
Senior	18.5	11.1	-	3.7	22.2	25.9	3.7	14.9	100

As it is evident, strategy f, "I'd appreciate..." received the majority of the three groups' responses; however, it varied in terms of recurrence among them, being highly employed by sophomores (46.2%), but, less, by

seniors (25.9%). But "can...", "command", "should...", "would..." (except for juniors) and "will..." were rarely employed by the respective groups. "Could..." was the second item opted for by the three groups, with almost approximate frequency. Interestingly, other than the provided strategies, subjects provided responses the like of "Would you mind giving me a lift in your way?", "I was wondering if you could give me a lift", or silence (in most cases).

- Situation 8: (P=H   D=L   R=H)

"You work as a secretary in a private office. Your salary is due in two weeks. But, you need NIS 1000 urgently. What would you say to request your boss to lend you that sum of money?".

Like situations 5 and 6, situation 8 had two of the three variables determining its politeness strategy as high, and the third, low. Such high values had characterized P and R; "low" had been the characteristic of D.

Pertaining to subjects' responses to such a situation, consider Table 9 below.

Table 9: S8: Frequency Distribution (percentages), choice of strategy based on AL

Academic Level	Politeness Strategies								
	would	can	command	should	could	I'd	will	Other	Total
Sophomore	11.5	3.9	-	3.9	42.3	30.8	3.8	3.8	100
Junior	18.6	11.1	-	-	33.3	25.9	3.7	7.4	100
Senior	18.6	7.4	3.7	3.7	29.6	33.3	3.7	-	100

It is obvious that sophomores and juniors opted for "could..." (querying the hearer's ability) as their first preferred strategy, while, seniors, "I'd..." (the formers' second best choice). The rest of strategies were not employed, but little. Relating to "other" responses, subjects opted for **silence.**

Taking the eight situations together, one could divide them, according to the distribution of P, D and R, into four categories:

1. A group which had two lows; one high (S1, S2, S3);

2. A group which had two highs; one low (S5, S6, S8);

3. A group which had three lows (S4); and

4. A group which had three highs (S7).

Considering the influence of subjects' competency level (CL) on the choice of the appropriate requesting strategy, taking into account the majority of responses, one could come up with the following observations:

First, with regard to the first category above, CL was found to have had little bearing on the choice of strategy in situations 1 (P=H) and 2 (D=H), but, significant in 3 (R=H). Thus, in S1, the three groups opted for "I'd appreciate..."; in S2, for "would..."; whereas, in S3, there was a split in strategy choice decision: sophomores went for "can..."; juniors and

seniors, for "I'd appreciate...", and, thereby, sophomores appeared to be less tentative and more direct than the others.

Second, in category 2, CL seemed to play a role in choosing a strategy. There was a noticeable discrepancy in subjects' first preferences. Hence, in S5 (P=L), each group went for a different strategy. For example, sophomores had opted for "I'd appreciate..."; juniors, "would..."; while, seniors, "can...". In crude terms, sophomores were seen to be more considerate to distantly related people, with absence of power relationships, in highly impositive situations than juniors, and the latter more so than seniors. In S6 (R=L), sophomores preferred "would..."; juniors and seniors, "I'd appreciate". Contrary to the previous situation, sophomores employed more direct strategies when addressing people of high positions as well as distantly related persons than the other two groups. In S8 (D=L), seniors had selected "I'd appreciate..."; the other two groups, "could...". In other words, in doing the FTA with powerful people when the force of the impositive act was high, seniors were found to be the most considerate group, with the other two being equal.

Third, in category three which encompassed S4 (three lows), sophomores and juniors chose the imperative strategy, while, seniors, the "will...". Interestingly, by choosing the conventionally indirect request, not the imperative, seniors could be described as less direct, more tentative,

and, therefore, more polite than the other two groups were. On the other hand, in S7 (three highs), the three groups had a homogeneous decision: all opted for "I'd appreciate...", and, therefore, there was a passive role of the CL, in this respect.

Looking critically at the data presented so far, while focusing the light on the modals employed, one could easily perceive the notion that the discrepancy in subjects' performance with respect to the requesting strategy chosen was more noticeable between sophomores and seniors than by the former and juniors, or by the latter and juniors. This was apparent in situations 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8 (see tables 3, 4, 5, 6, 8). Yet, one could ask, whose responses were to be deemed appropriate: sophomores', juniors', or seniors'? Such a question was not easy to answer. It should be made clear at that stage that it was difficult to be certain in any particular way whose responses were appropriate. Indeed, subjects' responses needed to be checked against those of native speakers to determine the appropriateness of the three groups' employed strategies.

4.1.2 Native Speakers' Responses

The native speakers' performance in terms of requesting strategies employed in the respective situations are presented in Table 10.

Inevitably, the difference was very apparent between NSs and NNSs, including the three groups, concerning the choice of requesting strategy, and, therefore, choice of appropriate modals in the appropriate situations. Hence, the majority of NSs opted for 'could....', in situations 3, 5, 6, and 8; whereas, "I'd appreciate...", in situation 4 (room). They went for expressions other than the provided in situations 1, 2, 3, and 7.

