Core Request Strategies among Jordanian Students in an Academic Setting

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the pragmatics of politeness with reference to the core request strategies used by the Jordanian students in an academic setting. The respondents comprised 45 males and 5 females who are studying English language in the national university of Malaysia. The data was collected using a Discourse Completion Test, which the questionnaire consisted of 14 situations. These were combined with a rating scale to weigh the imposition for each situation. The data was analysed based on CCSARP (Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project) and the theory of politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1987). The results indicated that Jordanian students used a variety of strategies ranging from the most direct to indirect as the following, inquiry strategy, mind strategy, permission strategy, appreciation strategy and preparatory strategy. The preparatory strategy accounted for 335/700 or 47.86% of the total core request strategies used by Jordanian students. This strategy consider as a polite strategy and indirect. This guides us to say that the Jordanian preferred to be polite and indirect. The indirect strategy could also be attributed to their culture and religious values, whereas the use of direct strategies (the imperative) could be attributed to the closeness and the solidarity between the Jordanian students. This research could be extended to investigate the politeness phenomenon in Jordanian family and social contexts in relation to Islamic values.

Keywords: Politeness, request, culture, Jordanian culture, Core request strategies

I Introduction

Speakers of any language encounter situations in real life in which pragmatic competence comes into play. Making requests is one of these situations. This speech act is very situation-dependent. The speakers need to know how to perform the speech act taking into consideration such aspects as the hearer, the relationship with the hearer, the topic, the purpose of the speech, and the appropriate linguistic forms. Understanding different cultures is a very important factor in communicating successfully with other people from around the world. Misunderstanding a request sometimes leads to problems and causes negative reactions. For example, if an Arabic-speaking student requested a pen his fellow student for a pen in the class by saying, in English, "I want your pen for a moment" it may appear that he is obligating his classmate to give him the pen, and it may be considered an impolite request. When this sentence is expressed in Arabic it does not have the above connotations, but because the requestor does not know that, "Could I please borrow your pen for a moment", is a better way a misunderstanding could occur.

In the case of Jordanian students, misunderstandings may occur when they transfer their Arabic request strategies to other languages such as English or Malay, so the meaning of their requests may then be misunderstood or unacceptable to others. This phenomenon arises because speakers from different cultures hold differing degrees of politeness. Their sensitivity to social variables, also differ which affect their request realization and performance in terms of the content of strategies (Shazly 1993 cited in Eryani, 2007; Al-Ammar, 2000). The findings of Umar (2004), support this view by demonstrating that Arab students of English, even at advanced levels, tend to fall back on their cultural background when formulating their request strategies.

In light of the foregoing discussion, this present study aims to explore the aspects of pragmatics in requests made by Jordanian students in an academic setting. In particular, it aims to investigate politeness strategies in the requests that these students prefer during interactions in a non-native English- speaking country, in this case Malaysia. In this study, the students were provided with a situational questionnaire combined with a rating scale for weighing the imposition of each situation.

In addition to exploring the preferred request strategies used by Jordanian students, this study also investigates the possible causes of misunderstanding which may occur between them and the interlocutors of different cultural backgrounds such as those from Malaysia and other foreign students studying in Malaysia. These include Jordanian students, lecturers and staff of the Malaysian universities. There are students from different nationalities could also communicate with Jordanian, such Indian, Iranian, Pakistanis, and Chinese.

II Background to the Study

Arabic, an official language of the Jordanian society, is spoken in various dialects in Jordan. People in this country still practice Muslim-Arab values which encompass all aspects of their lives. The flood of greetings and ritual wishes heard in an encounter between two Jordanians is amazing. A simple 'thank you' is substituted by a host of expressions of gratitude and many prayers: *mashkuur* which means 'thanks'; *(ʔalla) yi ʕTiik ʔil ʕaafyih* which is translated as 'May Allah provide you with the best of health'; *(walla) maa qassart* which means 'You did your best for me'; and *alla yijzaak/yijziik ktheir and jazaaka allaahu khayran*, which are all forms of 'May Allah bless you'. This verbal generosity, wrapped in a predominantly religious discourse, is well-documented in manuals and travel guides pertaining to the Jordanian society.

