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**Investigating the Pragmatic Awareness of EFL Students in  
Using the Speech Act of Polite Request  
The Case of Third Year Students of English at Biskra  
University**

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a  
**Master Degree in Science of Language**

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## DECLARATION

I, Lakhdari Ikram, do hereby declare that the work I am going to present in this thesis, which is entitled as:

**“Investigating the Pragmatic Awareness of EFL Students  
in Using the Speech Act of Polite Request:  
The Case of Third Year Students of English at Biskra University”**  
is my own original work. It has not been submitted before to any other institution or university or degree, and all sources that I have used to accomplish this work have been indicated by means of complete references.

Author: Ms. Lakhdari Ikram Signature:

Date:

## **DEDICATION**

By the care of Allah and all the courage and patience he has in me brought from those years of study that I can now see the fruit of my labor this modest memory.

This work is dictated to :

To my mother who gave dear and who sacrificed so much so that I could reach the good part Thank You my Mother .

To all my family, my brother Chaker and my sisters Iman and Sara . All my friends. my lovely friend Mouna . I will never forget you .

To those who sincerely supported me with their prayers, kindness, and efforts .

To all of you , I gladly dedicate this work and these words .

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## ABSTRACT

The current study investigates the pragmatic awareness of EFL students in using the speech act of polite request (requesting). The current study attempts to raise awareness in order to help prevent English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners from being regarded as rude or being misunderstood when communicating. This can be achieved by helping them develop their pragmatic knowledge of making polite requests. Additionally, it aims to make EFL students pragmatically competent, and this would make them more aware of how to deal with everyday language in the speech community, specifically the appropriate realization of the speech act of polite request. In order to meet these objectives, the mixed methods approach is adopted; hence, both quantitative and qualitative data are collected from the discourse completion task directed to third year EFL students, and the interview conducted with EFL teachers at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra, respectively. The sample consists of (30) third year EFL students and four EFL teachers, both belonging to Biskra University. The results from the two research instruments show that pragmatic awareness plays an important role in the use of speech acts of polite request. Moreover, the findings highlight that the respondent learners are pragmatically aware, which helps them to use the speech acts of polite request. Furthermore, the participant teachers emphasize the importance of explicit instruction, practical application, and exposure to authentic materials to enhance pragmatic awareness. By incorporating strategies such as role-playing, discourse completion tasks, and cultural comparisons, teachers provide students with opportunities to practice and reflect on their use of polite language. Therefore, it can be stated that pragmatic awareness is crucial for enhancing EFL students' speech acts of polite request.

**Key words:** EFL students, polite requests, pragmatic awareness, speech acts.

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

**DCT:** Discourse Completion Task

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**FTA:** Face Threatening Acts

**IMRAD:** Introduction, Methods, Results, And Discussion

**LMD:** License, Master, Doctorate

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In foreign language classrooms, the language used in the interaction between both the teacher and his/her learners still looks more different from that used in a real foreign context. Unlike the daily informal language used by native speakers, the classroom language seems to be more grammatically correct, structurally formal, and linguistically based, which creates a gap between the EFL learners and the native speakers' ways of communication. Thus, the majority of EFL learners are not able to effectively communicate in a foreign context, and they are unable to hold a conversation with a foreigner or a native speaker. Therefore, learning a foreign language requires being both able to and knowledgeable about the different aspects of the foreign language and its society. Generally, these abilities and knowledge reflect the linguistic, sociolinguistic, cultural, and communicative competencies of the language learner. Consequently, the structured language used in classroom contexts demand EFL learners to be pragmatically aware.

The current study is interested in investigating the pragmatic awareness of EFL students at Biskra University in using the speech act of polite request. Moreover, it is believed that pragmatic awareness can have a great impact on EFL students' performance of speech act of polite request. According to Kim (2016, p. 452):

Pragmatic awareness is generally referred to as the ability of communicating appropriately according to the situation where the conversation takes place, in consideration of the power and the distance of the interlocutors. As it plays a crucial role in social interaction, more attention should be paid to the learners' development of second language (L2) pragmatics.

Furthermore, one of the basic of educational requirements is the teaching of the principles of pragmatics, which may decrease the different issues related to the second language in terms of speech act use. Polite requesting is one of the main speech acts to which EFL learners are exposed during their daily L2 communication.

## **1. Background of the study**

Recently, investigating the pragmatic awareness of EFL students in using the speech act of polite request (requesting) is a fascinating area of research within applied linguistics and language education. Pragmatic awareness refers to an individual's understanding of the social and cultural rules governing language use in specific contexts, such as making requests politely in a given speech community. Indeed, politeness strategies play a crucial role in establishing successful communication, particularly in intercultural interactions where cultural norms regarding politeness may differ. However, EFL students often encounter challenges in acquiring the pragmatic competence, including the understanding of the appropriate use of request strategies, due to differences between their native language (e.g., Arabic) and the English language.

Various researchers and scholars investigate studies about the pragmatic awareness related to the effective production of speech act. To begin, Brown and Levinson's (1987) study of politeness theory, entitled: *Some Universals in Language Usage*, provide a theoretical framework for understanding how politeness is expressed and interpreted across different cultures. They introduce concepts such as positive and negative politeness strategies, face-threatening acts, and politeness maxims, which are highly relevant to the study of polite requests. In addition, Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) focus on requests and apologies. Their work includes studies that investigate how speakers of different languages formulate and interpret requests, shedding light on the role of cultural factors in shaping one's pragmatic competence.

Furthermore, Kasper (1997) discusses the teachability of pragmatic competence, addressing the challenges and strategies involved in instructing learners on how to use language appropriately in various communicative contexts. Although not specifically centered on requests, Kasper's work provides valuable insights into pedagogical approaches for developing

learners' pragmatic awareness. Rose and Kasper's (2001) study explores the integration of pragmatics into language teaching. It includes chapters that discuss the teaching of speech acts, such as requests, and provides practical suggestions for fostering learners' pragmatic competence in the language classroom.

The above mentioned studies offer the foundation for understanding the pragmatic awareness of EFL students in using polite requests and provide valuable insights into both theoretical frameworks and practical pedagogical considerations.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Acquiring the language from a communicative perspective requires being able to use the language which demands more than knowing its syntactical, morphological, and phonological rules. Accordingly, pragmatics comes into play here, studying the use of language in human communication as determined by the conditions of society (Mey, 2001, as cited in Semanur, 2022, p. 1). That is to say, the knowledge about societal conditions and pragmatic requirements of a language is important; therefore, the speakers' ability to successfully convey a message to their interlocutors is compromised.

Moreover, the relationship between what we think and what we utter is complex. The operations included in the process of the interpretation of language message are equally important for pragmatics and cognitive linguistics and are, thus, the subject of research of both linguistic disciplines.

Furthermore, one of the main components of pragmatics is the Speech Act Theory, more precisely, the speech act of making requests. Therefore, teaching pragmatics, especially the ability to use speech acts appropriately, is needed as it is effective for the speaker to convey his/her message. In other words, developing the pragmatic awareness is vital for EFL learners' appropriate communication.

Requesting is one of the main speech acts that we are all exposed to during the daily communicative situations. According to Semanur (2022,p. 10), the speech act of request is an illocutionary act through which the speaker asks the hearer of a particular piece of information or some service. This means that EFL learners should enhance their pragmatic awareness on intercultural differences, as well as instilled confidence in English interactions. However, students are not completely aware of certain conventions or pragmatic features used when exchanging ideas or executing a specific speech acts like requesting. Hence, they are likely to appear impolite or even cause breakdown in communication. We have noticed that many EFL learners fail to realize different speech acts, particularly the speech act of making polite requests in a given situations or context. In a society where English is considered as a foreign language, many EFL learners might be unable to perform different speech acts because of the lack of pragmatic awareness. Thus, in the present study, we attempted to show the role of EFL students' pragmatic awareness in the realization of speech act of polite request.

### **3. Research Questions**

In order to reach the research objectives, the following research questions are raised:

**Q1.** Does pragmatic awareness have a positive effect on EFL learners' performance of the speech act of making polite requests?

**Q2.** How can pragmatic awareness contribute to improving learners' speech act of polite requests?

**Q3.** What are EFL teachers' perceptions towards raising their EFL students' pragmatic awareness of the speech acts of polite request?

### **4. Research Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses are formulated as possible answers for the above-asked research questions:



**H1.** We hypothesize that third year EFL students' pragmatic awareness has a positive effect on their performance of the speech acts of making polite requests'

**H2.** We believe that the more EFL learners are pragmatically aware of the societal and cultural rules that govern language use, the more polite their requests in L2 are.

**H3.** We assume that EFL teachers value the integration of pragmatic awareness instruction as a means to develop EFL learners' effective performance of polite requests.

## **5. Research Aims**

The present study seeks to investigate the pragmatic awareness of EFL students in using the speech act of polite request. To be more precise, this study aims to achieve four major objectives. First, it attempts to prevent EFL learners from being regarded as rude or being misunderstood when communicating by helping them to be pragmatically aware in performing L2 speech acts. Second, it aims to make EFL students pragmatically aware, which would make them more aware about how to deal with language in daily use in the speech community, especially the appropriate realization of the speech act of making polite requests. Third it strives to measure the extent to which EFL students are pragmatically aware of the use of polite requests. Finally, the current study seeks to spot light on EFL teachers' perceptions on the issue raised.

## **6. The Research Methodology for this study**

The current research seeks to investigate the pragmatic awareness of EFL students in using the speech act of polite request (requesting). Accordingly, we consider that the mixed method approach, which combines both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods, is the most adequate to carry out this research as an objective and systematic process to describe, explain and interpret the obtained results. On the one hand, quantitative data are collected from a DCT directed to third year EFL students in order to measure the extent to which EFL students are pragmatically aware of the use of polite requests. Quantitative data are

analyzed in terms of percentages and displayed in tables and diagrams. On the other hand, an EFL teachers' interview was conducted with four EFL teachers and was analyzed qualitatively to gather insights about their perceptions towards pragmatic analysis to use speech act of polite request.

## **7. Population and sampling techniques**

The population of this study will cover third year students at Biskra University. Among this population, we have non-randomly selected a group of (30) students that we believe are homogenous in their level and representative of the whole population. In addition, four EFL teachers at Biskra University were also selected on a convenience basis to conduct the interview.

## **8. Significance of the Study**

This study is important in the academic field and beneficial to researchers who are interested in conducting linguistic research on speech act theory, specifically the speech act of making polite requests. Providing clear insights about the speech act of polite request can yield valuable information on how students communicate in foreign environments. This can help educators to get a sense of students' abilities in pragmatic awareness. This research can also help determine the ways in which EFL students use the speech act of polite request. Eventually, this research topic can also be useful for EFL learners as it can provide them with insights on the function and importance of pragmatic awareness, which is considered to be a construct of communicative competence. It would also enable them to make sense of what they want to convey beyond the communicated messages.

To sum up, developing EFL learners' the pragmatic awareness is crucial for the establishment of successful communication. As such, they will be able to acquire the linguistic aspects and expressions used in relation to the socio-cultural norms of the foreign language and,

hence, to properly perform any speech act of request in different situations with different interlocutors and reduce the face threatening act.

## **9. The Referencing Style of the Dissertation**

Since this study belongs to the educational research realm, this dissertation employed the seventh edition of the APA style (American Psychological Association). In addition, the organization and the arrangement of the dissertation is guided by the instruction of the supervisor.

## **10. Structure of the Dissertation**

The present dissertation follows the IMRAD Format (Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion), also known as the traditional simple model. It contains four main chapters in addition to a General Introduction and a General Conclusion. The General Introduction gives a brief account of what is going to be covered in the body of the dissertation and identifies the scope of the study and some important information concerning the research process. It states the raised problem, presents the research objectives, states the significance of the study, highlights the research questions and hypotheses, and briefly explains the research methodology. The first chapter explains the main concepts related to pragmatics and pragmatic awareness. The second chapter describes the speech act theory; more specifically, it provides clear insights and understanding of the speech act of making polite request. The third chapter is devoted to tackle the methodology adopted for the collection of data related to the study's topic. The fourth chapter concerns the analysis and discussion of the obtained findings through the Discourse Completion Task dedicated to EFL students and through the teachers' interview. Finally, a general conclusion sums up the research by highlighting the main points and findings, pinpointing the limitations of the study, and offering instances for further research.

# **CHAPTER ONE: Pragmatics awareness in Foreign Language Learning**

## **Introduction**

Language is a dynamic and multifaceted phenomenon; thus, the way people communicate may significantly differ from one to another according to the way s/he wants to convey a message. Accordingly, without the knowledge of such societal conditions and pragmatic requirements of a language, the speaker's ability to successfully convey a message to their interlocutors is needed. Therefore, pragmatics has been a focal area of research in linguistics in recent years.

This chapter is concerned with a theoretical overview. It includes the main theoretical aspects of the current study's first variable. It first includes the explanation of the key concepts in relation to the research study, which is concerned with pragmatics. Also, it highlights the pragmatic awareness and its importance.

### **1.1. Language Meaning**

Language is a system of arbitrary signs. These signs are linked all together to create meaning in a specific social context. Thus, it is a significant means of communication used by a group of people belonging to a certain geographical area. According to Wharton (2009, p.8), "language is a principle-governed system. It is also a creative, combinatorial system with a finite number of elements (morphemes) which can be combined to create novel of arbitrary length."

In the same context, Denasi (2004, p.96) also explains that:

Language is a mental code. It is a system of signs commonly delivered as vocal speech; but it can also be expressed through other physical modesthrough pictography, gesture, and so on. One can have language

without speech (as do individuals with impaired vocal organs), because it exists in the mind.

From Denasi's (2004) explanation, we assume that language production is a complex mental and physical process that involves both the cognitive ability and social appropriateness. From the above quotations, language is not only a structural system, but also a functional device used to transmit different messages related to various communicative purposes, such as: informing, suggesting, directing, etc.

Bloom (1978, p. 1, as cited in Revira, 1984) explains that "languages exist because of the functions they serve and so how individuals learn to use language for such different purposes as to get and give information and initiate and monitor interactions with others is a major aspect of development". Apparently, the idea of language in use is merely linked to the language as system of communication where sentences and words have forces in the act of communication; they represent several functions used by interlocutors to attain different purposes.

## **1.2. Language Form and Language Meaning**

Language form refers to the structure and composition of language, encompassing elements such as grammar, syntax, morphology, phonology, and semantics. It focuses on how words, sentences, and discourse are constructed and organized to convey meaning. Language form is essential for effective communication, as it provides the framework for encoding and decoding messages. Language meaning, on the other hand, deals with the significance and interpretation of linguistic expressions. It encompasses the various layers of meaning embedded in language, including literal meaning, connotations, implications, and cultural nuances. Understanding language meaning is crucial for grasping the intended message and for effective communication across different contexts and cultures.

According to Brown (1988) “Language is not simply a reporting device for experience but a defining framework for it. Language is the road map of a culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going. That is to say, to comprehend the dynamics of communication who communicates what to whom understanding the context is crucial. For example, participants in a conversation must select particular linguistic forms to fulfill specific language functions that suitably consider the circumstances surrounding the exchange.