Table 10: Frequency Distribution (percentages): Choice of Strategy by NSs

	Politeness Strategies								
Situation	would	can	command	should	could	I'd	will	other	Total
1.Umbrella	11.1	5.6	-	-	22.2	11.1	5.6	44.4	100
2. Time	5.6	22.2	-	-	16.7	11.1	-	44.4	100
3.JD 1000	5.6	16.6	5.6	-	33.3	11.1	5.6	22.2	100
4. Room	5.6	16.6	5.6	-	5.6	33.3	5.6	27.7	100
5. Grocery	22.2	-	-	-	50	-	5.6	22.2	100
6. Window	16.7	11.1	-	5.6	22.2	16.6	5.6	22.2	100
7. Lift	11.1	5.6	-	-	27.8	22.2	-	33.3	100
8.NIS1000	11.1	16.7	-	-	38.8	5.6	-	27.8	100

Talking specifically about each situation, it was evident that in situation 1, "would", "can", "I'd appreciate", and "will" were hardly ever used; "should" and the imperative, never. "Could" was the second preference after "other". Regarding "other", NSs suggested expressions such as "Do you think I could borrow one of your umbrellas?", "May I borrow one of your...?", "You couldn't lend me..., could you?", "It's raining so hard, wouldn't you know? I forgot my umbrella", or silence.

In situation 2 (time), "can..." was the second preferable selection after "other"; the rest of strategies had little weight. As a matter of fact, 87.5% of responses under "other" were of "Excuse me /hey, do you know what time it is?" type; 12.5%, of "I was wondering if you could tell me the time". As regards situation 3 (JD1000), with ignoring the infrequently selected items, "other" was found to occupy the second preference after "could...". In other words, when not choosing "could..." NSs preferred silence, or, they used formulas such as "Do you think you can /could spare me ...for a month?" (after explaining the situation).

Scollon & Scollon (1995: 83) point out that the American (and generally Western) explanation of the situation before requesting some big /embarrassing favor from a friend is due to face work: "in such a situation the person would understandably be reluctant to come out with his topic at the outset of the conversation. We can be certain there would be an extended period of face work in which the would-be borrower would feel out the situation for the right moment in which to introduce his or her topic".

Similar to situation 3 is situation 4. But, this time, subjects suggested expressions (hints, more often) the like of "Isn't it your turn to clean up the room?", "Oh, the room is very messy", or silence with some

reservations (having cleaned the room, S will tell his/her roommate that the latter owes him/her a day of cleaning).

In situation 5 (grocery), "would..." and silence (100% under "other") scored the second high percentage (after "could...") in equal amounts (22.2%). The rest of options were noticeably neglected by NSs. In situation 6, "could..." and "other" had completely an equal value (22.2%). Interestingly, half of the "other" responses were of the type "would you mind opening...?"; the other half, **silence.**

Relating to situation 7, the majority of subjects found it risky to do the FTA, i.e., asking for a lift (33.3%), so silence prevailed. When daring to do the FTA, subjects opted for "could..." (27.8%) and "I'd appreciate..."(22.2%). Similarly could it be said for situation 8, but in the opposite direction: the majority chose "could..." (38.8%) in the first place, and suggested "other" expressions (27.8%), in the second. Such expressions included "I would like to know if an advance on my salary is possible", "Would it be possible for me to get an advance on my salary?", "Could I have an advance on my salary?", or silence (one case).

Generally speaking, NSs' focus was on "could", "I'd appreciate..." (to some extent) and silence. **Silence, or, opting not to do the FTA had been noticeably prevalent with powerful, distantly related persons,**

particularly, when the impositive force of the act was high (see S 7, for example). Using such a strategy could be accounted for on the grounds that "Americans try to be very independent and do not ask strangers for help. It is seen to be rude to do so. A person is seen as very aggressive if he asked a superior (a professor, boss) for any thing personal (umbrella or a ride)", says Patricia Estop[*].

At any rate, to answer the question posed earlier, "Who is closer to the NSs' performance in terms of employing requesting strategies, sophomores, juniors, or seniors?", consider Table 11.

Table 11: Choice of Request Strategy by NSs and NNSs

Situation	NNSs			NSs
	sophomores	juniors	seniors	
1. (umbrella)	I'd (46.2)	I'd (55.6)	I'd (55.6)	Other (44.4)
2. (time)	Would (34.6)	Would (29.6)	Would (25.9)	Other (44.4)
3. (JD 1000)	Can (46.2)	I'd (40.8)	I'd (25.9)	Could (33.3)
4. (room)	Command (30.7)	Command (33.3)	Will (33.3)	I'd (33.3)
5. (grocery)	I'd (34.6)	Would (29.6)	Can (33.3)	Could (50)
6. (window)	Would (42.3)	I'd (40.8)	I'd (33.3)	Other=could (22.2)
7. (lift)	I'd (46.2)	I'd (33.3)	I'd (25.9)	Other (33.3)
8. (NIS1000)	Could (42.3)	Could (33.3)	I'd (33.3)	Could (38.8)

[*] Patricia Estop (NS informant) is an American instructor of TEFL at the American -Arab University, Palestine. She provided her comment on the back of the questionnaire sheet.