In research on culture, many scholars relate politeness with the notion of high and low context cultures. According to Hall (1976), Arab culture is considered to be high context (i.e., less direct) and American culture is low context (i.e., more direct). Hall's study continues to be used by some communication scholars, in part because his study makes complex differences in communication understandable. Additionally, empirical research has supported many of Hall's

contentions (Gudykunst, Matsumoto, Ting- Toomey, Nishida, Kim, & Heyman, 1996). According to Cohen (1990), Arabic language reflects a high-context culture in which "what is not said is sometimes more important than what is said" (p. 42). English, on the other hand, reflects a low context culture in which "words represent truth" (Hall, 1976: 42). Cohen (1990: 43), points out that in Arabic culture directness is much disliked and great pains will be taken to avoid saying 'no'. He further states that "circumlocution, ambiguity, and metaphor help to cushion against the danger of candor" (p. 43) since a refusal will cause embarrassment.

One of the most important explorations of politeness research can be found in the work of (Brown and Levinson, 1987). The distinction made by Brown and Levinson (1987: 63), between positive and negative politeness leads to another important distinction, that of positive and negative politeness societies. 'Positive face' refers to every individual's basic desire to be wanted. In contrast, the 'negative face' represents the want of every actor that his or her person be unimpeded, or in other words, it is related to the desire for freedom from impingement. Brown and Levinson argue that England, for example, can be seen as a negative politeness society when compared to America. Al-Khatib (2001), assumes that Arab society in general, and Jordanian society in particular, is a positive politeness society when compared to England. El-Shazly (1993), in her study of the request strategies in American English, Egyptian Arabic, and English as spoken by Egyptian second language learners, shows that Arab societies express a high tendency towards using conventional indirectness which depends on the use of interrogatives. Most of the previous Arabic studies reviewed in this study show that Arabic societies prefer to be indirect in their requests: they try to be polite by using strategies which could be acceptable to others and make them react politely to them.

Abdul Sattar's (2009), study indicates that 'can/could' is clearly the most prominent modal used by Iraqi postgraduate students to make requests. This means that the respondents prefer to use a preparatory strategy in their requests. Using 'can or could' indicates that they are polite students, and it evidently shows that they like to use indirect requests in their speech. In addition, they also prefer to use the supporting moves (internal and external modifiers) such as, grounders and imposition minimizers in their requests, which make the requests more acceptable.

Al-Ammar's (2000), study reveals that native speakers of English and Saudi students change their requestive behaviour according to the social situations once they communicate with their communities. Directness increases with decreasing social distance and power between the interlocutors. The findings also indicate that English shares with Arabic a rich set of requesting strategies. This finding lends support to the issue of universality in speech act behaviour. Umar (2004), conducted a sociolinguistic investigation into the request strategies used by advanced Arab learners of English as compared to those strategies used by native speakers of English. It was found that native speakers of English used more semantic and syntactic modifiers, such as, "Excuse me sir, could you please lend me you dictionary for a while", than their Arabic counterparts due to the linguistic superiority of the native speakers group. Moreover, the study demonstrated that Arab students might fall back on their cultural background when formulating their request strategies.

The current study focuses on the pragmatics of politeness in the core request strategies among Jordanian students in an academic setting. It is hoped that the research findings of this study will sensitive speakers of other cultures towards core request strategies used by Jordanians in their requests leading to more successful communication with the Jordanians in the future.

III Theoretical Framework

The authors believe that the abstract notion of 'face', which is central to their model, is universal (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 13). Nevertheless, in any particular society, face is expected to be the subject of much central elaboration. It is subject to cultural specifications of many sorts: what acts threaten face, which persons have special rights to face-protection, and

what kinds of personal styles are especially appreciated. Thus, despite its universality, the actual manifestations of politeness or the ways to realize politeness and the standards of judgement differ across cultures. Such differences need to be traced to the origin of the notion of politeness in each culture. Based on the types of face that Brown and Levinson (1987: 13), explored, researchers are able to identify which strategies showing a positive or a negative face according to the subjects' responses. It is reasonable to use Brown and Levinson's (1987), theory in this study because it successfully reflects the universality of the politeness phenomenon among societies all over the world. While some researchers have criticized (Brown and Levinson's, 1987) politeness theory, such as Locher and Watts (2005), for the missing of the contextual analysis; overall it is still applicable for enabling the researcher to analyse the politeness strategies that could be used in different cultures. Therefore, in this study, the researcher adapts this theory to analyse the pragmatics of politeness found in the core request strategies among Jordanian students in an academic setting.