### **1.3. The Scope of Sociolinguistics**

Sociolinguistics is a very wide field, and it can be used to describe many different ways of studying a language. According to Trudgill (2003), sociolinguistics is a term used to describe all parts of the investigation of the relationship between language and society, apart from those which are purely social scientific in their objectives, such as ethno methodology. Sociolinguistic research is thus the work which can be intended to accomplish a better comprehension of the nature of human terminology by studying language in its social context and to accomplish a better understanding of the type of the relationship and discussion between language and society. Sociolinguistics contains anthropological linguistics, dialectology, discourse examination, ethnography of speaking, geo-linguistics, terminology contact studies, the social psychology of a language, as well as the sociology of a language.

In other words, it is the study of the relationship between language and society; it mainly focuses on the use of the language by an individual speaker within groups of speakers in its social context.

Moreover, Sociolinguistics is the study of the appropriateness of language use in different contexts. In other terms, sociolinguistics is the study of how “situational factors such as setting of a speech event and the cultural context affect on the choice of what should be said.” Brown (2000, p. 220).

Sociolinguistic competence is one of several components that include grammatical competence, strategic competence and discourse competence. Grammatical competence and discourse competence are defined as the linguistic system of the language, whereas sociolinguistic and strategic competences are used to describe the functional aspects of communication. Sociolinguistic competence is divided into two pragmatic categories, which are the functional aspect of the language and the sociolinguistic aspect. The first aspect is the functional aspect, or “illocutionary” competence, that deals with sending and receiving intended messages (Brown, 2000). Sociolinguistic competence encompasses such aspects as formality, politeness, metaphor, register, and culturally related aspects of the language (Brown, 2000,p. 23). In addition, nonverbal communication deals with ‘how you say it’ rather than on ‘what you say’ through the use of body language, such as physical distance, gestures, eye contact, and other nonverbal signals. It should be noted that the speaker’s cultural aspects are connected to the nonverbal communication s/he uses.

Similarly, Hall (1998. p. 54) asserts that “the barriers to culture learning are more nonverbal than verbal.” In fact, there are six categories of nonverbal communication: kinesics or body language, eye contact, proxemics or physical proximity, artifacts or clothing and ornamentation, kinesthetic or touching, and olfactory dimension or sensory nonverbal messages. For example, the English language is more verbal than Japanese. It means that speakers of English express their views through words rather than using gestures; Japanese, on the other hand, emphasize on a nonverbal, implied message. Speakers of Japanese infer meaning from the context of statements, such as the way it is said, by whom, to whom and where (Bennett, 1998). Furthermore, nonverbal behavior includes intonation and pitch of voice. A change in pitch can imply a range of emotions from anger to friendliness.

Through nonverbal communication, one can indicate his/her social status, level of education, and home region. Another aspect is turn taking in conversations. It is common for

the European American patterns to stare directly in the eye to taking turns. In contrast to this pattern, Asian cultures require averted eyes to indicate a turn in a conversation (Holmes, 2013). A study by Eibl-Eibesfeldt (cited in Knapp, Hall, and Horgan, 2014, p. 52) on the use of verbal and nonverbal human communication concluded that rules related to greetings, getting the attention, or persuading a partner are essentials of both verbal and nonverbal human behavior. He also noticed that cultural factors play a great role in making these strategies different from one culture to another.

#### **1.4. Pragmatics**

Pragmatics as a field of inquiry was initiated in the 1930's by Morris, Carnap, and Peirce; they produced three main fields, which are: (1) syntax, which addresses the formal relations of signs to one another, (2) Semantics, which concerns the relation of signs to what they denote, and (3) Pragmatics, which focuses on the relation of signs to their users and interpreters (Horn & Ward, 2005, p. 1).

Indeed, pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning that the speaker intends to convey when communicating with other interlocutors, and how the context influences the linguistic choices made by the speaker. In the same context, Yule (1996) defined pragmatics:

as being concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader). This type of study necessarily involves the interpretation of what people mean in a particular context and how the context influences what is said (p. 3).

Similarly, Koc and Bamleer (1977) stated that a sentence uttered by a speaker can carry more than one meaning, which differs according to different situations. In fact, meaning is of three types:

- 1- The conceptual meaning: the meaning that the sentence or utterance has in isolation;



- 2- The contextual meaning: the meaning that a sentence or utterance takes in a particular context;
- 3- The pragmatic meaning: the meaning that the sentence or utterance takes on only due to the interaction between a speaker and a listener (as cited in Yan & Zhuang, 2010, p. 2).

This means that , when people are engaged in an interaction, there are certain limits that govern their choices of the language they use depending on many considerations, such as how close or distant the listener is, and what his social status is. The context also influences the choice of words; it makes people decide what style (formal or informal) is appropriate to the conversation while it is occurring. In addition, Pragmatics seeks to explore how listeners can make inferences about what is said in order to arrive at the interpretation of the speakers' intended meaning, and how the context helps them in doing so (Yule, 1996).

Pragmatics also deals with presuppositions. It represents the shared background assumptions that are taken for granted when people communicate; people who know each other well can build up quite accurate impressions of what assumptions are shared between them (Griffiths, 2006). Accordingly, presuppositions extremely contribute to both the speakers and the listeners to achieve successful communicative purposes.

Additionally, pragmatics is not only interested in the verbal features of the language (morphology, syntax, semantics and phonology), but also interested in the non-verbal ones (gestures, conjunctions and facial expressions) and how they contribute to the listeners' interpretations of the speakers' intentions. In addition , Wharton (2009) stated that “the aim of pragmatic theory is to explain how utterances with all their linguistic and non-linguistic properties are understood” (p. 4). He also described verbal communication as a mental process in which people use their cognition, intelligence, inferential activities in order to recognize intentions.

Furthermore, Crystal (1997) argues that pragmatics mostly covers a range of the social aspects of a language. However, as seen in two subfields of pragmatics, socio-pragmatics and pragma-linguistics, it also focuses on the linguistic structures of utterances since various language functions cannot be achieved without appropriate linguistic structures (cited in Kim, 2016, p. 454).

To sum up, even with perfect grammatical forms and lexicon, language learners may still be unable to express their intended meaning because they do not possess the pragmatic or functional knowledge required to do so. While communicating in Arabic, some students appear to be pragmatically competent, but this competence may not transfer to their second language. Pragmatics is described a practical, sensible approach to problem-solving and decisionmaking. It involves dealing with things in a realistic and sensible way, based on practical considerations and experiences rather than on theoretical or abstract principles. Pragmatic individuals can achieve the desired outcomes efficiently, often adapting their strategies based on the specific circumstances and hurdles they face.

### **1.5. Pragmatic Awareness**

Pragmatic awareness deals with understanding how a language is used in different social contexts to achieve specific objectives. In addition, it involves recognizing specific variations in communication, such as body language, cultural norms, and adjusting individual's speech accordingly in order to effectively convey meaning. Therefore, improving pragmatic awareness can foster better interpersonal relationships, enhance professional communication, and promote successful navigation of diverse social situations. It empowers individuals to adapt their language and behavior appropriately, ultimately leading to more meaningful and productive interactions.

According to Bardovi-Harlig (2009), pragmatic awareness refers to an individual's ability to understand and appropriately use the language in various social contexts. It encompasses an

understanding of social conventions, implied meanings, and the ability to adapt language use based on the situational context. Pragmatic awareness is essential for effective communication as it enables individuals to interpret both explicit and implicit messages and respond accordingly.

That is to say, pragmatic awareness is crucial for effective communication, as it involves understanding and appropriately using language in context. Hence, being pragmatic means being practical and focused on achieving goals. As a result, developing pragmatic awareness enhances interpersonal interactions, promotes clear communication, and facilitates successful navigation of social situations.

The author further adds that “increasing pragmatic awareness involves learning to recognize, and ultimately produce, the meanings encoded in various pragmatic structures, as well as learning to use these structures appropriately in context”(Bardovi-Harlig, 2009, p. 298). In other words, pragmatic awareness refers to the ability to understand and use language appropriately in various social contexts, considering the underlying intentions, cultural norms, and situational factors of words. It encompasses skills such as understanding and recognizing speech acts and adapting communication styles based on the context.

Several definitions also were provided by researchers and scholars; each definition tackles the concept of pragmatic awareness from a different angle. According to Taguchi (2009), “pragmatic awareness involves knowledge about language use and its social functions in communicative contexts” (p. 210), moreover, “pragmatic awareness is essential for learners to be able to use language appropriately in different contexts and for different purposes” (Rose & Kasper, 2001, p. 14). Additionally, Barron (2003, p. 2) reported that “pragmatic awareness involves sensitivity to the social meanings encoded in linguistic forms and the ability to modify language use appropriately in different contexts.”

From the above quotations, pragmatic awareness simply refers to the individuals' ability to navigate the subtleties of communication beyond the meaning of words. It involves understanding the implicit messages and specific context of norms that shape how language is used. Essentially, pragmatic awareness enables us to interpret what is meant rather than just what is said, allowing for effective communication in diverse social settings. It is like having a keen sensitivity to the unspoken rules of conversation, knowing when to be direct and when to use polite language, and being able to adjust the produced speech to fit the expectations of the listeners.

To sum up, pragmatic awareness plays a vital role in facilitating effective communication and fostering social harmony across various domains. Understanding its significance can enhance language teaching methodologies, improve intercultural competence, and promote successful communication outcomes in diverse contexts.

## **1.6. Pragmatic Failure**

Thomas (1983, p. 92) introduces the concept of 'pragmatic failure' to describe the inability to grasp the intended meaning behind spoken words, often resulting in breakdowns in crosscultural communication. Identifying the causes of pragmatic failure is crucial to avoiding awkward situations caused by inappropriate linguistic choices or unintentional offense.

This failure manifests in two main forms: pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic, terms borrowed from Leech's (1983, p. 127) analysis of pragmatics. Pragma-linguistics, as defined by Leech, pertains to our understanding of how language is used structurally (Leech, 1983, p. 128, as cited in Lihui and Jianbin, 2010). Crystal (1998, p. 51) similarly defines pragma-linguistics as the examination of language use from a structural perspective. In contrast, socio-pragmatics involves the influence of sociological factors on interaction, such as participants' social backgrounds, sex, age, and power dynamics (Crystal, 1998).

Pragma-linguistic failure arises primarily from differences in the linguistic expression of

pragmatic meaning, whereas socio-pragmatic failure stems from varying cultural interpretations of appropriate linguistic behavior (Thomas, 1983, p. 101). These failures reflect distinct pragmatic decision-making processes, although they often overlap. An utterance may be deemed pragma-linguistic failure from one perspective and socio-pragmatic failure from another.

### **1.6.1. Socio-pragmatic failure**

Socio-pragmatic failure refers to the breakdown in communication caused by misjudgments of social conditions affecting language use. In simpler terms, it occurs when errors occur regarding factors like social distance or obligations. Decisions regarding sociopragmatics are primarily social rather than linguistic in nature (Thomas, 1983, p. 104). Consequently, non-native speakers may perceive the degree of imposition or social distance differently from native speakers.

For instance, Reynolds (1995, p. 5) recounted an incident in Poland where a conversation on a train led to misunderstanding. When Reynolds asked about the number of trees in Poland, his Polish companion failed to recognize it as an attempt at idle conversation. Instead, the response seemed to rebuke Reynolds for asking what was perceived as an impractical or foolish question.

Another example of socio-pragmatic failure involves cultural taboos. In a scenario where Sara, a native English speaker, arrives in Korea, her host Laura's comments about Sara's weight breach a taboo in Western culture (Montgomery and Tinsley-Kim, 2001, p. 75). While it's customary in Korean culture to discuss topics like weight casually, in Western cultures, such inquiries are considered inappropriate. This disparity in cultural norms can lead to sociopragmatic misunderstandings. Thomas (1983, p. 106, as cited in Lihui and Jianbin, 2010, p. 55) suggests that pragmatic principles like politeness can clash with deeply held values such as sincerity, resulting in socio-pragmatic failures.

## 1.6.2 Pragma-linguistic failure

Pragma-linguistic failure occurs when the intended pragmatic meaning behind an utterance by a speaker differs significantly from the meaning typically assigned to it by native speakers of the target language, or when speech act strategies are incorrectly applied from the speaker's native language to the target language (Reynolds, 1995, p. 6). In simpler terms, pragmalinguistic failure happens when a non-native speaker appropriately uses a speech act in the target language but in an inappropriate manner. This failure can stem from two main sources: 'teaching-induced errors' and 'pragma-linguistic transfer,' where speech acts are improperly transferred from the speaker's native language to the target language (Lihui and Jianbin, 2010, p. 47). Certain teaching methods may inadvertently heighten the risk of pragma-linguistic failure. Kasper (1984, p. 3) identifies some of these 'teaching-induced errors' resulting from teaching materials or classroom discourse.

Kasper (1984, p. 3) suggests that pragma-linguistic failure occurs because learners often respond to literal meaning rather than intended meaning. To illustrate, consider the example provided by Kasper: a second language learner (L) bidding farewell to her native English-speaking landlady (E) after two years of staying with her.

E: I've got some sandwiches ready for you here. I hope it'll be enough.

L: Yes, of course it will be enough.

In this exchange, E's statement about the sandwiches isn't meant to inquire whether they are sufficient for L. Instead, it's a gesture of gratitude as L prepares to leave. However, L's response, while literal, may come across as impolite to E. A more appropriate response would express gratitude, such as "Thank you, how sweet" or "Thank you, how thoughtful." L's unintentional rudeness stems from a lack of pragmatic competence in English, leading her to respond literally to E's utterance.

## **1.7. Pragmatic Competence and Communicative Competence**

First, pragmatic competence is considered to be a construct of communicative competence, and generally covers a narrower scope than communicative competence does. Bachman and Palmer (1996) presented two major components of language competence: organizational knowledge and pragmatic knowledge. Under the category of pragmatic knowledge were more concrete aspects, functional knowledge and sociolinguistic knowledge, which were distinguished from Canale and Swain's (1980) model. To delineate these types of knowledge specifically, functional knowledge enables us to interpret relationships between utterances and the intentions of the speaker, also called illocutionary competence. On the other hand, sociolinguistic knowledge is required to produce or interpret language which is appropriate to a particular context, incorporating knowledge of dialects/varieties, registers, natural or idiomatic expressions, cultural references, and figures of speech (as cited in Kim, 2016, p. 453). Moreover, pragmatic competence, through the examination of the influential models of communicative competence, is mainly concerned with appropriate language use in each social context where conversation occurs. In the same context, Mey (1993) reported that the study of pragmatics examines how language usage in interpersonal communication is influenced by societal conventions. It is more important to use the right words and forms in the right situations while speaking effectively than it is to know the correct grammar. While gaining pragmatic information suitable for different contexts in the target culture can be extremely difficult for L2 learners, pragmatic training, especially explicit instruction with explanations that are metapragmatic, can help L2 learners become more pragmatically competent.

That is to say, it might be essential to comprehend the pragmatics of the target language in order to use vocabulary and grammatical structures correctly. Teaching pragmatics is essential for teaching any language, but it is especially important for teaching speech actions

adequately, which makes the speech act useful in efficiently communicating the speaker's intended message.