As the table shows, in the majority of situations, the three NNS groups employed strategies totally different from those employed by NSs. It was only in the eighth situation that sophomores and juniors, but not seniors, came close to NSs. Therefore, one could say that neither sophomores, nor any of the other two groups, expressed requests the way native speakers did. The majority of non-native speakers were satisfied with the provided options as ways of expressing requesting contrary to NSs. On the whole, NSs employed non-conventionally indirect requests, i.e., hints (e.g., "it's raining so hard...I forgot my umbrella", "the room is very messy") and silence more frequently, particularly when addressing strangers or people in high positions (See, S1, S2, S6, S7.). On the other hand, they differed from NNSs in the sense that they employed various modality markers, syntactically and lexically. For example, they made use of consultative devices (e.g., "Do you think I could borrow one of your umbrellas?"), ing-form (I was wondering if you could tell me the time?), and tag questions (e.g., "You couldn't lend me your umbrella, could you?"). Indeed, the employment of such devices made the request more polite and more considerate (Trosborg, 1994; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989).

As the current study explores, in one of its layers, modal use by native and non-native speakers in requesting situations, it is of sheer importance to ignore the "other" category. To get valid results, each of the

provided items (i.e., strategies) will be considered in terms of the highest

percentage it represents in the relative situations. Table 12 gives a summary

of the distribution of items per each situation by both NSs and NNSs.

Table 12: Modal Employment by NSs and NNSs

	NSs	NNSs		
		Sophomore	Junior	Senior
Item	Situation			
Would	5 (grocery)	6 (window	2 /5	2
Can	2 (time)	3 (JD1000	2 /3	5
Command	Rare	4	4	4
Should	Rare	Rare	Rare	Rare
Could	5	8 (NIS1000)	3 /8	8
I'd ...	4 (room)	1 (umbrella)	1	1
Will	Rare	Rare	4	4

As Table 12 shows, "would" and "can" were employed by juniors,

and not by the other two groups, in a way similar to that of NSs (i.e., in

situations 5 and 2, respectively). The imperative (direct) form had a

completely different employment, rarely considered by NSs; intensively,

by the three non-native groups, particularly, in situation 4 (three lows).

This finding reflected the cultural difference between American English

and Arabic; hence, the former could be depicted as having negative

politeness, whereas, the latter, positive politeness. In other words, it

reflected, as the Chinese psychological anthropologist Francis L.K. Hsu

(1953) argued, the excessive independence and individualism of the

Western sense of the self as opposed to the involvement and collectivism of

the East. In broad terms, it could be said that the inability of NNSs to reach NSs' performance level could be attributed to interference from the mother tongue (i.e., the eastern innate involvement aspect). "Should" had similarly been considered (rarely used) by both NSs and NNSs (the three groups). "Could" and "I'd appreciate" were employed by NSs in situations different from those of NNSs. As regards "will", it was employed similarly by both NSs and sophomores, but differently, by the former and juniors and seniors.

Generally speaking, one could say that except for few cases, neither sophomores, nor any of the other two groups (juniors or seniors) came close to NSs in terms of employing the appropriate request strategy, and, therefore, the appropriate modals, in the appropriate situation. In other words, competency level (CL) did not affect performance (appropriate use). Such a conclusion was a clear indication that the teaching system, at the university level, seemed not to build enough awareness or offer training in pragmatic relevance.

On the other hand, when competency level was disregarded, the imbalance between NSs and NNSs became more noticeable. Consider Table 13:

Table 13: Use of Requesting (modal) strategies by NNSs regardless of AL

	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	f.	g.	h.	
Situation	would	can	Command	should	could	I'd	Will	other	Total
1.Umbrella	20	3.7	-	1.3	12.5	**52.5**	1.3	8.7	100
2.Time	**30**	22.5	7.5	-	13.8	7.5	5	13.7	100
3.JD1000	5	**30**	8.8	-	17.5	27.5	7.5	3.7	100
4.Room	8.7	8.7	**31.3**	7.5	10	6.3	**23.8**	3.7	100
5.Grocery	17.5	21.3	2.5	2.5	22.5	20	3.7	10	100
6.Window	25	3.7	1.3	-	17.5	28.8	6.2	17.5	100
7.Lift	16.2	6.3	2.5	1.3	21.3	35	3.7	13.7	100
8.NIS1000	16.2	7.5	1.3	2.5	**35**	30	3.7	3.8	100

Surveying the figures represented in bold, one can notice that "would" was used intensively in S2; "can", in S3; the imperative, in S4, "should", rarely used; "could", in S8; "I'd appreciate", in S1; and finally "will", in S4. In terms of the politeness value inherent in the modals employed, subjects seemed to have perceived that "could" and "would" were more polite than "can" and "will", on the one hand, and all were more polite than "should", on the other. Moreover, "could" and "can" appeared to them more polite than "would" and "will" (used similarly as the imperative), respectively, as they were employed in more formal, and thus, more risky situations than the latter were. Yet, despite such awareness, subjects, as expected, failed to use the appropriate modal for the appropriate situation as their native counterparts did. By and Large, NNSs employed, when compared to NSs, more direct, less tentative, and, therefore, less considerate request strategies with acquaintances (revise use

of imperative, "can", and "will" in S3 & S4) as well as with people in power.

Other than being a cultural difference between American English and Arabic, it was an indication that Arab subjects may have lacked pragmatic and sociopragmatic competence, and, consequently, pragmatic awareness. There was no doubt that the comprehension and correct use of English modals were indicators of pragmatic competence that was important for interpersonal aspects of language development. A student who had spent 9- to 14 years learning English was expected to able to use that language appropriately. It should be stressed, at this point, that such low L2 pragmatic awareness would be a major source for problems when translating utterances from and into English.