At the centre of any work on politeness is the so called "face". It is exposed throughout interaction which consists of a set of common interactional events –termed 'face-threatening-acts' FTAs (Brown and Levinson, 1987). These FTAs include acts such as criticizing, disagreeing, interrupting, imposing, asking for a favour, or requesting for information or goods. A simple request for information such as, asking the time threatens the hearer face. The requestor presumes right of access to the hearer's time, energy, and attention. When 'performing' (phrasing) FTAs, speakers commonly draw upon linguistic politeness routines so as to defray or mitigate the face- threatening aspect. Phrasings such as: "Could you lend me your pen please" typify verbal interchange rather than: "I want your pen for a moment". Figure 1 below models the options (strategies) available to actors faced with performing a speech act they deem face-threatening.

Figure 1. Possible strategies for performing a FTA (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 69)
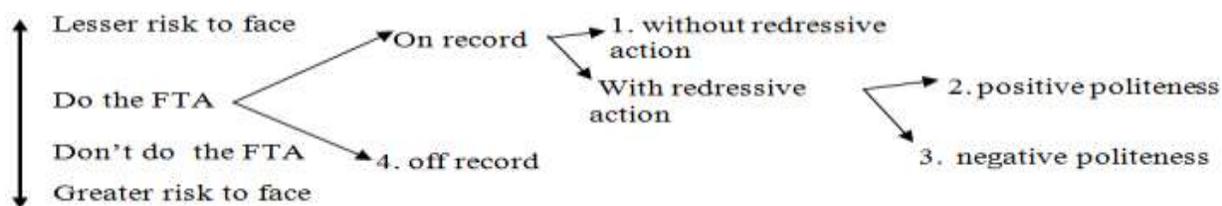
Brown and Levinson (1987: 69), state that there are two basic aspects of face 'wants': positive face and negative face. Positive face refers to every individual's basic desire for their public self-image to be shown in engagement with, ratification by, and appreciation from others. In other words, this is 'the want to be wanted'. Negative face represents the want of every actor that his or her person be unimpeded or, in other words, it is related to– the desire for freedom from impingement. Positive politeness tactics thus address or invoke others' positive face wants, which are palliated through the demonstration of esteem. Negatively polite constructions contend with negative face, by demonstrating distance and circumspection. In order to protect the mutually vulnerable face needs and minimize the negative effects, the speaker will select the most appropriate strategy of the five strategies in the above figure by assessing the situations at hands and taking three general social variables into consideration: (1) the social distance (D) between the speaker and addressee; (2) the relative power (P) of the speaker and addressee; and (3) the ranking of the imposition (R). The weight of the imposition (W) is measured by the

formula W= D+P+R Brown and Levinson (1987). So eventually, the single index W becomes the motive for the selection of one of these five strategies (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 74-76).

In research on the structures of speech acts, requests have been frequently analysed in terms of discourse sequences consisting of 'head acts' and 'supportive moves'. According to Blum-Kulka et al (1989), head acts refer to the request proper or the main strategy employed to make the request while supportive moves are the peripheral elements and refer to the pre or post-posed moves or strategies that accompany the head act, to better account for the structure of requests. Request head acts are classified according to a directness continuum. Blum-Kulka et al's (1989), classification of request head acts includes three levels of directness: direct strategies, conventionally indirect strategies, and non-conventionally indirect strategies. Five head acts are considered direct (mood derivable, performative, obligation statement, need/ want statement), and two are considered conventionally indirect (query preparatory, suggestory formulae). Non-conventional indirectness, such as (hints), which are a form of or, in cases of extreme imposition, they can choose not to perform the FTA altogether.

Internal modification includes mitigators which soften direct requests and comprise both lexical (diminutives, please, mental verbs such as ethnic/believe) and syntactic conditional, imperfect mitigation. External modification includes optional supportive moves that modify the head act such as, "*I was sick and tired two days ago,* could you give me a make-up exam, Prof Mohammad." The classifications of the internal and external modifications are explained as the following:

1 Internal Modification

Internal modifications are classified in (Blum-Kulka et al, 1989) CCSARP coding scheme as supportive moves in order to mitigate (downgraders) or enhance (upgraders) the illocutionary force of the request. The classification of external modifications is as follows:

 i. *Downgraders***:**

Syntactic Downgraders:

- -   _Play-down (e.g. "I was wondering if I could join your study group.")
- -   Conditional (e.g. ". . . if you have time.")