Similarly, Daskalovska et al. (2016, p. 57) highlight that since direct tactics are frequently comparable to those used in first languages, users of second languages typically have little difficulty using them when making requests. They might not always be able to transmit their first language pragmatic ability while communicating in a second language, which presents issues when indirect tactics are used. In other words, a crucial factor in learning a second language is developing the pragmatic ability. Whether ESL speakers use courteous, culturally appropriate language, when speaking or writing, they are demonstrating pragmatic competence.

Koike (1989, p. 279) defines pragmatic competence as “the speaker's comprehension and application of appropriateness and politeness rules, which determine how the speaker will interpret and construct speech acts.” For that, being pragmatically sound guarantees that the goals of communication are met while averting possible misunderstandings and miscommunications.

In summary, to foster pragmatic competence in second language learners, it might be beneficial to recognize typical speech acts that learners use in their communication and investigate the politeness methods that speakers use to accomplish their communication objectives. This might assist those who speak second languages in being more pragmatically and culturally conscious of their own speech, as well as provide insights to ESL teachers in order to develop the pragmatic competence of their learners.

Second, the appropriate use of language in an interactive context represents the communicative capabilities of the speaker or the user of the foreign language. This ability is known as the communicative competence. Communicative competence is the ability to use a language correctly and appropriately in a socio-cultural context where several conditions are realized. In language classrooms, language teachers try to create such a foreign language



atmosphere by including interactive activities like everyday conversations, role plays where sociolinguistic, pragmatic, strategic, and discourse competencies are used in the classroom context. Thus, we can say that in order to communicate effectively in foreign language classes, the students should acquire a good understanding of the target language different aspects, as well as, the ability of teachers to choose and include these aspects in their classrooms. In EFL classrooms, the majority of language students can produce, construct, and pronounce a number of correct words and sentences in a foreign language. However, when it comes to producing long speeches or holding everyday conversations with their teachers or other speakers of the target language, they feel blocked and unable to do so. Linguists describe this impediment as the lack of communicative competence. Therefore, it is a lack of the sociocultural knowledge about the foreign society, which affects the appropriate use of language in the social context.

Communicative Competence is the ability of the speaker to produce correct sentences and to use them appropriately in a socio-cultural context. The term communicative competence was related to Hymes (1972), who defines it as the grammatical knowledge of language and its appropriate use in a given context. He has illustrated the shift that happened in a language as an isolated system of structures into a system of communication based on functions. His work was mainly based on Chomsky's work of linguistic competence; it comes like a comparison of both competences.

The work of Hymes was developed later on by other researchers such as Canale and Swain(1980) and, Canale(1983), Bachman(1990)and Celce-Murcia et al.(1995), who attempted to define certain components leading to communicative competence.

Consequently, we can say that, since the emergence of Discourse Completion Task CTL as a language teaching approach, several linguists have tried to find out the different components that construct the communicative competence.

Communicative competence refers a person's unconscious knowledge of the rules governing the appropriate use of the language in a particular social situation. It is usually contrasted with linguistic competence, the person's unconscious knowledge of the formal patterning of language. Hall (2002) emphasizes that communicative competence entails understanding and effectively utilizing linguistic resources in socially, contextually, and culturally appropriate ways within various communicative settings. It also involves using language accurately and effectively to achieve communication objectives. He desired outcome of the language learning process is the ability to communicate competently, *not the ability to use the language exactly as a native speaker does.*

### **Conclusion**

The most efficient communicator in foreign languages is not always the person who is best at manipulating its structures. It is often the person who is the most skilled at processing the complete situation involving himself / herself and his/her hearers, taking into account what knowledge is already shared between them, and selecting items which will communicate his/her message effectively. In that sense, in particular situations, people are required to make polite requests when they want to ask for something. Therefore, if these expected behaviours are not done, it can be viewed as a social disrespect, or inappropriate behaviors. As a solution, many people proposed the teaching of the language pragmatics; according to them, if ESL students are more pragmatically aware; their failure to appropriately convey a message in the second language will be reduced.

# **CHAPTER TWO: The Speech act of Polite Requests**

## **Introduction**

This chapter will primarily deal with an over view of the linguistic realization concerning the speech act of polite request. We will first provide a definition of this specific speech act, outlining its main characteristics and differentiating it from other types of speech acts. Second, we will review the different studies conducted on requesting and politeness by examining these studies from the field of pragmatics. Employing such a study in foreign language teaching (FLT) could provide learners with a range of particular forms that can be used in different situations concerning the speech act of polite request. Moreover with a view to implementing this study in the foreign language classroom, the present chapter aims to expand the pragmatic features examined in the speech act of polite request.

## **2.1. Speech Acts**

### **2.1.1. Definitions of Speech Acts**

The concept of speech acts was initially introduced by Austin (1975) in his book "How to Do Things with Words" published in 1962. Although Austin didn't use the term "speech act," he referred to "performative utterance" or "performative sentence," indicating that speaking is an action (p.6). Searle (1969) later coined the term "speech act," defining it as fundamental units of linguistic communication (p.16).

Back and Harnish (1979) expanded on this idea, identifying speech acts as combinations of utterances, including locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. The schema for speech acts involves the speaker (S), the hearer (H), and the expression (e), where S says something to H (locutionary act), S does something by saying something to H (illocutionary act), and S affects H by doing something (perlocutionary act) (p.3).

Recognizing speech acts is crucial for successful communication, as they allow speakers to convey beliefs, provide information, and influence others' actions. However, understanding speech acts can be challenging, especially in cross-cultural communication, where pragmatic competence plays a significant role.

Recent studies have proposed various definitions and taxonomies of speech acts, considering conversational, social, and cultural contexts. Geis (1995) suggested a dynamic speech act theory, while Wee (2004) argued for a theory of communicative acts that incorporates linguistic and non-verbal forms of communication.

According to Capone (2005) emphasized the importance of situational and social aspects in understanding speech acts, proposing a pragmatic approach that considers the interaction between language, behavior, and social context. This integrated perspective contributes to a broader understanding of speech acts within communication theory.

In conclusion, speech act theory remains a contested field with diverse definitions and taxonomies. The inclusion of various perspectives and considerations, such as social context, behavior, and pragmatics, enriches our understanding of speech acts and their role in communication.

## **2.2. Types of Speech Acts**

Understanding speech acts is crucial for effective communication. Speech acts refer to the actions performed through language, such as making requests, giving commands, expressing opinions, or making promises. Scholars have proposed various classifications to categorize these acts, providing frameworks to analyze how language functions in social interactions. According to Allan (1998), speech acts can be classified using two main methods. The first method, referred to as “lexical classification” categorizes speech acts based on the illocutionary verbs they employ, such as apologizing, promising, requesting, and so on.

Austin (1975, p. 151) initially categorized speech acts into five groups:

1. "Verdictives," which involve issuing judgments,
2. "Exercitives," granting power to the hearer,
3. "Commissives," committing the speaker to an action,
4. "Behavitives," encompassing social behaviors like congratulating or apologizing,
5. "Explosives," related to conversation or argument, such as "I assume" or "I concede."

Various researchers have since attempted to establish a universally accepted taxonomy of speech acts. Communicative approaches usually classify speech acts based on their intended communication to the hearer.

Searle (1976) proposed five types of speech acts: representatives/assertive, directive, commissives, expressive, and declarations. Leech (1983) categorized speech acts by the verbs expressing them, grouping them into commissive, assertive, directive, interrogative, and expressive verbs. Bach and Harnish (1979) classified speech acts based on illocutionary acts into four main types, each with several subcategories: constatives, directives, commissives, and acknowledgments.

Another classification approach stems from Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, which considers the impact on face threat. Staab (1983) differentiated between four categories of face-threatening acts: threats to a speaker's negative and positive face, and threats to a hearer's negative and positive face.

Cohen (1996) devised a classification of 14 speech acts grouped into five main categories: representatives, directives, expressives, commissives, and declaratives, based on various taxonomies presented previously.

In conclusion, the classification of speech acts offers valuable insights into how language is used to convey meaning and achieve communicative goals. Whether categorized by illocutionary verbs, communicative functions, or social implications, these classifications

help us understand the diverse ways in which language is employed in different contexts. By studying speech acts, we can enhance our communication skills and navigate social interactions more effectively.

### **2.3. Types of Illocutionary Acts**

Illocutionary acts play a fundamental role in understanding the intended meaning behind utterances. These acts refer to the force or intention behind speech acts, indicating what the speaker aims to accomplish through their words. Various classifications have been proposed to categorize illocutionary acts, shedding light on how language is used to convey intentions and achieve communicative goals.

The illocutionary act, which is the intended meaning or force behind the utterance, serves as the core of speech acts. Different societies may interpret expressions differently, leading to variations in speech act usage. Therefore, language learners should focus on developing speech act behavior, including strategies for complaints, apologies, requests, and refusals, within sociocultural dimensions.

Speech acts have been classified into five categories by Searle (1976):

- a. **Representatives:** These utterances convey assertions or claims about the speaker's beliefs or thoughts.
- b. **Directives:** Directive speech acts aim to influence the behavior of the hearer, such as ordering or requesting.
- c. **Expressives:** Expressive speech acts convey the speaker's emotions or attitudes, such as apologies or expressions of sorrow.
- d. **Commissives:** Commissive speech acts commit the speaker to future actions, such as promises or threats.
- e. **Declaratives:** Declarative speech acts aim to change the state of affairs or reality, such as pronouncing someone as husband and wife.

Empirical studies conducted by Cohen, Olshtain, et al , have provided further insights into speech act perception and production by learners of second or foreign languages, aiming to establish cross-language and language-specific norms of speech act behavior.

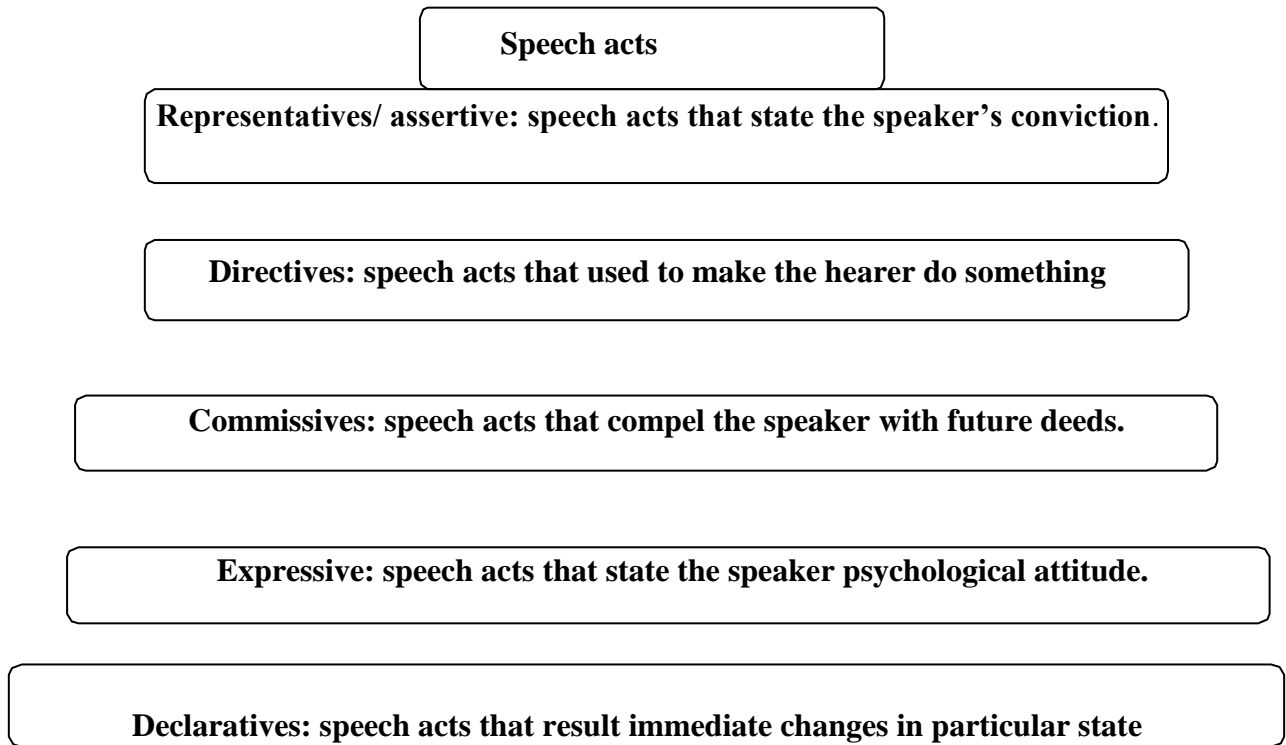


Figure 2.1: The five types of speech act that presented by Austin Adapted from (Huang , 2008, 106-108)

In conclusion, the classification of illocutionary acts provides valuable insights into the underlying intentions behind speech acts. By categorizing these acts based on their intended meaning or force, we gain a deeper understanding of how language functions in social interactions. Studying illocutionary acts enhances our ability to interpret and respond to verbal communication effectively, ultimately facilitating smoother and more meaningful exchanges in diverse linguistic contexts.

## 2.4. Speech Act Theory

Speech Act Theory, a significant framework within the realms of linguistics and the philosophy of language, delves into the investigation of how verbal expressions serve as actions

imbued with communicative purposes. Initially formulated by J.L. Austin in the mid-20th century and subsequently expanded upon by John Searle, this theory scrutinizes the notion that language isn't merely descriptive but rather per-formative, actively shaping social constructs through various speech acts. It elucidates how individuals employ language to achieve diverse objectives, ranging from issuing requests and commands to expressing opinions or making commitments, and examines how these actions are perceived and comprehended by recipients. Through its analysis of the structure and functionality of speech acts, Speech Act Theory offers valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of verbal communication and the significance of language within social contexts. (Hymes ,1972)

Numerous researchers have endeavored to grasp the essence of speech act theory. Many argue that this task proves challenging unless one distinguishes between three key terms: speech situation, speech event and speech acts. Hymes (1972) provided a helpful distinction among these terms. He contended that within a community, various situations involving speech, such as meetings or lectures, exist. However, these situations lack consistent rules governing them in and of themselves. Consequently, simply relabeling them in terms of speech does not offer much insight. It is more beneficial to confine the term “speech event” to activities directly regulated by rules or norms for speech usage. Examples include conversations occurring in settings like private discussions or classroom lectures. In essence, “speech acts” represent the fundamental elements within the set comprising speech situations, speech events, and speech acts.

Furthermore, the functional unit in any communication is referred to as a speech act, serving as the minimal unit of analysis. Speech acts are influenced by rules of perception and interpretation. Examples of speech acts include reporting, promising, requesting, suggesting, and apologizing.



Searle's (1969) classification of speech acts posits that only a single speech act exists in any conversation. However, this idea has faced criticism from several researchers who argue that conversations are multifunctional. Labov and Fanshel (1977, p. 29) asserted that “most utterances can be seen as performing several speech acts simultaneously.” Conversations are not merely a series of utterances but rather a blend of speech and actions intertwined through a framework of understandings and reactions.