It should be borne in mind that research into the pragmatic competence of adult foreign and second language learners has demonstrated convincingly that the pragmatics of learners and NSs are often quite different. True, learners may exhibit high levels of grammatical competence, but this does not necessarily guarantee pragmatic mastery. In other words, there is always a divergence between the lexico-grammatical microlevel and the "macrolevel of communicative intent and sociocultural context" as Celce-Murcia, Dornyei & Thurrell (1995: 13) have pointed out.

Indeed, the disparity between NSs' and NNSs' pragmatic competence may be attributed to the nature, or let's say, the availability of input and the salience of relevant linguistic features in the input from the point of view of the learner. Comparative studies dealing with the pragmatics of natives and non-natives have proven this point. Thus, Kasper (1997), Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford (1996) have discussed the availability of input for institutional and classroom talk. They argue that learners do not acquire a sufficient level of second language (L2) pragmatic competence because the target language they encounter in the L2 classroom lacks a sufficient range and emphasis of relevant exemplars. Moreover, the disparity could be attributed to the scope of emphasis in evaluating learners' production. Hence, in the evaluation, grammar and content are the most important criteria for teachers; appropriateness of use is not emphasized. As far as modality is concerned, it could be said that it is hardly taken account of. In other words, modality, Kasper (1979) argues, might be corrected "in passing" but never taught or evaluated systematically.

Having examined the performance of native and non-native speakers of English in terms of modal and requesting strategy employment, we move now to examine how English modals are rendered into Arabic. It has been said explicitly (or implicitly) that NNSs have been aware of the

politeness embodied in English modals though not applying it appropriately. But, will such politeness be kept when English modals are rendered into Arabic? Such a question paves the way to examine results of the translation test (TT).

4.2 Translation Test (TT)

As pointed out in chapter three, the translations of "can" and "will", along with their past forms ("could" and "would", respectively) were examined in this test. 'Should' was ignored, as it was not normally used to initiate requests. The researcher included it in the MC questionnaire as a distracter to test subjects' awareness of its use. As data showed, it was rarely used. In fact, this test was exclusive to NNSs including the three levels: sophomores, juniors and seniors. It is important to note that the phonological variation of Arabic (e.g., urban "?" vs. rural "k" as variants of "q") was neglected, as it was not crucial for the purposes of the research. On the other hand, in presenting Arabic equivalents, "mumkin" was used to encompass the verb 'mumkin" and the phrases derived from it (e.g., "bi ?imkaanak", " fii ?imkaniyyi", ?idhaa fii ?imkaaniyyi"). In terms of politeness value, Jabr (2000) pointed out that the verb and its derived forms had the same value[*].

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[*] Dr. Yahya Jabr, former head of Arabic Department at An- Najah National University, Nablus, Plaestine (personal communication).

- <u>Can</u> you lend me an umbrella?

Results show that the majority of the three groups ((more than 50%) rendered "can" into "btiqdar" (are you able to). One third of juniors, and 29.6% of seniors rendered it into 'mumkin' (is it possible?); while 26.9% of sophomores had come up with "tastaTii'" (can you?). Very few translated it into "law samaHt btiqdar" (Are you able to…, please?), "law samaHt" (please), or "bidak" (do you want?). On the other hand, 3.7% of seniors could not come up with an equivalent for "can". Table 14 provides more illustration:

Table 14: Arabic Equivalents to English "can" based on AL

	Arabic Equivalents to English 'can'						
Academic Level	mumkin	btiqdar	law samaHt btiqdar	law samaHt	tastaTii'	bidak	Non-translatable (NT)
Sophomor	15.3	50	-	3.9	26.9	3.9	-
Junior	33.3	51.9	-	-	7.4	7.4	-
Senior	29.6	59.3	3.7	-	3.7	-	3.7

- <u>Will</u> you lend me an umbrella?

Unlike "can", "will" was rendered by sophomores primarily into "mumkin" (30.8%) and secondarily into a future referent (sa /sawfa) (26.9%); by juniors, into "bidak", or none, in the first place (29.6%), and into "mumkin", in the second (22.2%). The majority of seniors (40.7%) provided no equivalent: they had translated the whole request as a bare

imperative (27.3%), (e.g. ?a'tiini shamsiytak (give me your umbrella!), or

they used the perfect form of the tense in an interrogative form (72.7%),

(e.g. ta'tini shamsiytak? (in a rising intonation). Of the three groups, very

few translated it into "btiqdar", "law samaHt", "min faDlak" (please) or

"ballah" (for God's sake). Examine Table 15 below.

Table 15: Arabic equivalents to English "will" (conventionally used) based on AL

AL	Arabic Equivalents								
	mumkin	btiqdar	bistiTaa'tak	law samaHt	min faDlak	bidak	ballah	Sa / Ha	NT
SO	30.8	11.6	3.8	7.7	3.8	15.4	-	26.9	-
JU	22.2	7.4	-	-	-	29.7	11.1	-	29.6
SE	3.7	7.4	-	3.7	-	29.7	-	14.8	40.7

- Lend me an umbrella, **will** you?