Lexical/Phrasal Downgraders:

- -   _Politeness marker (e.g. "Can I please have an extension on this paper?")
- -   _Embedding (e.g. "It'd be great if you could put this on the door.")
- -   _Understate (e.g. "If you have a minute, could you help me with this stuff?")
- -   _Appealer (e.g. "I need your computer to finish my assignments, okay?")
- -   _Downtoner (e.g. "Is there any way I could get an extension?")
- -   Consultative Device (e.g. "Would you mind lending me a hand?")
- -

ii. *Upgraders*:

- Adverbial intensifier (e.g. "I would be most grateful if you could let me use your article.")

B. External Modifications

External modifications are classified in (Blum-Kulka et al, 1989) CCSARP coding scheme as supportive moves that may be attached either before or after the head act to mitigate the illocutionary force of the request. External modification might serve to either soften or emphasize the force of the whole request. The classification of external modifications is as follows:

-    _Preparator (e.g. "Hey, you had this management class, right?")
-    _Grounder (e.g. "I wasn't in class the other day because I was sick.")
-    _Disarmer (e.g."I know this is short notice")
-    _Promise of Reward (e.g. "I'll buy you dinner.")
-    _Imposition Minimizer (e.g. "I will return them in an orderly fashion.")
-    _Sweetener (e.g. "Today's class was great.")
-    _Pre-pre strategy (e.g. "Hello sir, how are you today?...")
-    _Appreciation (e.g."I would appreciate it.")
-    _Self introduction (e.g. "Hey, I'm in your politics class.")
-    _Confirmatory strategy (e.g. "I would be grateful if you could help me.")
-    _Getting a pre-commitment (e. g., "Could you do me a favor? …").
-    Apology (e.g. "I'm sorry I can't give you the lesson on Monday.")

In this study, the Blum-Kulka et al (1989), analysis framework is used to identify the preferred core request strategies used by Jordanian students in an academic setting, the discussion and findings concentrate on the core request strategies rather than discussing the requests' supporting moves and alerters, which is defined as the opening elements preceding the actual requests, such asterms of address or attention-getters as 'hi, hello'.

IV Research Design

This study uses a framework that has been used in some of the most important studies of speech acts and requests in particular. The Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989) has been the most extensive cross-cultural study of speech acts to date. It investigates two speech acts, requests and apologies, across seven different languages and cultures—four varieties of English (American, Australian, British, and Canadian), Danish, German, and Israeli—in the same 16 social situations: 8 for requests, and 8 for apologies.

In introducing the CCSARP, Kulka et al. (1989: 18), propose nine types of strategies for core requests, from the most direct to the most indirect: mood derivable, performatives, hedged performatives, obligation statements, want statements, suggestory formulae, query preparatory, strong hints, and mild hints. Among these request strategies, three levels of directness can be identified. Referring to the strategies in the above order, the first five strategies are considered direct while the sixth and seventh strategies are regarded as conventionally indirect. The last two strategies are viewed as non-conventionally indirect strategies. In addition to classifying requests by directness or indirectness, the CCSARP also makes the following distinctions regarding request strategies: hearer-oriented; speaker-oriented; inclusive, in which hearer and speaker are both included; and impersonal, when neither speaker nor hearer is mentioned.

50 Jordanian students participated in this research by filling out the DCT questionnaire. 700 request utterances were obtained (14 x 50 = 700). The method of data collection of this study is the elicitation method. A DCT written questionnaire used to obtain data with a transcription. The DCT combined with a self-assessment method, namely, a rating scale that the respondents were asked to use to rate the imposition of their requests on a 5-point scale, with 5 being the highest. The students were invited to answer the questionnaire form in a lecture hall. I distributed the questionnaire to them then requested them to answer it. After they complete answering the form, I collected it from them.

1   Research Instrument
A.   DCT Questionnaire

This study replicates the design of the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) (Kulka et al., 1989). A DCT questionnaire was used as the primary method to obtain a sample of data on requestive features of the language used in this speaking act. A total of 14 request situations were included in the questionnaire and were designed to reflect the types of Jordanian interaction that would occur in the daily life of these students in an academic setting. These 14 request situations were designed to elicit the preferred core request strategy used by Jordanian students in an academic setting. The DCT was also combined with a self-assessment method, namely, a rating scale that the respondents were asked to use to rate the imposition of their requests on a 5-point scale, with 5 being the highest. A total of 50 Jordanian native speakers completed the questionnaire by providing 14 requests based on the 14 request situations. Each participant was given the questionnaire. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of some questions to obtain demographic information about the participants. Table 1 shows that more men than women participated in this study.