In other words, unlike language usage that serves only as information transfer, speech act may be simply described as linguistic units used for conveying one’s goals. As opposed to Austin’s (1962) classification of speech acts, which focuses on contextual appropriateness, Searle (1976) contends that these five categories determine the verbs rather than the acts, and he creates a taxonomy that is comparable of representatives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations. Both Austin’s categorization and Searle’s taxonomy are summarized in the table below (Sematur, 2022,p. 8):

Austin’s Classification (1962)	Searle’s Classification (1969)
<i>Verdictives</i> give a finding or verdict (e.g., analyse, assess, characterise, date, describe, estimate, hold, rank)	<i>Representatives</i> commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition (e.g., asserting, concluding)
<i>Exercitives</i> exercise of a power or right (e.g., advise, command, direct, order, recommend)	<i>Directives</i> show attempts by the speaker to get the addressee to do something (e.g., ordering, questioning, requesting)
<i>Commissives</i> commit you to an action (e.g., contracts, embrace, guarantee, pledge, promise, swear, vow)	<i>Commissives</i> commit the speaker to some future course of action (e.g., offering, promising, threatening)
<i>Behabitives</i> expressing attitudes about social behaviour (e.g., apologise, express gratitude, express sympathy, greet, wish)	<i>Expressives</i> express a psychological state specified in the sincerity condition about a state of affairs specified in the propositional content (e.g., apologising, congratulating, thanking, welcoming)
<i>Expositives</i> fit utterances into conversations (e.g., affirm, answer, call, class, deny, emphasise, identify, illustrate)	<i>Declarations</i> affect immediate changes in the institutional state of affairs which tend to rely on elaborate extra linguistic institutions (e.g., christening, declaring war, excommunicating, firing from employment, marrying)

*Figure 2.2: Classifications of speech acts according to Austin & Searle (Semanur 2022,p. 9)*

Moreover, the speech act theory, originating from the work of philosophers such as Austin and later developed by Searle, is a framework that examines the ways language can be used, not just to convey information, but also to perform actions including per formative utterances, for example, saying “I promise” is not just a statement; it is an action that commits the speaker to a future course of action. Illocutionary acts, like asserting, commanding, requesting, apologizing, and complimenting, perlocutionary acts (for example: a successful request) result in the hearer performing the requested action.

To sum, the speech act theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how language functions beyond its literal meaning, enabling speakers to accomplish various communicative goals and influencing the behaviour and perceptions of others.

## **2.5. The Teach ability of Speech Acts**

This section is an attempt to highlight if speech acts behavior can be taught. If yes, how can it be taught? Since speech acts behavior is everyday language use, it can be taught. “The fact that speech acts reflect, for the most part, reutilized language behavior helps learning in the sense that much of what is said is predictable” (Cohen,1996, p.408).

Teaching strategies of speech acts and linguistic means used in its socio-cultural dimension is probably the only way for EFL learners to develop their sociolinguistic ability. Dunham (1992)described a series of techniques for teaching complimenting behavior after doing an informal study of forty south East Asian high school students, employing the complimenting outlined by Wolf. The techniques are: reviewing how it is done in the native culture, reviewing how it is done in the United States, vocabulary phrase lists, student practice, role play in gin pairs, teacher role play with students in front of the class, projects in which learners must compliment natives, students’ oral reports to the class following their field

experiences with native speakers, connecting techniques to lengthen conversation, and paired interaction with complimenting and connecting techniques(Cohen, 1996,p.411) .

The teach ability of speech acts lies in their fundamental role in communication and social interaction. While speech acts are often intuitive, they can also be explicitly taught and learned through various methods. Teachers can provide direct instruction on different types of speech acts, their linguistic features, and appropriate contexts for their use. This includes teaching students about requests, apologies, compliments, invitations, and more. Teachers can demonstrate how to effectively communicate with others. This can involve role-playing exercises or real-life examples to illustrate the use of speech acts in context (Semanur, 2022). Furthermore, engaging students in activities such as dialogues, scenarios, and roleplays allows them to apply their understanding of speech acts in simulated interactions.

Feedback from teachers and peers helps reinforce learning and refine communication skills. Teaching about speech acts also involves raising awareness of cultural differences in communication styles and norms. Students can learn how different cultures express politeness, make requests, and convey meaning through speech acts.

Encouraging students to reflect on their own communication experiences and analyze real-life interactions enhances their understanding of speech acts. This can involve discussing instances where speech acts were successful or unsuccessful and identifying strategies for improvement. Teachers can effectively teach the use of speech acts, empowering students to become competent communicators capable of navigating diverse social contexts with sensitivity and proficiency.

## **2.6. The Speech Act of Polite Request**

The speech act of requesting is realized by three ways. The speaker can opt for a direct, indirect or the formal use of modals. This section concerns the linguistic means used to realize the speech act of requesting, taking into account the participants' role in the society. As any

situation of normal life, in EFL classroom, students make a request and all other main constitutions of Face threatening act (FTA) Different types of requests, direct and indirect, have been done by students as it was found by the previous study in the field of teaching English as a foreign language.

According to Rulon and McCreary (1986), students perform requests for clarification and confirmation when interacting with each other more than when interacting with the teacher. ESL students make requests for need, help and permission within the classrooms found by Ellis. It can be concluded that EFL students' requests performed are "functionally driven" (cited in Jabbar Rasheed, 2020,p.507).

The speech act of a polite request is a linguistic act where one person asks for something from another person in a courteous and respectful manner. It involves using language that is considerate of the other person's feelings and autonomy. Polite requests often include phrases such as 'please, would you mind, could you,' etc., and may also involve expressing gratitude regardless of the outcome. This speech act serves to maintain positive social interactions and to foster cooperation and goodwill between individuals.

Indeed, the speech act of requesting has been a hot topic in Inter language Pragmatics (ILP) research. Being one of the inherently face-threatening speech acts according to Brown and Levinson (1987); requests are very commonly used in daily interactions and are thus an exciting source of investigation. The speech act of requesting is an illocutionary act through which the speaker asks the hearer of a particular piece of information or some service. The beneficiary of this particular speech act is the speaker, which is what makes it potentially face-threatening (as cited in Semanur, 2022, p.10).

In politeness theory, using the terminology from Spencer-Oatey's Rapport Management Model (2000), it can be said that the face-threatening effect of requests can be diminished to protect or improve rapport, or reinforced to neglect or challenge it. That being said, specific

strategies can be adopted while performing the speech act of requesting to modify its facethreatening effect.

A classification of the speech act of requesting, regarding the level of directness, was suggested by House and Kasper (1981) and Blum-Kulka (1984): direct, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect levels (or just indirect). This classification is the one that has been the most ‘agreed-upon’ framework for empirical studies investigating the level of directness in the potentially face-threatening speech act of requesting. Performing the speech act of request through the most direct level would mean making use of imperatives, performatives, or ‘hedged performatives’ (Semanur, 2022,p.11).

That is to say, realizing the speech act of request through the conventionally indirect level requires tending to the necessities the conditions of the interaction bring about. Nonconventionally indirect level, on the other hand, would mean giving hints or “contextual clues” when utilized, which would be the safest road to take if the speaker is afraid of threatening the face of the hearer or the rapport they have. The acquisition of adequate teaching speech act of request is significant for foreign language use because extensive speech act of request helps EFL learners to use the language and functions for effective and understandable communication. By the same token, a speech act of request is an important act in teaching and learning any language and it is a significant aspect in the development of the English language.

In the same way, Jabbar Rasheed (2020) stated that learning the appropriate production of the speech act of requesting is regarded as the most important aspect in academic achievement for foreign or second language students. Moreover, the teaching of the speech act of requesting has a vital role inside the EFL classroom and it can be effective in raising learners’ communication skills and enhancing the social-culture expressions (p.507).

## 2.7. The Theory of Politeness

The theory of politeness in language and communication explores how people use language to maintain social harmony and show respect for others' feelings, face, and autonomy. One of the most prominent frameworks in this field is Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory, developed in the 1970's. According to this theory, politeness revolves around two main concepts: positive face and negative face. Positive face refers to the desire to be liked, appreciated, and included in social groups, while negative face refers to the desire to have freedom of action and not be imposed upon by others (Semanur, 2022).

The theory, proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), has been the emerging point of many other theories of politeness suggested in the literature of pragmatics research. The backbone of this theory is the term 'face', which is something within Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory "that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced."

Although Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory is probably the most popular among the others, it was also exposed to criticism for its individualistic and Western perspectives. To elaborate, this theory leaves out other crucial components of an interaction in its analysis, such as the hearer and the social circumstances of the interaction, while focusing too much on the speaker and on their individuality. On another note, the theory might not apply to all cultures, which counter-proves (Semanur, 2022, p.17).

In the area of politeness, Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) Politeness Theory is considered a greatly influential framework in analysing discourse related to politeness. There have been various criticisms on the theory, even from its beginning stages. There has also been an ongoing debate on whether the framework is still applicable in the current trends of sociolinguistic studies. In addition, many recent studies have also adapted Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness framework, such as Jalilifar (2009), Elmianvari and Kheirabadi

(2013) and Pomerantz and Heritage (2013), which proves its relevance in today's society.

Brown and Levinson's framework is based on the notion of 'face'. They assert that an interaction is controlled by managing the 'face' of the participants through the application of politeness strategies. The concept of 'face' is then further divided into the 'Negative Face' and 'Positive Face'. Brown and Levinson proposed various strategies people employ to mitigate threats to these faces in communication, including:

- Bald on-record: Directly stating a request without any politeness markers.
- Positive politeness: Emphasizing closeness and camaraderie to reduce the imposition on the hearer's positive face. This may involve using friendly language or expressing empathy.
- Negative politeness: Acknowledging the hearer's negative face by minimizing the imposition. This often involves hedging the request or using deferential language.
- Off-record: Indirectly hinting at a request without explicitly stating it. This allows the speaker to avoid imposing on the hearer's face (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 65, as cited in Thuruvan and Melor, nd, p.214).

This means that, the 'Negative Face' is the independence of action, while the 'Positive Face' is the need to be acknowledged and liked by others in an interaction. It is suggested that, in the course of an interaction, this notion is threatened to a certain degree and this is referred to as 'Face Threatening Acts'.

Moreover, participants in an interaction resort to using politeness strategies to ensure that they protect each other's 'face' from being damaged in the interaction. As requests are categorized as a Face Threatening Act (FTA), a participant would choose a suitable strategy to either strengthen or mitigate the effects of FTA on a participant's face. Brown and Levinson (1987) propose that the participants' choice of strategies depends on the gravity and seriousness

of the particular FTA, which can be assessed by the speaker, based on three variables, namely, the social distance between the participants (D), the relative power of the hearer (P), and the rate of imposition on another person's actions (R). For instance, requesting to borrow money from a peer would be a less serious FTA as compared to requesting to borrow money from a teacher. This is because the person making the request would have lower relative power over the teacher and the social distance between them is wider. As such, the rate of imposition is considered higher (Thuruvan and Melor, nd, p.215).

To sum up, politeness theory provides valuable insights to understanding politeness through the speech act of requesting in the education setting and how people navigate social interactions through language, striving to maintain social harmony and mutual respect.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have proposed a detailed study and analysis of the speech act of polite request, which has been drawn up on the basis of speech act. Accordingly, the speech act of a polite request serves as a vital tool in interpersonal communication, allowing individuals to ask for something while respecting the autonomy and feelings of others. It is similar to having a keen sensitivity to the unspoken rules of conversation, knowing when to be direct and when to use polite language, and being able to adjust the speech in order to fit the expectations of our listeners. By employing polite language and strategies to mitigate potential face threats, such as positive and negative politeness, individuals can navigate social interactions smoothly, fostering cooperation and maintaining positive relationships. Polite requests demonstrate an understanding of social norms and contribute to the creation of a respectful and harmonious environment in both personal and professional settings.



# **CHAPTER THREE: Research Methodology**

## **Introduction**

So far, the theoretical part has deeply investigated the pragmatic awareness of EFL students in using the speech act of polite request (requesting). The next step is designing the methodology, collecting and analysing data as a practical part. Accordingly, this chapter includes the research approach adopted, the design and the data collection methods used in the current study, in addition to data analysis. It is, hence, concerned with the methodology and procedures used in data collection and analysis. Firstly, it begins with the research approach and design that were adopted in this study. It describes the quantitative and qualitative research approaches. It also describes the population and sampling techniques. Finally, it includes the data collection instruments used in the current study, which are the learners' discourse completion task and the teachers' interview.

### **3.1. The Research Approach**

Considering that our study belongs to the field of descriptive studies that aims "to accurately and systematically describe population, situation or phenomenon" (McCombes, 2022, p.1), this study adopts the mixed method approach. Venkatesh et al. (2013) claim that mixed methods refers to a technique that blends quantitative and qualitative research methodologies in the same study or enquiry. This means that the research will be using both qualitative and quantitative research methods for the collection and analysis of data.

### **3.1.1. Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research allows for a deeper understanding of the importance of research topic. Qualitative data are analyzed depending on thematic interpretation. According to Nunan (1991, p. 55):

Qualitative method is characterised through a way of means of verbal descriptions as its statistics, it really works to find data from data-wealthy sample, and it entails frequencies of incidence of members` beliefs, opinions, attitudes and motivation which can be explored, analyzed, and interpreted via way of means of a few statistical strategies.

That is to say, qualitative research is non-statistical; rather, it is based on interpretations generated from the interview, for instance. To conclude, the qualitative strategy is an interpretative method, which tries to benefit perception into particular behaviors associated with a social phenomenon through the evaluation of the members` personal reports. In addition, through this method the researcher is able to construct data through addressing questions like how, why, in what way, so it helps the researcher to watch the participants` reports and realities from their perspective.

### **3.1.2. Quantitative Research**

Unlike qualitative research, quantitative research is statistical in nature. According to Cresswel (2009, p. 172), quantitative research is “a means for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables; these variables, in turn, can be measured, typically on instruments, so that numbered data can be analyzed using statistical procedures”. In the same context, Blaxter et al. (2006, p. 9) stated that:

Quantitative research is characterized by deductive approaches to the research process aimed at proving, disproving, or lending credence to existing theories. This type of research involves measuring variables and testing relationships

between variables in order to reveal patterns, correlations, or causal relationships.

That is to say, quantitative research is characterised by the use of numerical analysis through the sample selected by the researcher in order to explain the main issue. It displays the findings in form of numerical and mathematical procedures.

### **3.2. Research Design**

Research Design refers to a set of techniques and methods that are used to conduct the research study. Churchill and Lacobucci (2005) provide a simple definition to the research design. According to them, it is “the blueprint that is followed to complete the study”(p.74). Similarly, Cresswell (2009) expresses that the research design is the plans and the procedures for research that span the discussion from broad. In fact, the type of the research design that will be used in this study is descriptive. In order to investigate the pragmatic awareness of EFL students in using the speech act of polite request (requesting), both quantitative and qualitative research methods were adopted to collect and analyse data. The adopted methods seek to provide a deep understanding of the research topic and enhance the validity of the research findings. Certain research cannot be approached only through one method because of the nature of its data. For that, using a mixed method can help decrease bias of the findings.