What distinguished the use of "will" here was that, unlike request 2,

it was attached to an imperative (direct) strategy. Results show a noticeable

difference in the outcome of the translation. Thus, the three groups

translated it into "mumkin", in the first place and "btiqdar" (particularly for

sophomores and seniors), in the second. Indeed, "mumkin" and "btiqdar"

were perceived by subjects to convey more politeness than was "bidak". If

this was the case, then subjects used them with the imperative as to

alleviate its impositive force. On the other hand, 14.8% of juniors, and

11.1/5% of the other two groups did not translate it (they used the

imperative alone). Other renderings, however very few, included "law

samaHt", "law samaHt mumkin" (please, is it possible...), "bidak",

"ma'alish" (doesn't matter), "min faDlak", "ah" (Ah), and the future referent "sa". Results are shown in Table 16 below.

Table 16: Arabic Equivalents to English "will" (as a tag) based on AL

AL	mum-kin	btiq-dar	law samaHt mumkin	law samaHt	min faDlak	ma'-alish	bidak	ah	sa	idha bitriid	NT
SO	42.3	19.2	-	11.5	-	-	7.7	3.9	-	3.9	11.5
JU	44.5	11.1	3.7	11.1	3.7	7.4	3.7	-	-	-	14.8
SE	33.3	25.9	-	3.7	-	-	14.9	-	7.4	3.7	11.1

- **Would** you lend me an umbrella?

Similar to case 3 above, the greater part of the three groups rendered 'would' into "mumkin" (65.4%, sophomores; 48.2%, juniors; 25.9%, seniors). On the other hand, 22.2% of juniors and seniors, and 7.7% of sophomores, came up with "law samaht" as an equivalent. Very few came up with other translations such as "btiqdar", "law samaht mumkin", "min faDlak mumkin", "fi majaal" (is there a chance…?", "fiik" (is it possible), etc. Consider Table 17.

Table 17: Arabic Equivalents to English "would" based on AL

AL	mum-kin	btiq-dar	law samaHt	law samaHt mumkin	min faDlak mumkin	min faDlak	fii majal	ma'-alish	bid-ak	fiik	sa
SO	65.4	7.7	7.7	-	-	3.9	3.8	7.7	3.8	-	-
JU	48.2	7.4	22.2	7.4	3.7	-	-	7.4	-	3.7	-
SE	25.9	11.1	22.2	18.6	-	-	11.1	-	7.4	-	3.7

- **Could** you lend me an umbrella?

Once again, "could" was rendered into "mumkin", in the first place, and "btiqdar", in the second, by the three groups. It was translated marginally into "law samaHt, mumkin", "btiqdar luTfan" (Are you able..., please?), "bistiTaa'tak", "fii majaal", and "fii iHtimaaliyyi" (Is there a probability? (literal translation)). For a clear understanding, refer to Table 18.

Table 18: Arabic Equivalents to English "could" based on AL

AL	Arabic Equivalents							
	mumkin	btiqdar	law samaHt mumkin	btiqdar luTfan	law samaHt	bistiTaa'-tak	fii Maj-aal	fii iHtimaali-yyi
SO	73.1	19.3	-	-	-	3.8	-	3.8
JU	40.8	25.9	3.7	7.4	-	14.8	3.7	3.7
SE	77.8	7.4	-	-	3.7	-	3.7	7.4

Screening Arabic equivalents to the four English modals presented (i.e., "will", "would", "can" and "could"), it was found, as expected, that the politeness evidenced in them was not reflected in Arabic. Hence, "mumkin" and "btiqdar" (emphatically for 'can') were the norm for the respective modals. As said earlier, the use of "mumkin" and "btiqdar" alone did not reflect the politeness embodied in English modals, particularly, "would" and "could". It seemed that subjects translated the utterances literally paying no attention to the politeness equivalence.

On the other hand, when considering the role of the academic level (sophomore, junior, or senior) with respect to the outcome of the translation, the present results showed that it was a marginal one. In other words, there was no significant influence of the CL (except for (initial) "will"), on subjects' performance. This was, again, an indication of the flaw in the teaching process. AS Tannen (1984) pointed out, the lexicogrammar of L2 (English, in our case) was learned against the cultural background of L1 (i.e., Arabic), and, therefore, the translation reflected such a flaw.

Surveying all Arabic items rendered as equivalents to English modals, one might argue that the use of "fiik" or "mumkin", for example, sprang from sociolinguistic considerations. In other words, it might be attributed to the class or the geographical area where the subjects lived (e.g., city, village, camp). Based on the data provided in the biographical section, the researcher found that residence and class were not indicative in producing the various items. So the issue remained bound to politeness, a point that triggered the inclusion of the Assessment Test.

In the Assessment Test, subjects agreed that "bidak", "fii majaal" and "fiik" were the least polite items; "mumkin law samaHt", "min faDlak mumkin", and "min faDlak btiqdar", the highest. Between these two extremes lay "mumkin" (equally as "btiqdar", "ma'alish", and "tastaTii'")

and "min faDlak" (equally as "law samaHt"), with the latter being more polite than the former. Table 19 shows NNSs' ratings of Arabic (modal) equivalents in terms of politeness.