Table 1. *Distribution of the participants by gender*

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	45	86.0
Female	5	14.0
Total	50	100.0

Each participant also provided details of their age. On the basis of the information provided in the questionnaire, review appendix, each participant was allocated a code JS (number) = Jordanian student 1, 2, 3 which are used in the citation of examples in the analysis. Table 2 provides some examples of how each respondent in this study was identified.

Table 2. *Gender and Age of the Participants*

Abbreviation	Age	Gender	Abbreviation	Age	Gender
JS1	30s	Male	JS26	20s	Male
JS2	20s	Male	JS27	20s	Male

In this study, the researcher considered other strategies not mentioned in the CCSARP, name, inquiry strategy, permission strategy, mind strategy, and appreciation strategy. The inclusion of these additional strategies allows the incorporation of the element of culture, which was not taken into consideration in the CCSARP.

The names of the above strategies are based on the typical locutions used in the Arabic language. For example, the mind strategy is named after the word 'mind', which appears in the analysed utterances (e.g. 'Do you mind?' or 'Would you mind?').

V Findings

The findings on the usage and the distribution of the request strategies in the core requests are presented in Table 3. Although request is found in all languages, the realization of this speech act varies according to the culture of the community. As noted earlier, some adaptations were made to the process of analysing the data, which were not adapted in the

CCSARP ((Kulka et al., 1989: 278). As a result, these new strategies are considered culturally specific manifestations that characterized the request in the Jordanian society. The additional strategies are marked with an asterisk (*).

Table 3. *Distribution of strategies used in Jordanian students' core requests*

Strategy employed in core request	Frequency	Percentage
1. Preparatory strategies	335	47.86%
2. Inquiry strategies*	105	15%
3. Hint strategies	73	10.44%
4. Permission strategies*	49	7%
5. Mind strategies*	43	6.15%
6. Intention strategies	38	5.43%
7. Want inquiry	23	3.26%
8. Need statement	20	2.86%
9. Appreciation strategies*	7	1%
10. Mood derivable	7	1%
Total	700	100%

The following discussion elaborates on the findings presented in Table 3 As indicated in the table; Jordanian students employed all the 10 types of core request strategies investigated in this study. The findings for each of these strategies are explained in detail with some examples.

A Preparatory Strategy

The preparatory strategy (can, could) was by far the most frequent strategy employed in the Jordanian students' core requests. Altogether, the preparatory strategy accounted for 335/700 or 47.86% of the total core request strategies. This strategy conventionally checks on the preparatory condition for the feasibility of the request. The results show that the Jordanian students' requests typically involved the verbs of possibility (ممكن, هل من الممكن): "can" as in example (1) or "could" as in example (2).

(1) Can I borrow your dictionary for a moment? I just want to understand the meaning of this word. (JS 1)
(2) I am going to get a new job in a company and need a recommendation letter from my lecturers. Do you think you could write me a good one? (JS 5)

The use of internal modifications with the preparatory strategy is illustrated in example (3) below:

(3) I need a letter of recommendation. I was wondering if you could write it for me. (JS 4).

Some respondents' requests also contained internal modifications (linguistic elements or syntactical structures within the request proper) and they appeared to be widely used in this type

of request strategy. For instance in example (3), the internal modification, *akon mamnonanlaka, akon saeedan jedan, atmana katheran,*(أكون ممنونا لك, أكون سعيد جدا, أتمنى كثيرا) , which means 'I was wondering, I hope, I wish' was added to the basic core request. In fact, a few internal modifications accompany the core requests with preparatory strategy, as illustrated in examples (4) and (5):

> (4) Excuse me, I'm looking for a book, but I can't find it here. Do you happen to know where it might be? (JS 9)
> (5) I was hoping you could tell me if the Chairperson is in. If not, do you know when he/she will return? (JS11).

A. *Inquiry Strategy*

As shown in Table 3, the inquiry strategy was the second most- used strategy accounting for 105/ 700 or 15% of the total core requests. This type of request was ordinarily used to ask for information, as in examples (6) and (7):

> (6) Excuse me, is the Chairperson in the office right now? (JS 4)
> (7) Hello, do you know where the medical centre is? (JS 2)

B. Permission Strategy

The permission strategy occurred 49 times, accounting for 7% of the total core requests. In this strategy, the speaker asks the hearer for permission to perform the requested action as in examples (8) and (9). Here, terms such as 'may I' or 'might I' were used:

> (8) May I borrow your camera? I have an invitation to the International Students' Celebration this weekend. (JS9)

> (9) Excuse me, might I borrow a pen for class? (JS11)

C. Mind Strategy

The mind strategy occurred 43 times, accounting for 6.15% of the total core requests. At this point, it is important to note that permission and mind strategies are functionally similar to the preparatory strategy in that they conventionally check on preliminary conditions for the realization of the request.