### **3.3. Data Collection Instruments**

#### **3.3.1 The Students’ Discourse Completion Task (DCT)**

##### **3.3.1.1. Aims and Description**

DCT is a quantitative tool used to collect information which includes situations. A DCT is an uncomplicated and affordable way for collecting data. Accordingly, it is a valuable research instrument for gathering large quantitative data in a short period of time. The students’ DCT is mainly designed to find out whether the EFL learners are pragmatically aware to use the speech act of polite requests. Second, it attempts to investigate the actual state of learning

in terms of pragmatic awareness. In order to collect the relevant data, and to answer the research questions of the study, a quantitative data collection instrument consisting of an online DCT was used. A DCT was designed to conduct this study with 30 third year students at Biskra University. The rationale behind using this DCT is to measure the extent to which they are pragmatically aware of the use of polite requests

We sent the link of the DCT to the students on a Facebook group in the period between the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> of May, 2024, using Google forms. We received 30 responses. Among the 30 students who answered the questionnaire, 26 students are females and four are males.

The DCT contained three (3) closed-ended questions in which the answers are suggested and the respondents are only asked to choose the ones that are related to them (Multiple choice), in addition to ten (10) situations.

### **3.3.1.2. Data Analysis Procedures**

The quantitative analysis of the data collected tackled the closed-ended questions obtained from the DCT (Figures). In addition, the quantitative analysis uncovers the existing relationship between the variables, the pragmatic awareness of EFL students and the speech act of polite request (requesting), simply to verify and confirm or deny the previously stated hypotheses.

The DCT includes closed-ended questions, which were analysed quantitatively; the results are interpreted in terms of numerical data manually coded in a Microsoft Excel document in the form of percentages, then presented in the form of tables and figures.

### **3.3.2. The Teachers' Interview**

In social research, an interview is a qualitative tool. It is a useful data gathering strategy. There are various types of interviews, among which are the semi-structured, structured and unstructured interviews. Cohen and Manion (1994, p.35) define the interview as a method “used between two persons, with the interviewer aiming to collect views and attitudes of the

interviewees concerning a specific topic". As it is known in social research, the interview is an important and essential data collection method that is widely used by researchers. In the present study, the researcher adopted a structured interview to collect teachers' perception about the importance of pragmatic awareness to perform the speech act of polite requests, because of its greater flexibility and validity of reports.

In this study, this tool is adopted as a follow up to the DCT response, and to test the stated hypotheses. "Structured interviews involve a predetermined set of questions asked in a standardized manner, ensuring all interviewees are asked the same questions in the same order. This method enhances reliability and allows for systematic comparison of responses." (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2018). That is to say, a structured interview is a standardized questioning method where all participants are asked the same set of questions in the same order, ensuring consistency and facilitating comparison of responses. Thus, the interview can be a good step for checking, investigating, and analysing the data gathered about the subject.

### **3.3.2.1. Aims and Description**

The present study involved an interview that is based on what was dealt with in the theoretical part of this research. The interview was conducted with four (4) EFL teachers at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra. The selection of the interviewees is based on convenience sampling technique, which belongs to non-random sampling technique. Also, we gave sufficient time for the respondents to express their opinions, share their views and make comments on the topic under investigation. The interview was conducted with four (4) EFL teachers; they contributed to our study by answering the questions, reporting experiences, commenting, and giving suggestions. The interview consists of ten (10) questions, which are either directly or indirectly related to the research. The questions are open-ended, which provides the freedom of responses as to gain more detailed answers and to gather information on our subject.

### **3.3.2.2. Data Analysis Procedures**

This study is a mixed method approach, in which the teachers' interview was the second instrument to be used. The data obtained from the interview were analysed using "Qualitative Content Analysis" (QCA), with the aim to highlight whether EFL learners are pragmatically aware to use speech act of polite request, and to elicit their teaching experiences that raise the students' pragmatic awareness of using polite requests. To reach these aims, QCA was used to categorize the data into different themes. Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1278) assert that QCA is "a research method for subjective interpretation of the content of text data through a systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns". Put differently, qualitative content analysis is applied in order to categorize textual data into symbols and issues, elicit meaning, and reach conclusions. Therefore, QCA was used in order to analyze the qualitative data obtained from the teachers interview. We have read and reread the teachers' answers to analyse the open-ended questions of the interview.

### **3.4. Population and Sampling Techniques**

Sampling is a very important step in any investigation; in different words, "Sampling involves selecting a subset from the entire population under study to address research questions and propose solutions for the stated problem." (Thompson, 2012, p. 1). Since, the study is descriptive in nature; our target population is represented by third year LMD students of English department at Biskra University. They consist of two hundred and thirty two (232) students. Acharya et al. (2013, p. 330) stated that a sample is "a subset of the population selected so as to be representative of the larger population".

In the present study we have dealt with a homogeneous sample composed of thirty (30) males and females and four (04) EFL teachers. The students sample was required to respond to

three questions and ten situations designed in DCT. Moreover, the participant teachers were required to answer ten open ended questions to fulfil the aim of our research.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter included the general approach, design and data gathering methods used in this study. It included the research methodology used to address the study's questions and test the validity of the research hypotheses stated in the general introduction of this dissertation.

This study used the mixed research method. Then, this chapter has described the data collection instruments (students' DCT and teachers' interview) of the current study. Also, it has provided a descriptive account of the data analysis procedures. Finally, this chapter shed light on the sampling technique adopted to gather the data.

# CHAPTER FOUR: Results and Data Analysis

## Introduction

This chapter displays the findings gained from the analysis of the data collection tools. It exhibits the main results obtained after the analysis of the third year EFL students DCT and teachers' interview. More specifically, this chapter reports the findings of the learners online DCT posted on a Facebook group messenger; in addition, it presents the results obtained from the analysis of the teachers' interview. The findings of the study were analyzed using both the quantitative method and the qualitative content analysis (QCA) method.

### 4.1. Findings of the Students' Discourse Completion Task (DCT)

The procedures undertaken in analyzing the data obtained from the questionnaire is described as follows:

- Statement of the DCT as they appear.
- Reporting the results of the questions in the form of tables and figures.
- Analysing and discussing the findings of each question separately.

The detailed results of the questionnaire (DCT) are presented below.

#### 4.1.1. Analysis of the Findings Obtained from the Students' DCT

##### Section One: General Information

The questionnaire starts with questions which aim at revealing students' personal information.

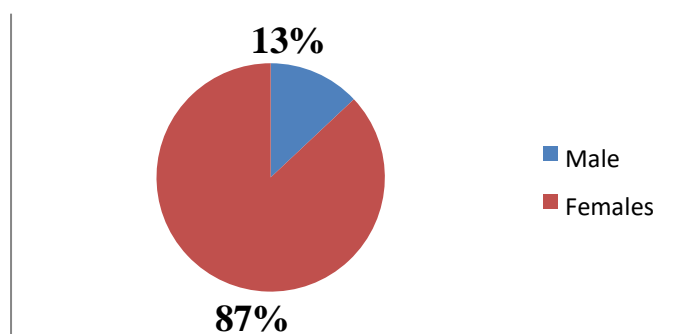


## Q1. Gender

This question aims to know the gender of our participants. The question offers two items about learners' gender: male or female. Also, the aim of this item is to determine the most interested category of students answering our research questionnaire.

Gender	Number	Percentage
<b>Male</b>	<b>4</b>	13%
<b>Female</b>	<b>26</b>	87%
Total	30	100 %

*Table 4.1: Students' Gender*



*Figure 4.1: Students' Gender*

The results displayed in the table above show that the majority of students (87%) who study third year at Mohamed KhiderUniversity of Biskra are girls, and only (13%) represent boys. As shown in the table, females (26) are about 6 times the number of males (4).

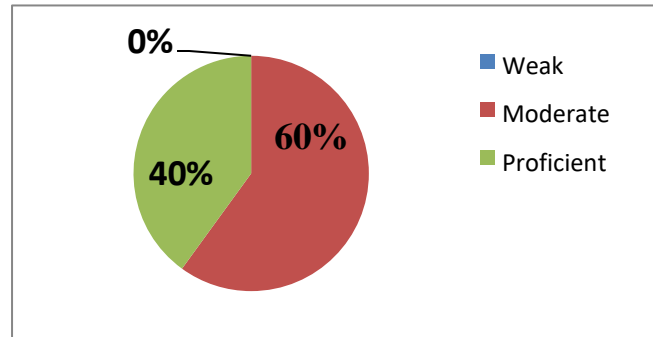
## Q2. How do you consider your level in English?

This question enquires about the respondents' opinions about their level in English. Three options were offered to select from the lowest degree to the highest: weak, moderate, and proficient.

Options	Number	Percentage
<b>Weak</b>	00	00%
<b>Moderate</b>	<b>18</b>	60%

<b>Proficient</b>	12	40%
Total	30	100%

**Table 4.2: The Students' Consideration of their Level in English**



**Figure 4.2: The students' Consideration of their Level in English**

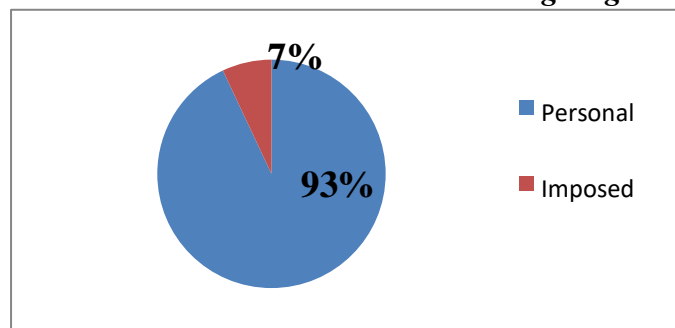
It is noticed from the results contained in the table and figure that a considerable number of subjects (60%) claim that their level in English is “Moderate”. Others (40%) show that they are proficient in English. However none of students chose ‘weak’.

**Q3. Your choice of studying English was:**

This question aims to seek information about whether the choice of studying English as a university major is personal or imposed.

Options	Number	Percentage
<b>Personal</b>	<b>28</b>	93%
<b>Imposed</b>	<b>2</b>	7%
Total	30	100 %

**Table 4.3: Students' Choice in Learning English**



**Figure 4.3: Students' Choice in Learning English**

The figure reveals that the majority of students (93%) said that their choice of learning English as a foreign language is personal. However, just a small portion of the participants (7%) claimed ‘imposed’.

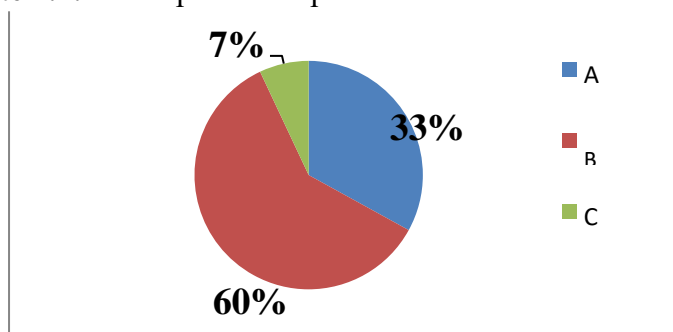
**Section Two: Discourse Completion Task**

**Situation 01:** Imagine that you are in a classroom and need to borrow a textbook from a classmate. What would you say?

- a. Would it be possible for me to borrow your textbook for today’s class?
- b. Hey, do you mind if I borrow your textbook
- c. Get me your textbook now.

Options	Number	Percentage
<b>A</b>	<b>10</b>	33%
<b>B</b>	<b>18</b>	60%
<b>C</b>	<b>2</b>	7%
Total	30	100 %

**Table 4.4:** Participants’ Responses Distribution in Situation 1



**Figure 4.4:** Participants’ Responses Distribution in Situation 1

Table and figure reveal that (60%) of the students would say “hey, do you mind if I borrow your textbook”. Therefore, this indicates that EFL learners not politeness at all. Also, (33%) of them chose “would it be possible for me to borrow your textbook for today’s class”.

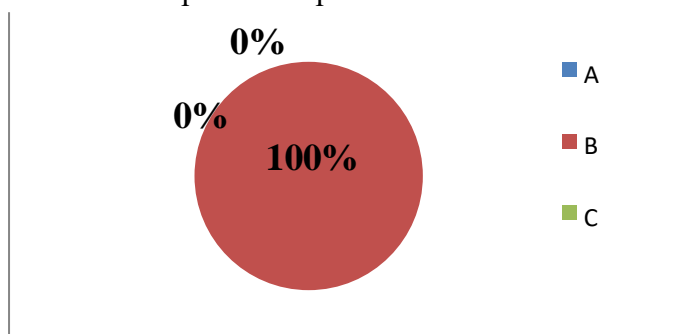
However, (7%) of students reported “get me your textbook now” as an impolite way. **Situation**

**02:** Imagine you are attending a meeting, and you'd like to request a clarification from the presenter. What would you say?

- a. I don't understand. Explain it again.
- b. Could you please clarify that point for me?
- c. What are you talking about? Explain it better

Options	Number	Percentage
<b>A</b>	<b>00</b>	00%
<b>B</b>	<b>30</b>	100%
<b>C</b>	<b>00</b>	00%
Total	30	100 %

**Table 4.5:** Participants’ Responses Distribution in Situation 2



**Figure 4.5:** Participants’ Responses Distribution in Situation 2

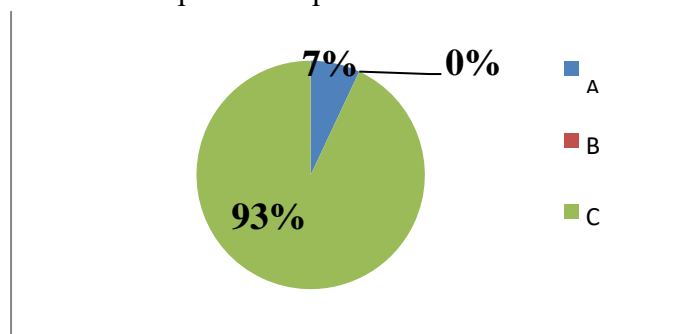
The data obtained from this question reveal that there is unanimity among students. More specifically, all (100%) students answered the question politely. That is to say, EFL students claimed that they would say “could you please clarify that point for me”. As a result, it seems that the students are familiar with pragmatic features. On the contrary, none of the students said “I don't understand. Explain it again” or “what are you talking about? Explain it better”.

**Situation 03:** Imagine you are working in pairs, and you want to ask your partner to explain a grammar rule again. What would you say?

- a. I didn't understand. Teach me again!
- b. You're not making sense. Explain it better!
- c. Could you please explain that grammar rule one more time?

Options	Number	Percentage
<b>A</b>	<b>2</b>	7%
<b>B</b>	<b>00</b>	00%
<b>C</b>	<b>28</b>	93%
Total	30	100 %

**Table 4.6:** Participants' Responses Distribution in Situation 3



**Figure 4.6:** Participants' Responses Distribution in Situation 3

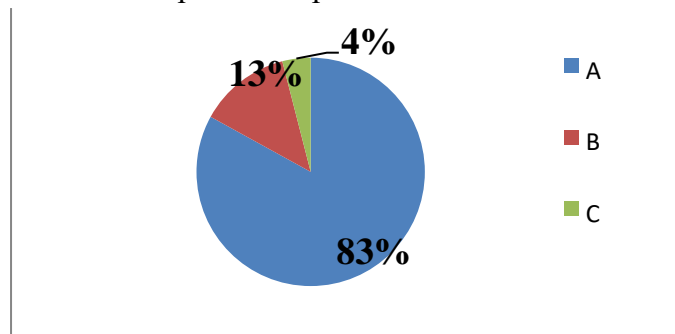
According to the statistics offered in figure, the majority of the students (93%) claimed that they would say “could you please explain that grammar rule one more time”. However, some of them (7%) said “I didn't understand. Teach me again!”. None of the students opted for “you're not making sense. Explain it better!”