Table 19: NNSs' assessment of translations of English modals in terms of politeness value

Arabic expressions Transliterated	Politeness Value Scale					
	1	2	3	4	5	Total
fii majal	34.4	28.1	25	12.5	-	100
mumkin	18.7	40.6	25	6.3	9.4	100
btiqdar	31.2	40.6	21.9	6.3	-	100
min faDlak	3.1	12.5	31.2	31.3	21.9	100
mumkin law samaHt	6.3	-	21.9	15.6	56.2	100
ma'alish	28.1	31.3	25	15.6	-	100
minfaDlak mumkin	3.1	-	3.1	25	68.8	100
tastaTii'	15.6	40.6	25	18.8	-	100
fiik	59.4	25	12.5	3.1	-	100
min faDlak btiqdar	3.1	-	28.1	31.3	37.5	100
law samaHt	9.4	9.4	15.6	50	15.6	100

It is worth mentioning that not all the Arabic equivalents provided were modals. The only real ones were "mumkin", "btiqdar", and "bistiTa'tak". "Min faDlak", and "law samaHt" were conditional markers used to soften the impositive act. Their use connoted more politeness than "mumkin" and "btiqdar". So, such conditional markers could come with any of the real modals within the same utterance to enrich its politeness/consideration weightiness. The rest of items, except for "sa /Ha /sawfa" (modal particles) were considered to carry the meaning of root

modality. Pertaining to "sa", "Ha", and "sawfa", they were considered literal renditions of no interpersonal character; they were futurity markers relaying no timelessness. Indeed, translators who produced such items could be described as totally ignorant of the social role of modals in speech acts.

True, subjects, in the MC test, recognized that "could" and "can" conveyed more tentativeness, and thus, more politeness than did "would" and "will", respectively (past forms are more tentative and more formal). Yet in the translation, as expected, the mainstream equivalence was almost the same for the respective modals, i.e., use of "mumkin" or "btiqdar". In other words, the politeness as evidenced in the original was not "carried over" in the translation, which may have been a major source for pragmatic/politeness loss that distorted the image of the American culture (i.e., indirectness and individualism). One thing to have been taken into account was that using the past forms of Arabic modals, "mumkin" and "btiqdar" ("?amkana" and "qadira", respectively), formally equivalents to "could" or "would", might result in a phrase that could only weaken the potential force of the request. So, what was to be done in order to the pragmatics of the source language (SL) and the target language (TL) to match?

As a matter of fact, it was the translator's task to allow persons in the target culture access to the original, source "text" (ST) and its cultural impact on source-culture members, and, therefore, the translator, as House (1998) argued, must "manage to put the target-culture members in a position to observe, and be worked upon by, the original text's function". Specifically speaking, whatever the politeness portrayed in the original, communicatively equivalent choices must be made, regardless of any cross-cultural differences.

Despite the mismatch between English and Arabic in terms of the modal system, informants could have sustained ST politeness inherent in modals by adopting compensatory strategies. Arabic is very rich in expressions that carry modality meanings, which can serve as mitigators to add politeness to an utterance. Thus, subjects could have employed internal modifiers, syntactic or lexical, such as conditionals ("min faDlak", "law/?idha samaHt", "law takaramt", understatements ("bas laHZa" (just for a moment), "shwayyi" (just for a second/moment), etc. Thus, "could" and "would" might have been rendered into something like "min faDlak/law (idha) samaHt, mumkin/ btiqdar (ta'Tiini shamsiytak), shwayyi" (please, could you lend me your umbrella for a moment?); "would", into "idha (mumkin /btiqdar ...." (if it is possible /if you are able to...), or as "iza btismaH" (if you please); "can", into "mumkin /btiqdar..."

; while "will", into "ma'alish". In such a way, politeness gradience would have been "carried over". Indeed, of the total number of testees, only 3.8% had rendered "could" in the way described above; 5% and 2.5% with respect to "would" and "can", respectively; whereas, the majority (53.75) had succeeded with reference to "can" (See appendix 1.).

As a reminder, subjects considered "fiik" and "fii majaal" as the least polite items; "min faDlak mumkin", the most polite, although this was not reflected in their translations. One reason might be attributed, relatively speaking, to the subjects' ignorance of the pragmatics of the English modal system when compared to that of Arabic. In other words, subjects were unaware of the extent of politeness inherent in each English modal, which could enable them to provide exact equivalents. Such lack of awareness, as said earlier, could be the result of their learning and the nature of materials presented to them.

Finally, it is of some interest to shed some light on the pragmatic value (communicative effect) and the tenor of discourse in both SL and TL versions. Interestingly, 95.5% of the rendered translations maintained the same communicative effect of SL, that is, requesting. On the other hand, 4.5% deviated from that effect due to the adoption of literal translation. In other words, SL requests were perceived as questions into TL (e.g., "sa /Ha ta'Tiini ishamsiyyi?", "fii iHtimaal inak ta'Tiini ...?").

As far as the tenor (formal vs. informal) of discourse was concerned, it could be said that the formality thesis was lost into TL, particularly with respect to "could..." and "would...". Such expressions were translated, as said earlier, into "mumkin /btiqdar..." which were informal equivalents. Yet, regarding "can..." and "will...", one could notice a considerable match of formality between SL and TL versions (See appendix 1.). A good translator had to work hard in order to keep the pragmatic impact as well as the discourse tenor of SL and TL close to each other as much as possible. Therefore, a good translator had to remember that translation, as Gutt (1998) pointed out, was first and foremost "a pragmatic notion used to indicate the kind of communication intended by the communicator" (p. 47).