In employing the mind strategy, the speaker checks if the hearer has any objection to performing the request as in examples (10) and (11):

> (10) I have a university conference that requires some photos; do you mind if I use your camera? It'll only be for a day or so. (JS 8)

> (11) Would you mind if I ask you to help me move this weekend? (JS 9)

D. *Hint Strategy*

The hint strategy occurred 73 times or 10.44%. The relative frequency of hint was obviously a function of inferences in specific contexts, as in example (12), where the speaker was asking to borrow lunch money.

> (12) I forgot to bring my wallet today. (JS 4)

E. *Intention Strategy*

The intention strategy, which occurred 38/700 times (5.43%) in the data, is used when the speaker wants to check a precondition, namely, the addressee's willingness to fulfil the request, as in examples (13) and (14):

> (13) I forgot my wallet. Will you lend me 10 ringgit? (JS 2)

> (14) Would you please extend the deadline? I have another exam in this course on the same day. (JS 7)

It is appeared in the data of this research that the requests involving the intention strategy were usually made from the hearer's perspective.

F. Want Inquiry Strategy

Want inquiries occurred 23 times (3.26%) and were more frequently used than the intention strategy. In this strategy, the speaker phrases the request locution as if they are checking to see whether the hearer would like to do the requested action, as in examples (15) and (16):

(15) Do you want to help me move? (JS 15)

(16) Excuse me Professor Salih, would you be willing to write me a letter of recommendation? (JS 3)

G. Need Statement Strategy

Need statements, as illustrated by example 17, occurred 20 times (2.86%).

(17) Hello Professor Ahmad, how are you? I need to make an appointment with you to talk about my thesis. Do you know when you will be free? (JS 5)

H. Appreciation Strategy

The appreciation strategy as in example (18), occurred in 7 instances, accounting for 1% of the total core requests.

(18) I would greatly appreciate your help Professor Salim if you could lend me the reference book. It is not in the library. (JS 22)

I. Mood Derivable Strategy

The mood derivable strategy as in example (19), also occurred 7 times (1%).

(19) Hi sir, you buy lunch today. I'll get it next time. (JS 6)

The use of the mood strategy (the imperative) is rare and it only occurred scenarios involving close friends (situational questionnaire 1 and 2), i.e., in contexts with no social distance. Jordanian students sometimes use this strategy because there is a strong friendship between the requester and requestee (for example, best friends), and also because there is solidarity between the requester and requestee.

VI Discussion of Results

The results indicate that the most preferred core request strategy was the preparatory strategy which conventionally checks on the preparatory condition for the feasibility of the request. The Jordanian students' requests in this category typically involved the verbs of possibility (ممكن, هل من الممكن) *Momkin, Hal mnalmomkin*, (can or could), for example, 'I forgot my wallet. Could you lend me 10 ringgit?' (JS 2). The usage of this strategy is a polite gesture to the requestee in the Jordanian culture. The other core request strategies which were used are mentioned in table. 3. All these strategies were identified in the analysis with examples for each strategy.

This study contributes to cross-cultural understanding in that it has identified the manner in which Jordanian students in a public university in Malaysia performed the speech act of making a request. In the context of other cultures, they might be perceived by others as impolite or insincere whenever they were engaged in this face- threatening act. An overall view of the request data collected from DCT questionnaire revealed that indirectness was the most preferred approach employed by the subjects in almost all situations. According to Reiter (2000), this "could be explained by the fact that in uttering a conventionally indirect request the speaker is balancing clarity and non-coerciveness, hence ensuring that his/her utterance will have the correct interpretation and the right impact, thus leading to success" (p.173). The preparatory strategy is the most preferred among Jordanian students in the academic setting, usually in the forms of 'can' or 'could' to check the feasibility of the request. This indicates that Jordanian

postgraduate students used strategies to make requests politely and indirectly. As claimed by Blum-Kulka (1989), conventional indirectness is often employed during the negotiation of face, which allows interlocutors to end the interaction successfully and politely.