**Situation 04:** Imagine you are in a group discussion, and you want to request your classmates to speak one at a time. What would you say?

- a. Could we please take turns speaking?
- b. Stop interrupting each other!
- c. This is chaos! Let's speak properly!

Options	Number	Percentage
<b>A</b>	<b>25</b>	83%
<b>B</b>	<b>4</b>	13%
<b>C</b>	<b>1</b>	4%
Total	30	100 %

**Table 4.7:** Participants' Responses Distribution in Situation 4



**Figure 4.7:** Participants' Responses Distribution in Situation 4

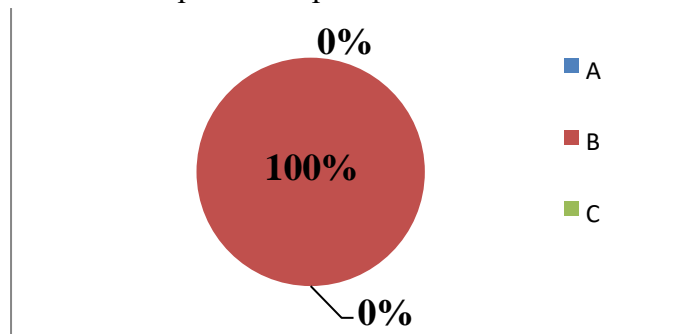
The data presented in figure reveal that the majority of the students, a percentage (83%), answered politely; they indicated that they would say in this situation “could we please take turns speaking?”. However, (13%) of the students answered the situation impolitely, saying “stop interrupting each other!”. Also, (4%) of them selected “this is chaos! Let's speak properly!”.

**Situation 05:** Imagine you need some help with pronunciation, and you want to ask your teacher for assistance. What would you say?

- a. You need to teach me how to pronounce this!
- b. Excuse me, could you help me with my pronunciation, please?
- c. I don't understand. Teach me!

Options	Number	Percentage
<b>A</b>	<b>00</b>	00%
<b>B</b>	<b>30</b>	100%
<b>C</b>	<b>00</b>	00%
Total	30	100 %

**Table 4.8:** Participants' Responses Distribution in Situation 5



**Figure 4.8:** Participants' Responses Distribution in Situation 5

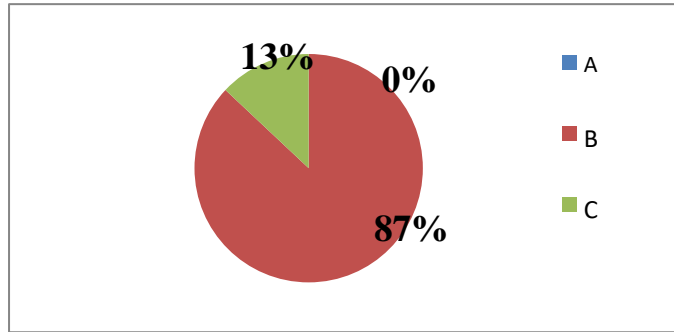
According to the statistics offered in the table above, all the students (100%) said “excuse me, could you help me with my pronunciation, please”; however, none of them selected the “you need to teach me how to pronounce this!” or “I don’t understand. Teach me!” options.

**Situation 06:** Imagine you are participating in a language game, and you need more time to think of a response. What would you say?

- a. Hurry up! I need more time.
- b. Excuse me, could I have a moment to think, please?
- c. This is taking too long. Give me a break.

Options	Number	Percentage
<b>A</b>	<b>00</b>	00%
<b>B</b>	<b>26</b>	87%
<b>C</b>	<b>4</b>	13%
Total	30	100 %

**Table 4.9:** Participants' Responses Distribution in Situation 6



**Figure 4.9:** Participants' Responses Distribution in Situation 6

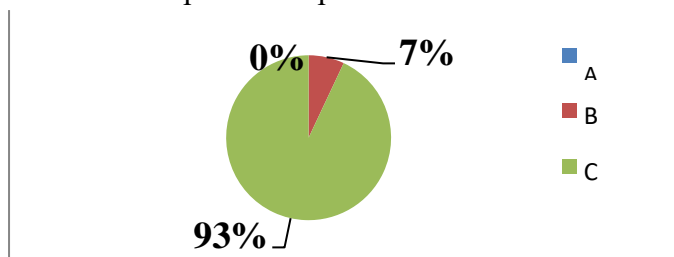
The results reveal that more than half of the students (87%) chose in the sixth situation “excuse me, could I have a moment to think, please”. However, only (13%) reported with “this is taking too long. Give me a break”. On the other hand, none of the students selected “hurry up! I need more time”.

**Situation 07:** Imagine you are confused about a homework assignment, and you want to ask your teacher for clarification. What would you say?

- This makes no sense. Explain it better!
- I don't get it. Explain it to me again.
- Could you please clarify the homework assignment for me?

Options	Number	Percentage
<b>A</b>	<b>00</b>	00%
<b>B</b>	<b>2</b>	7%
<b>C</b>	<b>28</b>	93%
Total	30	100 %

**Table 4.10:** Participants' Responses Distribution in Situation 7



**Figure 4.10:** Participants' Responses Distribution in Situation 7



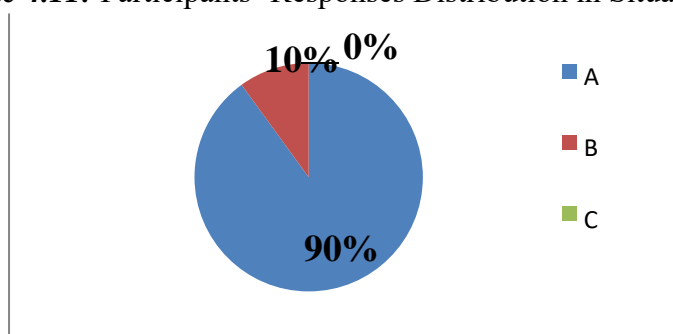
The data presented reveal that the great majority of the students, that is a percentage of (93%), selected the polite answer: “Could you please clarify the homework assignment for me” in situation seven. However, only (7%) of the students answered the question with “I don't get it. Explain it to me again”. However, none of the students chose “this makes no sense, explain it better!” option. From the findings, it can be deduced that the respondents are pragmatically aware with the speech act of polite requests.

**Situation 08:** Imagine you are preparing for a presentation, and you need to borrow a projector from the audio visual room. What would you say?

- a. Excuse me, could I borrow the projector for my presentation, please?
- b. I need the projector now!
- c. Give me the projector. I have a presentation.

Options	Number	Percentage
<b>A</b>	<b>27</b>	90%
<b>B</b>	<b>3</b>	10%
<b>C</b>	<b>00</b>	00%
Total	30	100 %

**Table 4.11:** Participants’ Responses Distribution in Situation 8



**Figure 4.11:** Participants’ Responses Distribution in Situation 8

It can be seen from the statistics provided that the students’ select “excuse me, could I borrow the projector for my presentation, please” as a polite request, which was mentioned by

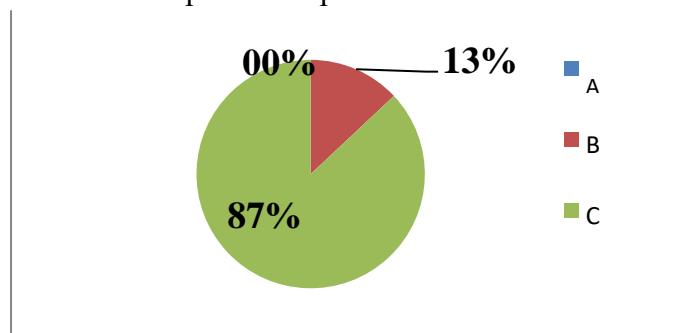
(90%) of them. “I need the projector now!” was selected by (10%) of the students. However, no one selected “Give me the projector. I have a presentation”.

**Situation 09:** Imagine you are in a group project, and you need a classmate’s notes for reference. What would you say?

- a. Give me your notes!
- b. I need your notes. Hand them over.
- c. Would you mind sharing your notes with me for our project?

Options	Number	Percentage
<b>A</b>	<b>00</b>	00%
<b>B</b>	<b>4</b>	13%
<b>C</b>	<b>26</b>	87%
Total	30	100 %

**Table 4.12:** Participants’ Responses Distribution in Situation 9



**Figure 4.12:** Participants’ Responses Distribution in Situation 9

Again, the figures displayed above reflect unanimity among EFL students who did highlight the polite request option. The majority of students (87%) selected “would you mind sharing your notes with me for our project?”. Also, only a few students (13%) reported “I need your notes. Hand them over”; and no one (0%) mentioned the “Give me your notes!” option.

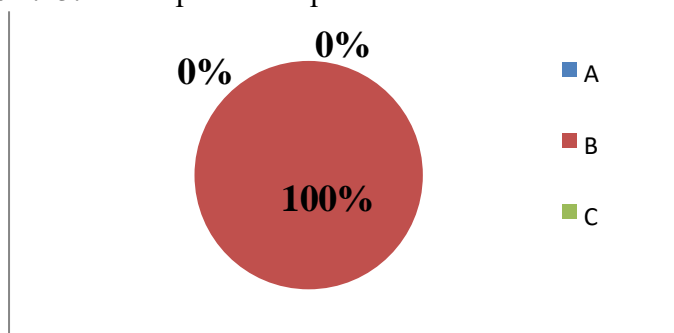
**Situation 10:** Imagine you are attending a workshop and would like the presenter to speak louder. What would you say?

- a. I do not hear you, raise your voice now.

- b. Excuse me, could you speak a bit louder, please?
- c. Hey, It's a bit difficult to hear at the back.

Options	Number	Percentage
<b>A</b>	<b>00</b>	00%
<b>B</b>	<b>30</b>	100%
<b>C</b>	<b>00</b>	00%
Total	30	100 %

**Table 4.13:** Participants’ Responses Distribution in Situation 10



**Figure 4.13:** Participants’ Responses Distribution in Situation 10

The data shows that all the 30 participants (100%) answered politely; this means that EFL students selected “Excuse me, could you speak a bit louder, please?”, but none of the students selected the impolite requests, which are: “I do not hear you, raise your voice now” and “Hey, It's a bit difficult to hear at the back”.

#### **4.1.2. Discussion of the Discourse Completion Task (DCT) Findings**

This part provides a discussion of the main results obtained from the students’ DCT, which was dedicated for 30 third year EFL students at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra. It seeks to answer the research questions formulated in the general introduction and check the validity of the advanced hypotheses.

On the basis of the results reached, the first question was dedicated to discover students’ gender; here the majority of the participant students were girls (87%) who study third year at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra, and only (13%) of them represent boys. Additionally,

the data displayed that the majority of them (60%) claim that their level in English is “Moderate”. Others (40%) show that they are proficient in English. However none of the students chose the “weak” option. Also, the findings show that the majority of students (93%) had selected the study of English as a foreign language based on their personal preferences. However, only a few percentage (7%) of students claimed that it was imposed.

Regarding students’ pragmatic awareness, it was revealed throughout their answers to the ten situations to which they were exposed. It has been clearly demonstrated that, from the analysis of learners’ DCT, the majority of the respondents answered using the speech act of polite request. This indicates that they are more familiar with the pragmatic awareness, and they are, to an extent, competent in using the speech act of polite requests when communicating in English. All in all, through the interpretation of the results, we conclude that students are aware about the value of pragmatic competence on using speech act of polite request for more proficiency in English communication.

## **4.2. Findings of the Teachers’ Interview**

### **4.2.1. Analysis of the Findings Obtained from the Teachers’ Interview Q1.**

#### **How long have you been teaching English at University?**

The purpose of this question was to discover the teachers’ experiences in teaching English at university through giving the number of the years. Teachers’ responses indicate that their EFL teaching careers are different; the first teacher affirms that s/he has taught English for two years, whereas two teachers have been teaching English for one year. On the other hand, another teacher reported with seven years. The variety of teachers’ periods in teaching English would be positive for the researcher as it guarantees that the next responses will be gathered from teachers with different experiences in teaching English. Their answers are presented as follows:

Participant 1 claimed: “*two years*”

Participant 2 claimed: “*one year*”

Participant 3 claimed: *“one year”*

Participant 4 claimed: *“For seven years”*

## **Q2. How do you consider your students' level in learning English communication?**

The aim of this question is to investigate the teachers' views about their students' level in learning English communication. All the interviewed teachers claim that their students' level is between average and very good, and that there were students with a poor level. Their answers are listed as follows:

Participant 1 affirmed: *“Average”*

Participant 2 affirmed: *“Very good”*

Participant 3 affirmed: *“Average”*

Participant 4 affirmed: *“Students' level in learning English differs from one student to another. There are excellent students who show great skills of learning English. Also, there exists another category of students whose level in learning English can be considered as good. Moreover, there are some students whose level in learning English can neither be classified as good nor as bad. In other words, their level in learning English can be described as average. Finally, we have students with poor level in learning English”.*

## **Q3. How do you perceive and evaluate the level of pragmatic awareness among your EFL students when it comes to making polite requests in English?**

This question constitutes the primary aim of this investigation. It intends to obtain information about the way teachers perceive and evaluate the level of pragmatic awareness among their EFL students when it comes to making polite requests in English. From the teachers' responses, we note that only a few EFL students demonstrate awareness of politeness in English requests, especially among L1 EFL learners. To assess pragmatic awareness, the participant teachers utilize methods like role-playing, discourse completion tasks, selfassessment methods, and observation. These techniques focus on EFL students' ability to

use appropriate language and tone in making polite requests. Despite some understanding among more advanced students, first-year students generally lack awareness of polite speech acts. Teachers emphasize the importance of pragmatic awareness in effective communication and acknowledge the need for improvement in this area among their L1 students. Participants' responses are cited below:

Participant 1 asserts that: *"Very few students who are aware of this politeness in requests. a few students who take into account politeness in requests especially L1 EFL learners"*.

Participant 2 submitted that: *"To evaluate "pragmatic awareness" in polite requests for language learners, I consider the following methods:*

*Role-Playing Exercises: Assess through simulated scenarios requiring polite requests.*

*Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs): Use incomplete dialogues for learners to finish with polite requests.*

*Self-Assessment and Reflection: Have learners reflect on their own or peers' use of polite requests.*

*Observation and Interaction Analysis: Observe real-life or recorded interactions focusing on polite requests.*

*To perceive the level of pragmatic awareness among EFL students regarding polite requests in English, I consider the following approaches:*

*Role-Playing Exercises: Observe students in various role-play scenarios that require making polite requests. Note their use of appropriate language, tone, and politeness strategies.*

*Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs): Analyze students' responses to written or spoken prompts where they need to complete a dialogue with a polite request. Evaluate the appropriateness and formality of their responses.*

Self-Assessment and Reflection: Have students reflect on their own polite requests in a journal or through peer reviews. Look for their understanding of politeness strategies and appropriateness in different contexts.