Chapter Five

Summary, Conclusions
& Recommendations

The current study was conducted mainly to explore the performance of Palestinian EFL learners in the requesting speech act in comparison to that of NSs. It, also, attempted to examine a crucial issue in the field of translation, namely, the translatability of English modals into Arabic. In particular, the focus was on root (non-epistemic) modals employed in requesting. It was assumed that modals presented a problem for translators due to the idiosyncratic features characterizing the modal system in English and Arabic, and, due to the fact that the rules of appropriateness varied across both cultures. Many issues were raised vis-à-vis cross-cultural politeness, notions of modals and modality in the relative languages as well as the linguacultural differences encapsulating rules of appropriateness, or let's say, politeness. For certainty's sake, the study, as already mentioned in Chapter One, was carried out with the following purposes in mind: finding out what request strategies, focusing the scope on employed modals, NNSs used in comparison to NSs in situations governed by the parameters of P, D, and R; investigating how non-epistemic English modals were rendered into Arabic which lacked pragmatically exact modal equivalents; finding

out the strategies that Arab translators adopted to compensate for any pragmatic loss due to the mismatch between the respective modal systems; and, finally, finding out if there were a co-relation between the translator's level of competency/academic level and the appropriateness of the translation.

To achieve the aforementioned objectives, three kinds of tests were carried out: a multiple choice (MC) test, translation test (TT), and assessment test (AT). Results revealed that Arabic shared with English some politeness strategies, in some situations, namely, when the social distance between interlocutors, or, risk, was low with the other two variables being high, and it had other different strategies that might look aggressive to Americans due to directness. Generally speaking, there was a manifest disparity between NNSs' and NSs' employment of request strategies. Compared to NSs, NNSs tended to employ more direct, less tentative strategies (as reflected from employed modals).

On the other hand, based on results of TT, one might conclude that the politeness gradience inherent in English modals, "will", "would", "can", and "could", was not "carried over" into Arabic: all the relative English modals had been rendered into "mumkin" or "btiqdar", with no past inflections. Informants had not compensated for the pragmatic loss resulting from the mismatch between English and Arabic modal /modality

systems. That was an indication that informants may have been unaware of the mismatch between their interlanguage pragmatics and the pragmatics of L2. As far as the competency level was concerned, it was found to bear very little influence on the appropriate performance with regard to MC and TT.

In light of the findings, it is hoped that a better understanding of such pragmatic problems will enable (prospective) translators to increase the likelihood of success in their work. Consequently, the researcher recommends the following:

1. There is a demanding need for a reconsideration of the nature of the English input offered at the educational institutions in Palestine. In other words, there is a need for enhancing the pragmatic level equally to, if not more than, the grammatical one.

2. Increased pragmatic awareness should be one goal of classroom instruction. Bouton (1994) and Billmeyer (1990) found that EFL /ESL learners showed improvement as a result of instruction in pragmatics.

3. In the evaluation of learners' production, emphasis should be on pragmatics equally as on content and grammar.

4. Linguacultural differences between SL and TL should be emphasized in translation sessions at undergraduate and graduate levels.

5. Prospective translators need to be aware that the pragmatics of SL and TL may be quite different, and thus, their responsibility is to adopt relevant strategies to bridge the gap of pragmatic loss in the translation.

6. English departments of universities in Palestine are recommended to include pragmatics on the list of compulsory courses for the undergraduate level.

7. As the current study dealt with the translatability of modals from English into Arabic, future research is deemed highly essential in the opposite direction (i.e., from Arabic into English) with respect to the same speech act.

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Appendix 1

Arabic equivalents to English root modals employed in speech act of requesting as rendered by NNSs

Arabic Equivalents

English Modals	mum-kin	btiq-dar	law samaHt mumkin	min faDlak mumkin	law samaHt	min faDlak	ma'-alish	bidak	fii majal	fiik	btiqdar luTfan	bisti-Taa'tak	Iza bitrid	Fi iHtimal	Bal-lah	ah	Sa/Ha	NT	Tot
Would	46.2	8.7	8.7	1.3	17.5	1.3	5	3.7	5	1.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.3	-	100
Can	26.2	53.7	-	-	1.3	-	-	3.7	-	-	1.3	12.5	-	-	-	-	-	1.3	100
,will[1]	40	18.7	1.3	-	8.7	1.3	2.5	8.7	-	-	-	-	2.5	-	-	1.3	2.5	12.5	100
Could	63.7	17.5	1.3	-	1.3	-	-	-	2.5	2.5	2.5	6.2	-	5	-	-	-	-	100
Will[2]	18.8	8.7	-	-	3.7	1.3	25	-	-	-	-	1.3	-	-	3.8	-	13.7	23.7	100

---

1 "Will" attached to an imperative direct request

2 "Will" (initial) employed in conventional indirect request

Appendix 2

An-Najah National University
Graduate School
M.A. Program in Applied Linguistics and Translation

Dear Respondent,

This is a multiple-choice test (MC) done as part of an M.A. thesis in Applied Linguistics and Translation. You are kindly invited to take part in the research by responding as required by the instructions. Be assured that your contribution, without which no research can be fulfilled, will merely be used for academic purposes.

Your co-operation will be very much appreciated.

The researcher
Maria Al-Aqra'

....

Before responding to the situations, please complete or tick where appropriate.

Name: ------------------------------------- Sex: F-----M-----.
Academic level /degree: Sophomore....... Junior---------Senior--------Other........
Years of learning English: ----------yrs.
Have you been to a foreign country? Yes-----No-----.
If 'yes', please specify----------------------; for how long? ----------------------------

Instructions

In each of the following situations, you are requested to encircle the response you find appropriate. If you deem none of the available options appropriate, you can provide your own answer next to the letter 'h'. Please make sure you have read each situation closely before providing your answers. Feel free to ask the researcher about any word / expression you may find ambiguous.