As for the production of the requests, certain sociolinguistic principles characterized the performance of the Jordanian students in terms of semantic formulae including both "request head act strategies" and "request supportive move strategies" such as the following example, *(4) Excuse me, I'm looking for a book, but I can't find it here. Do you happen to know where it might be? (JS 9).* Jordanian students prefer to use the grounding external modifier as mentioned in the example (4) "*Excuse me, I'm looking for a book, but I can't find it here.*" They Use this type of external modifier to be indirect in their request.

It was also found that Jordanian students utilized their preferred strategies in making requests; and it was clear that they used many external modifications (supporting moves) in their requests with the preparatory strategy being the most used modification strategy among the Jordanian students. This implies that it is their language norms and culture that determine the choice of certain speech act strategies because the culture of Jordanian society encourages a person to be more polite and indirect in their speech.

The discussion above would not be objective if it judges the directness or indirectness of the requests solely on the strategies used for the core requests, although it might be the most salient indicator. Keeping the similarities and differences in mind can help resolve possible misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication, and enable people from different cultures to make appropriate requests that comply with the rules of the target language so that, ideally, they can achieve their goals without seeming to be discourteous.

VII Conclusion

In this study, the features of the Jordanian students' requests in each of 14 situations were discussed, including the weight of imposition in each request, and the core request strategies chosen. It was found that the Jordanian students preferred to use the preparatory strategy which occurred in 335 out of 700 instances, regardless of the context and the change in social variables. However, there was an increase in the use of other strategies when the requestee had greater power than the requestor (situation 11) or when the weight of the request was relatively high (situation 5). Social distance in terms of familiarity and social power seemed to exert a lot of influence on the choice of core strategy employed by Jordanian students' when making their requests, as the preparatory strategy was the most used strategy regardless of the social variables, except in the case of requests for information.

The preparatory strategy was also used to alert the hearer about the ensuing request by announcing that he or she would make a request by asking about a potential availability of the hearer for carrying out the request. The external modification 'imposition minimizers' were also common.

This research provides insights that could be of use to other researchers working in this field. For instance, the data for this research was provided by native speakers of Arabic languages, in this case Jordanian students in an academic setting. This could serve as a base line for comparison with the learners' realization behaviour to detect possible deviant realization patterns which may be caused by interference from their first language. Moreover, future research could focus on defining the social variables or include more social factors in the study.

To conclude, it should be noted that Jordanian students in Malaysia interact with other students from different cultures, such as Malaysians, Chinese and Indian as well as English-speaking international students. In this broad cultural mix, the possibility of misunderstandings among students is high. Although there may be similarities in the strategies of requests, politeness and directness in all these groups, they perform requests differently. While some cultures prefer indirectness and politeness; the actual performance of politeness and indirectness

may be different from one culture to another. What is polite for the Jordanian students may be considered as impolite in the Malay or English cultures. When the Jordanian students in university try to be polite to their classmates and lecturers, they actually use the strategies of their first language in making requests. However, sometimes they rely on a direct and literal translation (word for word) of their native language into the target language, which results in some cases being misunderstood. It is hoped that this study will provide a better understanding of the request strategies of Jordanian students and contribute to improve cross-cultural understanding. This research could be extended to investigate the politeness phenomenon in Jordanian family and social contexts in relation to Islamic values.

VIII Implication

The responses of the participants to the DCT questionnaire revealed that they prefer the preparatory core strategies and grounding external modification. Jordanian preferred indirect core request strategy and evade being direct in their requests. It is clear that they used external and internal modification to make their request more suitable for the requestee based on their culture. This research could be extended to investigate the politeness phenomenon in Jordanian family and social contexts in relation to Islamic values.

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X Appendices

A. Appendix (A) DCT Questionnaire

Thank you for participating in this survey. We have created **14 situations** to explore the preferred request strategies that the Jordanian students use in the academic setting. Please try to imagine that these situations are real and please write down what you would say in these situations in real life.

Part 1:

Personal information:
Age: 20s 30s 40s 50s
Gender: Male or Female
Are you an Undergraduate or Graduate student? Please circle: Undergraduate, Graduate
In which state of Jordan were you born?

Part 2: The following DCT Questionnaire contains the situations combined with the impositions ranking scale.

1. You are a student. Your best friend has just bought an expensive new camera. You ask your best friend to lend it to you since you are going to a club activity this weekend. What would you say to your best friend?	Please judge the imposition in this request on a scale from 1 to 5. 1 is the LEAST imposing all the way to 5, which is the MOST imposing. Please underline the level chosen for this request below.