Observation and Interaction Analysis: Watch students during real-life interactions or review recordings of their conversations, focusing on how they make polite requests. Assess their ability to adapt language to different social situations.

*By using these methods, I can gauge their pragmatic awareness and provide targeted feedback to help them improve their skills in making polite requests in English.”*

Participant 3 asserts that: *“The majority of students are well aware of the speech acts that are related to polite requests. However, first year students are less aware about these speech acts”*.

Participant 4 asserts that: *“Pragmatic awareness is of crucial importance in language learning because it places a great deal of emphasis on the context in which the action takes place. So, before making polite requests, students need to have adequate knowledge of pragmatic so that they can communicate their ideas effectively. Students’ level of pragmatic awareness among my EFL students when it comes to making polite requests in English is poor. It is to say, there is still a lot of work to do to enhance students’ pragmatic awareness so that they can produce meaningful and appropriate polite requests”*.

#### **Q4. In your experience, what are the common challenges EFL students’ faces when learning to make polite requests in English?**

This question was asked in order to know about teachers’ perception of the common challenges that EFL students face when learning to make polite requests in English. Here, the teachers affirm that EFL students commonly face challenges in making polite requests in English, including struggles with directness versus indirectness, navigating cultural differences in politeness norms, selecting appropriate language and structures, understanding formality levels, adapting to power dynamics, avoiding pragmatic transfer from their native language,

copied with limited vocabulary, and comprehending responses. Additionally, their personality traits and mother tongue can interfere with their learning process. Informal expressions may also pose difficulties for them. Teachers replied as follows:

Participant 1 said that: *“Language interference (they think in Arabic when speaking in English)”*

Participant 2 said that: *“EFL students often encounter several common challenges when learning to make polite requests in English:*

*Directness vs. Indirectness: Struggling to balance being clear and direct while remaining polite and indirect, especially if their native language has different norms for making requests.*

*Cultural Differences: Difficulty understanding and applying the cultural nuances of politeness in English, which can vary significantly from their own cultural norms.*

*Appropriate Language and Structures: Trouble selecting appropriate polite phrases, modal verbs (e.g., could, would), and mitigating strategies (e.g., "Would you mind...?" instead of "Can you...?").*

*Formality Levels: Misjudging the level of formality required in different contexts, leading to overly formal or informal requests.*

*Power Dynamics: Navigating requests to people of different statuses (e.g., teachers, employers) and adjusting their language accordingly.*

*Pragmatic Transfer: Transferring inappropriate pragmatic rules from their native language, resulting in requests that may seem rude or awkward in English.*

*Vocabulary Limitations: Limited vocabulary to express politeness, which can lead to repetitive or overly simplistic requests.*

*Listening and Comprehension Skills: Difficulty understanding the responses or feedback on their requests, which can impede their ability to refine and improve their pragmatic skills”.*



Participant 3 said that: *“Their personality traits and the effect of their mother tongue interfere when learning to make polite requests in English”*.

Participant 4 said that: *“Using informal expressions”*

**Q5. Can you describe any specific teaching strategy or technique you use to help students develop pragmatic awareness in making polite requests?**

This question was asked with the purpose of identifying the specific teaching strategies or techniques the teachers use to help students develop pragmatic awareness in making polite requests. From this question all the interviewed teachers affirm that in their teaching approach, they deploy various strategies to enhance their students’ pragmatic awareness in making polite requests. These include explicit instruction on common polite phrases and cultural norms, engaging students in role-playing exercises to practice and receive feedback, assigning discourse completion tasks for written and spoken practice, utilizing authentic materials like videos to analyze examples, employing a politeness ladder to rank requests and foster discussion, facilitating cultural comparisons between English and their native language, encouraging peer review for feedback exchange, prompting reflection through journals, demonstrating polite requests in class, and integrating direct teaching of speech acts alongside exposure to authentic materials. These methods collectively provide a comprehensive framework for students to develop their skills in making polite requests in English; their answers are listed as follows:

Participant 1 declared that: *“To practice more based on listening to native speakers and focusing on certain courses like grammar to know more about how to politely make requests”*.

Participant 2 declared: *“Here are some specific teaching strategies I use to help students develop pragmatic awareness in making polite requests:*

*-Explicit Instruction: Teach common polite phrases, modal verbs, and cultural norms related to politeness.*

*-Role-Playing: Create contextual scenarios for students to practice polite requests and provide feedback.*

*-Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs): Use incomplete dialogues to have students practice making polite requests in writing or speaking.*

*-Authentic Materials: Use video clips or real-life dialogues to analyze and discuss examples of polite requests.*

*-Politeness Ladder: Have students rank requests from least to most polite and discuss the reasoning.*

*-Cultural Comparisons: Compare and contrast polite requests in English and students' native languages.*

*-Peer Review: Facilitate group discussions and peer editing for students to provide feedback on each other's polite requests.*

*-Reflection Journals: Encourage students to keep journals reflecting on their experiences and improvements in making polite requests.*

*-Instructor Modeling: Regularly demonstrate and explain the use of polite requests in class”.*

Participant 3 declared: “Direct teaching of the speech acts of polite requests, and exposure to authentic materials (like videos of native speakers making polite requests) would help them in developing their pragmatic awareness”.

Participant 4 provided no answer.

**Q6. In your opinion, what are the key components of effective instruction for developing students' pragmatic awareness in making polite requests?**

This question is intended to inquire about teachers' perception concerning the key components of effective instruction for developing students' pragmatic awareness in making

polite requests. From the answers, we noticed that the teachers shared nearly the same point of view. Effective instruction for developing students' pragmatic awareness in making polite requests should encompass several key components. Firstly, explicit teaching of polite phrases, modal verbs, and cultural norms ensures students grasp both the linguistic and social expectations. Practical application through role-playing and discourse completion tasks allows for hands-on learning in simulated real-life situations. Incorporating authentic examples from video clips or real dialogues provides concrete demonstrations of polite request usage. Cultural sensitivity is paramount, with emphasis on differences between English norms and students' native language norms. Feedback mechanisms, including reflection and peer review, promote ongoing improvement and deeper comprehension. Additionally, regular instructor modeling of polite requests across various contexts serves as a clear example for students to emulate. Encouraging students to think in English, along with frequent practice and repetition of politeness speech acts, reinforces their learning and fluency in making polite requests. The teachers reported their answers as follows:

Participant 1: *“To learn English and think in English”*.

Participant 2: *“Effective instruction for developing students' pragmatic awareness in making polite requests should incorporate explicit teaching of polite phrases, modal verbs, and relevant cultural norms to ensure students understand the linguistic and social expectations. Practical practice through role-playing and discourse completion tasks allows students to apply what they've learned in simulated real-life scenarios. Using authentic examples from video clips or real-life dialogues helps students see how polite requests are naturally used. Emphasizing cultural sensitivity is crucial, highlighting the differences between English norms and those of the students' native languages. Providing feedback and encouraging reflection and peer review foster continuous improvement and deeper understanding. Finally, regular instructor modeling*

*of polite requests in various contexts demonstrates appropriate usage and sets clear examples for students to follow”.*

Participant 3: *“Thinking in English, frequent practice and repetition of politeness speech acts”.*

Participant 4: *“No answer”*

**Q7. In your opinion, how important is pragmatic awareness, particularly in the context of making polite requests, for EFL students' overall language proficiency?**

The goal of this question was to probe into the way the teachers view the importance of pragmatic awareness, particularly in the context of making polite requests, for EFL students' overall language proficiency. The findings indicated that pragmatic awareness, particularly in making polite requests, holds a significant importance for EFL students' overall language proficiency. It directly influences their ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in real-world contexts. While mastering grammar and vocabulary is essential, without the ability to navigate social interactions respectfully and according to cultural norms, students' proficiency remains limited. Politeness in requests reflects a speaker's sensitivity to context, relationships, and social expectations, facilitating smoother communication, minimizing misunderstandings, and fostering positive interactions. Ultimately, pragmatic awareness enriches language use, enhancing students' confidence and fluency across diverse communicative settings, thus contributing substantially to their overall language proficiency. EFL teachers answered as follow:

The following declaration demonstrates the point of the 1<sup>st</sup> participant: *“it is highly important to be aware of politeness in making requests”.*

The following declaration demonstrates the point made by the 2<sup>nd</sup> participant: *“Pragmatic awareness, especially in the context of making polite requests, is crucial for EFL students' overall language proficiency as it directly impacts their ability to communicate effectively and*

*appropriately in real-world situations. Mastery of grammar and vocabulary alone is insufficient if students cannot navigate social interactions respectfully and according to cultural norms. Politeness in requests is a key aspect of pragmatic competence, reflecting a speaker's sensitivity to context, relationships, and social expectations. This awareness helps avoid misunderstandings, fosters positive interactions, and enhances students' confidence and fluency in diverse communicative settings. Ultimately, pragmatic awareness enriches language use, making it more natural, nuanced, and effective in achieving communicative goals".* The following declaration demonstrates the point of the 3<sup>rd</sup> participant: *"It is highly important as it is one of the pillars of communicating with the others. Without politeness, people will seem to be rude and, hence, many other language functions will not be appropriately fulfilled"*.

The 4<sup>th</sup> participant stated: *"It is quite important"*

**Q8. Have you noticed any changes or improvements in students' pragmatic awareness over time, particularly in their ability to make polite requests appropriately?**

This question was asked with the purpose of identifying the teachers' view about whether they have noticed any changes or improvements in their students' pragmatic awareness over time, particularly in their ability to make polite requests appropriately. Here was unanimity in answering this question; all teachers answered with 'yes', stating that they noticed improvements in their students' pragmatic awareness, particularly in their skill to make polite requests appropriately. Initially, some students may have difficulties grasping the subtleties of politeness, often resorting to direct or culturally inappropriate forms of requests. However, as they receive consistent instruction and engage in practice activities, they begin to demonstrate a deeper understanding of the appropriate language structures and cultural norms involved. Moreover, as students' progress in their university education, they tend to further develop their pragmatic awareness as they become more conscious of the speech acts and are equipped with the language functions necessary for making polite requests effectively. This progression

suggests a positive correlation between ongoing instruction and students' enhanced ability to navigate polite interactions in English. Teachers' responses are cited below:

Participant 1 claims: *“Yes. When the students were taught modals and the degrees of politeness some of them started to think, before making requests, of the addressed and addressee”*.

Participant 2 claims: *“Yes, I have noticed significant improvements in students' pragmatic awareness over time, particularly in their ability to make polite requests appropriately. Initially, many students may struggle with the nuances of politeness, often defaulting to direct or culturally inappropriate forms of requests. However, with consistent instruction and practice, they begin to understand and apply the appropriate language structures and cultural norms”*.

Participant 3 claims: *“Yes, the more they advance in their university learning, the more they develop their pragmatic awareness of making polite requests. This is particularly because students are made aware of such speech acts, and they are taught the language functions that allow them to appropriately make polite requests”*.

Participant 4 claimed no answer.

### **Q9. How do you believe students' perceptions of understanding and using the speech act of polite requests in English?**

The aim of this question was to shed light on the teachers' opinions about their students' perceptions of understanding and using the speech act of polite requests in English. As far as this question is concerned, teachers claim that their students' perceptions of understanding and using the speech act of polite requests in English can evolve over time and depend on various factors such as language proficiency, cultural background, and prior experiences. Initially, some students may find that producing polite requests is challenging due to differences in cultural norms and linguistic conventions. However, as they receive instruction and practice, their perceptions typically shift. They begin to recognize the importance of politeness in effective communication, understanding its role in building rapport and showing respect. With increased

exposure to authentic language use and opportunities for practice, students gain confidence in navigating polite requests. Advanced students tend to become more aware of the nuances of polite language, appreciating its significance in L2 communication. As they progress, they value learning different speech acts that facilitate polite requests, enhancing their overall language proficiency and cultural competence in English. The following are the teachers' responses to this question:

Participant 1 declared that: *“Those who are have set their goals of learning the English language and speak like a native they improve their English”*.

Participant 2 declared that: *“Students' perceptions of understanding and using the speech act of polite requests in English can vary depending on their language proficiency, cultural background, and prior experiences. Initially, students may perceive polite requests as challenging due to differences in cultural norms and linguistic conventions between their native language and English. Some may feel uncertain about when and how to use polite language appropriately, while others might underestimate its importance in effective communication. However, as students receive instruction, practice, and feedback on making polite requests, their perceptions typically evolve. They begin to recognize the significance of politeness in building rapport, showing respect, and achieving desired outcomes in social interactions. With increased exposure to authentic language use and opportunities for real-life practice, students often gain confidence in their ability to navigate polite requests effectively. Over time, they may come to appreciate polite language as a vital aspect of their communicative repertoire, enhancing their overall language proficiency and cultural competence in English”*.

Participant 3 declared: *“Again, the more the students are advanced, the more aware they become when it comes to making polite requests. Therefore, they appreciate learning and*

*understanding the different speech acts that allow them to make polite requests in the foreign language as they perceive its importance in the context of L2 communication”.*

Participant 4 declared: no answer.

#### **Q10. Do you have any other suggestions concerning the importance of developing EFL students’ Pragmatic Awareness in Using the Speech Act of Polite Requests?**

This part of the question aims to have extra information about teachers’ perceptions concerning the importance of developing EFL students’ pragmatic awareness in using the speech act of polite requests. In fact, three EFL teachers did not answer this question. Only one teacher added the following:

*“Another suggestion for investigating the pragmatic awareness of EFL students in using the speech act of polite requests is to incorporate experimental or intervention-based studies. These studies could involve implementing targeted instructional interventions aimed at improving students’ pragmatic competence in making polite requests. Researchers could then assess the effectiveness of these interventions through pre- and post-tests, comparing students’ performance and perceptions before and after the intervention. Additionally, conducting controlled experiments with different instructional approaches or variables (e.g., explicit instruction vs. implicit learning, cultural awareness training) could provide valuable insights into the most effective methods for enhancing pragmatic awareness in polite request contexts. Such experimental designs allow researchers to establish causal relationships and provide evidence-based recommendations for pedagogical practices”.*

#### **4.2.2. Discussion of the Teachers’ Interview Findings**

As it was mentioned before, the data instrument used to collect qualitative data for the current investigation is the interview, which was conducted with four EFL teachers at the department of English at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra. The questions were very clear



and were asked in simple words. All the questions were asked and answered in a methodological and organized manner.

Based on the analyses of the findings of the current interview, it seems that EFL teachers' responses highlight the multifaceted approach they employ to address students' challenges in making polite requests in English. They emphasize the importance of explicit instruction, practical application, and exposure to authentic materials to enhance pragmatic awareness. By incorporating strategies such as role-playing, discourse completion tasks, and cultural comparisons, teachers provide students with opportunities to practice and reflect on their use of polite language. Moreover, they also acknowledge the role of cultural sensitivity and peer feedback in shaping students' perceptions and skills in making polite requests.

The results also underscore the significance of students' evolving perceptions as they progress in their language learning journey. Initially, students may find polite requests daunting due to cultural and linguistic differences, but with guidance and practice, they come to appreciate the importance of politeness in effective communication. Advanced students, in particular, demonstrate a heightened awareness of the specific variation of polite language and its relevance in cross-cultural interactions.