Situation 1

It is raining heavily. You are talking to a distinguished professor about your academic problems. After the talk, you want to borrow an umbrella from him/her because you know that s/he has two umbrellas in his/her office. What would you say to request that s/he give you an umbrella?

a) Would you lend me an umbrella?
b) Can you lend me an umbrella?
c) Lend me an umbrella, will you?
d) Should you lend me an umbrella?
e) Could you lend me an umbrella?
f) I'd appreciate it if you would lend me an umbrella.
g) Will you lend me an umbrella?
h) ....

Situation 2

You are on your way to college and you are a bit late. You have left your watch at home. A person (your age) wearing a watch passes by. You want to know what time it is. What would you say to that person?

a) Would you tell me the time?
b) Can you tell me the time?
c) Tell me the time, will you?
d) Should you tell me the time?
e) Could you tell me the time?
f) I'd appreciate it if you would tell me the time.
g) Will you tell me the time?
h) ....

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Situation 3

You found a house for rent; but you do not have the JD1000 required as a deposit before you can sign the contract. What would you say to request a close friend to lend you that money for a month?

a) Would you lend me JD1000 for a month?
b) Can you lend me JD1000 for a month?
c) Lend me JD1000 for a month, will you?
d) Should you lend me JD1000 for a month?
e) Could you lend me JD1000 for a month?
f) I'd appreciate it if you would lend me JD1000 for a month.
g) Will you lend me JD1000 for a month?
h) ....

Situation 4

You are a student sharing a room with another person (your age) for more than three years. You both have agreed that each one of you will clean the room every other day (each his/her turn). But, when it was your roommate's turn, you came back to find the room very messy. What would you say to request that your roommate clean it?

a) Would you clean up that mess?
b) Can you clean up that mess?
c) Clean up that mess, will you?
d) Should you clean up that mess?
e) Could you clean up that mess?
f) I'd appreciate it if you would clean up that mess?
g) Will you clean up that mess?
h) ....

Situation 5

You are carrying several bags full of groceries on your way back home from shopping. An unfamiliar person (your age) passes by. What would you say to request that person to carry some of the bags with you?

a) Would you help me with some of the bags?
b) Can you help me with some of the bags?
c) Help me with some of the bags, will you?
d) Should you help me with some of the bags?
e) Could you help me with some of the bags?
f) I'd appreciate it if you would help me with some of the bags?
g) Will you help me with some of the bags?
h) ....

Situation 6

You are in a conference room. It is too hot inside. What would you say to the conference chairperson who is sitting next to you, and whom you did not know before, to open the window next to him/her?

a) Would you open the window?
b) Can you open the window?
c) Open the window, will you?
d) Should you open the window?
e) Could you open the window?
f) I'd appreciate it if you would open the window?
g) Will you open the window?
h) ....

Situation 7

You are a new employee at a big company. Your house is on your boss' way home. What would you say to request that the boss, with whom you have no personal relationship, give you a lift?

a) Would you give me a lift?
b) Can you give me a lift?
c) Give me a lift, will you?
d) Should you give me a lift?
e) Could you give me a lift?
f) I'd appreciate it if you would give me a lift.
g) Will you give me a lift?
h) ....

Situation 8

You work as a secretary in a private office. Your salary is due in two weeks. But, you need NIS 1000 urgently. What would you say to request your boss to lend you that sum of money?

a) Would you lend me NIS 1000?
b) Can you lend me NIS 1000?
c) Lend me NIS1000, will you?
d) Should you lend me NIS 1000?
e) Could you lend me NIS 1000?
f) I'd appreciate it if you would lend me NIS 1000.
g) Will you lend me NIS 1000?
h) ....

Appendix 3

<div align="center">

An- Najah National University
School of Graduate Studies
M.A. Program in Applied Linguistics and Translation

</div>

Name:.................................Sophomore ...... Junior......Senior.......

Dear Respondent,

      Have you ever tried to exert your wit in translating speech acts? Well, this is your chance to do so with respect to the speech act of requesting. So, you are kindly invited to translate the following requests into *every day* (spoken) **Arabic.**

1. Would you lend me an umbrella?
   ....
   ....

2. Can you lend me an umbrella?
   ....
   ....

3. Lend me an umbrella, will you?
   ....
   ....

4. Could you lend me an umbrella?
   ....
   ....

5. Will you lend me an umbrella?
   ....
   ....

Appendix 4

An-Najah National University
Graduate School
M.A. Program in Translation and Applied Linguistics

Name:....................................(Please tick) Sophomore ......Junior....Senior......

Dear Student,

Following you find a set of Arabic expressions embodying one request. Your job is to **rate** them on *a politeness scale* of 5 where 1 represents the **lowest point and 5 the highest**. Remember that in your ratings, **each expression** should be viewed as **independent of all other expressions.**

...... في مجال تفتح الباب؟

...... ممكن تفتح الباب؟

...... بتقدر تفتح الباب؟

...... من فضلك تفتح الباب

...... ممكن تفتح الباب، لو سمحت؟

...... معلش تفتح الباب؟

...... من فضلك ،ممكن تفتح الباب؟

.... باستطاعتك تفتح الباب؟

...... فيك تفتح الباب؟

...... من فضلك، بتقدر تفتح الباب؟

...... لو سمحت تفتح الباب.