	1 2 3 4 5
2. You are a student. You ask your best friend to lend you RM10 for lunch since you forgot bring your wallet and you are very hungry. What would you say to your best friend:	Please judge the imposition in this request on a scale from 1 to 5. 1 is the LEAST imposing all the way to 5, which is the MOST imposing. Please underline the level chosen for this request below. 1 2 3 4 5
3. You are a new student on campus looking for the medical center. You ask a male student walking towards you where it is. What would you say to him?	Please judge the imposition in this request on a scale from 1 to 5. 1 is the LEAST imposing all the way to 5, which is the MOST imposing. Please underline the level chosen for this request below. 1 2 3 4 5
4. You are a student in a computer lab. You looked in your school bag for a pen, but could not find one. You see a girl sitting next to you with extra pens. You decide to borrow a pen from her. What would you say to her?	Please judge the imposition in this request on a scale from 1 to 5. 1 is the LEAST imposing all the way to 5, which is the MOST imposing. Please underline the level chosen for this request below. 1 2 3 4 5
5. You are a moving out next weekend. You would like to ask your friend to help you move out. What would you say?	Please judge the imposition in this request on a scale from 1 to 5. 1 is the LEAST imposing all the way to 5, which is the MOST imposing. Please underline the level chosen for this request below. 1 2 3 4 5
6. You need to know the time and you see a female classmate sitting behind you has a watch. You have only talked to her occasionally and do	Please judge the imposition in this request on a scale from 1 to 5.

not know her very well. What would you say to her?	1 is the LEAST imposing all the way to 5, which is the MOST imposing. Please underline the level chosen for this request below. 1 2 3 4 5
7. In a language class when you are reading an article, you come across an unknown word. You see that a male classmate sitting next to you has a concise dictionary on his desk, so you ask him if you could borrow it for a second. What would you say to him?	Please judge the imposition in this request on a scale from 1 to 5. 1 is the LEAST imposing all the way to 5, which is the MOST imposing. Please underline the level chosen for this request below. 1 2 3 4 5
8. Due to some family-related reasons you are not able to finish a paper on time. You would like to ask your male instructor for permission to extend the deadline. What would you say to him?	Please judge the imposition in this request on a scale from 1 to 5. 1 is the LEAST imposing all the way to 5, which is the MOST imposing. Please underline the level chosen for this request below. 1 2 3 4 5
9. You were sick and missed your exam, so you ask your female instructor if she would give you a make-up exam. What would you say to her?	Please judge the imposition in this request on a scale from 1 to 5. 1 is the LEAST imposing all the way to 5, which is the MOST imposing. Please underline the level chosen for this request below. 1 2 3 4 5
10. You are asking your advisor who is a male professor if he could lend you the reference book since you could not find it in the library.	Please judge the imposition in this request on a scale from 1 to 5. 1 is the LEAST imposing all the way to 5, which is the MOST imposing. Please underline the level chosen for this request below.

What would you say to him?	
	1 2 3 4 5
11. You are a student. You want to make an appointment with your advisor who is a female professor regarding your thesis. You see her walking in the hallway next to the department's office. What would you say to her?	Please judge the imposition in this request on a scale from 1 to 5. 1 is the LEAST imposing all the way to 5, which is the MOST imposing. Please underline the level chosen for this request below. 1 2 3 4 5
12. You need a letter of recommendation for a job application, and you would like to ask your instructor who is a male professor if he would write a letter of recommendation for you. What would you say to him?	Please judge the imposition in this request on a scale from 1 to 5. 1 is the LEAST imposing all the way to 5, which is the MOST imposing. Please underline the level chosen for this request below. 1 2 3 4 5
13. You are a student. You ask a middle-aged male librarian to help you find a book which you could not find on the shelf. What would you say to him?	Please judge the imposition in this request on a scale from 1 to 5. 1 is the LEAST imposing all the way to 5, which is the MOST imposing. Please underline the level chosen for this request below. 1 2 3 4 5
14. You are a student. You ask a female staff member working in the office of the Department's Chair if the Chair is in the office right now. What would you say to her?	Please judge the imposition in this request on a scale from 1 to 5. 1 is the LEAST imposing all the way to 5, which is the MOST imposing. Please underline the level chosen for this request below. 1 2 3 4 5