Overall, the teachers' insights highlight a dynamic process in which the students' pragmatic awareness evolves through a combination of instruction, practice, and cultural exposure. Thereon, by fostering a supportive learning environment and providing effective feedback, teachers play a crucial role in helping students develop the skills and confidence to navigate polite requests in English proficiently.

## **Conclusion**

The third chapter has presented the findings obtained from the analysis of the students' DCT and teachers' interview. Based on the findings, it can be safely argued that third year EFL students show a certain degree of pragmatic awareness to perform the speech act of polite

request. In addition, the teachers claim that students' pragmatic awareness development is shaped by instruction, practice, and cultural immersion. This highlights the teachers' role in nurturing a supportive learning atmosphere and offering constructive feedback, ultimately enabling students to navigate polite requests in English.

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

The present study has attempted to investigate the pragmatic awareness of EFL students in using the speech act of polite request (requesting), the case of third year LMD students at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra. More specifically, the ongoing study sought to reach the main aims, which have been previously mentioned in the general introduction. The study aimed at exploring how pragmatic awareness can foster the use of speech act of polite request among third year EFL students.

In order to attain the research objectives, provide answers to the research questions raised in the general introduction, and confirm or refute the proposed hypotheses, we have examined the use of pragmatic awareness in using speech act of polite request among (30) third year EFL students. A mixed method approach was adopted; to be more precise, data were collected using an online DCT for (30) third year EFL students at Mohamed Khider University. Three questions and ten (10) situations were addressed to the participants. The obtained data were analyzed using quantitative data analysis technique. In addition, an interview was carried out with four EFL teachers; the interview was analyzed using the qualitative method since it includes openended questions.

Based on the results displayed in this chapter and the discussion provided, the research questions can be answered. First, from the results of the students' DCT, it can be deduced that the students are pragmatically aware enough to perform the speech act of polite requests. In this content, the participants answer the first research question , which is “Does pragmatic awareness have a positive effect on EFL learners' performance of the speech act of making polite requests?” .in other words, the findings indicated that the questioned learners answer with polite requests, which concludes that they are aware about the syntax of the formal relations of signs and semantics, which concerns the relation of signs to what they denote, and pragmatics which focuses on the relation of signs to their users and interpreters. This answers

the second research question, which asks: ‘how can pragmatic awareness contribute improving learners’ speech act of polite request?’

Additionally, the results of the teachers’ interview indicated those students’ perceptions of understanding and using the speech act of polite requests in English can evolve over time and depend on various factors such as language proficiency, cultural background, and prior experiences. Initially, according to the participant teachers, some students may find polite requests challenging due to differences in cultural norms and linguistic conventions. However, as they receive instruction and practice, their perceptions typically shift. They begin to recognize the importance of politeness in conducting effective communication, understanding its role in building rapport and showing respect. With increased exposure to authentic language use and opportunities for practice, students gain confidence in navigating polite requests.

Therefore, these findings answer the last research question, which states: ‘ what are EFL teachers’ perceptions towards raising their EFL students’ pragmatic awareness of the speech acts of polite request.

The findings support the hypothesis that third-year EFL students' pragmatic awareness positively influences their performance in making polite requests. Through instruction, practice, and exposure to authentic materials, students demonstrate an understanding and proficiency in employing polite language, indicating a correlation between pragmatic awareness and performance in speech acts. So, the first hypothesis which states that third year EFL students’ pragmatic awareness has a positive effect on their performance of the speech acts of making polite requests’ is confirmed and valid.

Indeed, the data suggests that EFL learners who possess greater pragmatic awareness of societal and cultural language rules tend to make more polite requests in their second language. The emphasis on cultural sensitivity and exposure to diverse linguistic contexts in instruction aligns with the hypothesis, indicating a link between pragmatic awareness and politeness in L2

requests. As a result, the second hypothesis: We believe that the more EFL learners are pragmatically aware of the societal and cultural rules that govern language use, the more polite their requests in L2 are is confirmed.

The findings indicate that EFL teachers value the integration of pragmatic awareness instruction to enhance learners' effective performance in making polite requests. Teachers employ various strategies, such as role-playing and discourse completion tasks, emphasizing the importance of explicit instruction and practical application. This supports the hypothesis that teachers recognize and prioritize pragmatic awareness in developing students' skills in polite requests, the third hypothesis , We assume that EFL teachers value the integration of pragmatic awareness instruction as a means to develop EFL learners' effective performance of polite requests is confirmed.

## **Implications and Recommendations**

The findings of the study demonstrate substantial evidence on the effectiveness of pragmatic awareness on using the speech acts of polite request. The results of the both research tools display the significance of pragmatic awareness for effective communication skill in English and its positive impact on guiding learners to use correct statements that offer polite requests. It is therefore important to take into consideration the positive effect of pragmatic awareness on improving the quality of using the speech act of polite requests.

To conclude the present study, some implications and recommendations which can be helpful and practical for both EFL students and teachers are suggested below:

### ***1. Recommendations for EFL teachers at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra:***

- EFL teachers should design role-playing activities where students can practice making polite requests in various scenarios, providing feedback on their language use and level of politeness.

- Teachers have to dedicate class time to explicitly teach different politeness strategies, such as using modals (could, would, may), hedging expressions (I was wondering if...), and politeness markers (please, thank you).
- Teachers have to use authentic materials, like dialogues from movies, TV shows, or real-life situations where polite requests are made. They should also discuss the strategies used and how they differ based on context and relationship between speakers.
- Teachers should organize peer feedback sessions where students can practice making requests with each other and provide constructive criticism on each other's language use and level of politeness.
- Finally, teachers should encourage students to reflect on their own cultural backgrounds and how politeness norms may vary across cultures. They should also discuss the importance of understanding cultural differences in making polite requests.

## ***2. Recommendations for EFL students at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra:***

- Students should actively engage in role-playing activities in the classroom in order to actively practice making polite requests. In addition, they should not be afraid to experience different language strategies and observe how they are received.
- Students have to recognize that the level of politeness required may vary depending on the context and the relationship between speakers; this would help them adapt the language accordingly to fit the situation.
- Students have to incorporate politeness markers, such as "please" and "thank you" in their requests to convey respect and politeness towards the listener.
- Students have to ask their teacher or peers for feedback about their language use when making requests and work on improving and refining their polite language skills.
- Students should be aware that politeness norms may differ across cultures. Therefore, they should take time in understanding and respecting the cultural backgrounds of their

classmates and consider how cultural differences may influence communication styles.

### **Limitation and Suggestions for Further Research**

The limitations are uncontrollable weaknesses in the study. As in any other research work, we have encountered some limitations that might have affected the quality of our study. Undoubtedly, it should be mentioned that limitations confronted during the conduction of the present study has made the research process a bit challenging. The limitations that should be highlighted are listed below:

- The first limitation was to find appropriate sources and references that would contribute to our research (lack of sources) from the faculty library since pragmatic awareness, in relation to speech act of polite request, is not widely investigated in Algeria, which led the researcher to use the electronic sources.
- The second limitation is that the study was limited to third year students at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra. Consequently, the findings of the study cannot be generalized to other levels.
- The third limitation is related to the DCT. Some students might be hesitant to cooperate fully.
- The fourth limitation is the time factor in our research. Time is one of the most challenging issues that stood against a more elaborated research work.
- Finally, there were very few responses obtained from the part of EFL teachers at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra. More detailed data would have been drawn if more teachers cooperated and answered the interview questions.

To sum up, our study hopefully contributes to the field of pragmatics and speech act of polite request. In light of this conclusion, some suggestions for further research are required:

- In this study, we have dealt with both gender students, but in future studies one may deal with the way differences in gender (males or females) can show a difference in using the speech act of polite request.
- Moreover, the future studies may use other instruments to collect data. The current study is just a starting point. To determine the pragmatic awareness of EFL students in using the speech act of polite request (requesting), classroom observation is also a powerful tool that would help researchers to obtain more detailed and precise evidence. Also using experimental research is beneficial.
- Eventually, Future studies can explore the effectiveness of pragmatic awareness in producing other types of speech acts, such as apologizing, ordering, etc.
- To ensure the reliability and generalizability of the research findings, the study should be repeated with a larger sample and include learners from different Algerian provinces.



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# **APPENDICES**

## Appendix A: Students' DCT

Mohammed Kheider University of Biskra

Branch of English

### Students' Discourse Completion Task

**Dear students,**

This discourse completion task aims to collect data for the accomplishment of a master dissertation about “*Investigating the Pragmatic Awareness of EFL Students in Using the Speech Act of Polite Request (Requesting)*”. We would be grateful if you provide precise, clear, and complete responses. You will be given a number of situations in which you will have to select one choice. Please tick (✓) the appropriate answer and write full statement(s) whenever is necessary. Be sure that your answers will be anonymous and will be used for research purposes only.

#### **Section One: General Information**

##### **1. Gender**

- a. Male            b. Female

##### **2. How do you consider your level in English?**

- a. Weak            b . Moderate            c. proficient

##### **3. Your choice of studying English was:**

- a. Personal            b. Imposed

#### **Section Two: Discourse Completion Task :**

**Instruction:** In the following situations, please select the answer you think the most appropriate:

**Situation 01:** Imagine that you are in a classroom and need to borrow a textbook from a classmate. What would you say?

a. Would it be possible for me to borrow your textbook for today's class?

b. Hey, do you mind if I borrow your textbook



c. Get me your textbook now.

**Situation 02:** Imagine you are attending a meeting, and you'd like to request a clarification from the presenter. What would you say?

a. I don't understand. Explain it again.

b. Could you please clarify that point for me?

c. What are you talking about? Explain it better.

**Situation 03:** Imagine you are working in pairs, and you want to ask your partner to explain a grammar rule again. What would you say?

a. I didn't understand. Teach me again!

b. You're not making sense. Explain it better!

c. Could you please explain that grammar rule one more time?

**Situation 04:** Imagine you are in a group discussion, and you want to request your classmates to speak one at a time. What would you say?

a. Could we please take turns speaking?

b. Stop interrupting each other!

c. This is chaos! Let's speak properly!

**Situation 05:** Imagine you need some help with pronunciation, and you want to ask your teacher for assistance. What would you say?

a. You need to teach me how to pronounce this!

b. Excuse me, could you help me with my pronunciation, please?

c. I don't understand. Teach me!

**Situation 06:** Imagine you are participating in a language game, and you need more time to think of a response. What would you say?

a. Hurry up! I need more time.

b. Excuse me, could I have a moment to think, please?

c. This is taking too long. Give me a break.

**Situation 07:** Imagine you are confused about a homework assignment, and you want to ask your teacher for clarification. What would you say?

- a. This makes no sense. Explain it better!
- b. I don't get it. Explain it to me again.
- c. Could you please clarify the homework assignment for me?

**Situation 08:** Imagine you are preparing for a presentation, and you need to borrow a projector from the AV room. What would you say?

- a. Excuse me, could I borrow the projector for my presentation, please?
- b. I need the projector now!
- c. Give me the projector. I have a presentation.

**Situation 09:** Imagine you are in a group project, and you need a classmate's notes for reference. What would you say?

- a. Give me your notes!
- b. I need your notes. Hand them over.
- c. Would you mind sharing your notes with me for our project?

**Situation 10:** Imagine you are attending a workshop and would like the presenter to speak louder. What would you say?

- a. I do not hear you, raise your voice now.
- b. Excuse me, could you speak a bit louder, please?
- c. Hey, It's a bit difficult to hear at the back.

**Thank you for your time, effort and collaboration**

## **Appendix B: Teachers' Interview**

### **Introduction to the interview:**

Dear teacher, this interview is an attempt to collect information for the accomplishment of a Master's dissertation about "*Investigating the Pragmatic Awareness of EFL Students in Using the Speech Act of Polite Request (Requesting)*". Therefore, you are kindly requested to answer the following questions. Your contribution is of a great importance for the success of this research work. Be sure that your responses will be anonymous and will be used for research purposes only.

### **Interview questions:**

1. How long have you been teaching English at University?
2. How do you consider your students level in learning English communication?
3. How do you perceive and evaluate the level of pragmatic awareness among your EFL students when it comes to making polite requests in English?
4. In your experience, what are the common challenges EFL students' faces when learning to make polite requests in English?
5. Can you describe any specific teaching strategy or technique you use to help students develop pragmatic awareness in making polite requests?
6. In your opinion, what are the key components of effective instruction for developing students' pragmatic awareness in making polite requests?
7. In your opinion, how important is pragmatic awareness, particularly in the context of making polite requests, for EFL students' overall language proficiency?
8. Have you noticed any changes or improvements in students' pragmatic awareness over time, particularly in their ability to make polite requests appropriately?
9. How do you believe students' perceptions of understanding and using the speech act of polite requests in English?
10. Do you have any other suggestions concerning the importance of developing EFL students' Pragmatic Awareness in Using the Speech Act of Polite Requests?

**Thank you for your cooperation**

## ملخص الدراسة

الدراسة الحالية تحقق في الوعي البراغماتي لطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في استخدام فعل الكلام للطلب بشكل مهذب. تسعى الدراسة الحالية إلى رفع الوعي من أجل مساعدة طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لتجنب اعتبارهم غير مهذبين أو لفهمهم بشكل خاطئ عند التواصل. يمكن تحقيق ذلك عن طريق مساعدتهم في تطوير معرفتهم البراغماتية في إجراء طلبات مهذبة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يهدف إلى جعل طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية متمكنين بشكل براجماتي، وهذا سيجعلهم أكثر وعياً بكيفية التعامل مع اللغة اليومية في المجتمع اللغوي، وتحديدًا في تحقيق فعل الكلام للطلب بشكل مهذب. من أجل تحقيق هذه الأهداف، يتم اعتماد نهج الطريقة المختلطة؛ لذا، يتم جمع البيانات الكمية والنوعية من مهمة إكمال الخطاب التوجيهية الموجهة لطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية من السنة الثالثة، والمقابلة التي أجريت مع معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في جامعة محمد خيضر بسكرة، على التوالي. يتكون العينة من (30) طالباً من السنة الثالثة من طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية وأربعة أساتذة للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، كلاهما ينتميان إلى جامعة بسكرة. تظهر النتائج من الأدوات البحثية الاثنين أن الوعي البراغماتي يلعب دوراً مهماً في استخدام فعل الكلام للطلب بشكل مهذب. علاوة على ذلك، تسلط النتائج الضوء على أن الطلاب المستجيبين لديهم وعي براجماتي، مما يساعدهم في استخدام فعل الكلام للطلب بشكل مهذب. وعلاوة على ذلك، يؤكد المعلمون المشاركون على أهمية التعليم الصريح والتطبيق العملي والتعرض للمواد الأصيلة لتعزيز الوعي البراغماتي. من خلال دمج استراتيجيات مثل التمثيل الدوري، ومهام إكمال الخطاب، والمقارنات الثقافية، يوفر الأساتذة للطلاب فرصاً للتمرن والتفكير في استخدامهم للغة المهذبة. لذلك، يمكن القول إن الوعي البراغماتي أمر حاسم لتعزيز فعل الكلام للطلب بشكل مهذب لدى طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.