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LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF REQUEST STRATEGIES IN MOROCCAN SOUTH EASTERN AMAZIGH VARIETY

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ABSTRACT

It has frequently been noted that the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project (CCSARP) posits a universal categorisation of requests. This serves as a foundation for investigating the request speech act within the Moroccan South-Eastern Amazigh variety (MSEAV) using the CCSARP model. Accordingly, this paper aims to determine whether native speakers of MSEAV employ distinct request strategies that may challenge the universality of conventionally indirect requests. The analysis employs the CCSARP model by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) to systematically examine the complexity and diversity of request strategies in MSEAV. Data from Hmouri (2022) and natural conversations are utilised to offer a contemporary and culturally specific perspective on request strategies within this linguistic community. The findings, which diverge from the universal categorisation of conventionally indirect requests as delineated by the adopted model, aim to enhance the understanding of speech act realisation and underscore unique linguistic features in MSEAV requests.

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INTRODUCTION

The field of pragmatics, particularly through the lens of speech act theory, has significantly advanced our understanding of language use in real-world contexts. By examining the interaction between language and socio-cultural norms, researchers have illuminated how societal values and cultural practices shape language development and usage. This exploration has revealed the intricate ways in which language functions not only as a means of communication but also as a tool for encoding and transmitting cultural values and social norms. Within this framework, the speech act of requesting has garnered considerable attention. The features of requests are often analysed using established classifications, such as those proposed by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), House and Kasper (1987), and Trosborg (1995). These classifications provide a systematic approach to understanding the various strategies and structures employed in making requests, highlighting the complexity and variability of this speech act across different languages and cultures. This paper focuses on the types of request strategies classified in the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project (CCSARP) to analyse the linguistic features of the request speech act in the Moroccan South-Eastern Amazigh variety (MSEAV). The aim is to gather further evidence regarding the existence of a universal

category of conventionally indirect requests and to determine whether it holds in this context. Specifically, the study investigates whether native speakers of Moroccan South-Eastern Amazigh employ novel request strategies. Regarding the coding method, the data analysis in this paper is based on the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Patterns (CCSARP) model by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). The CCSARP scheme is adopted in this study due to its widespread use and increased credibility in cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics research. The data analysed in this study are derived from Hmouri (2022) and natural conversations, providing a contemporary and culturally specific perspective on request strategies within this linguistic community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The speech act of requesting: Speech act theory, initially formulated by Austin (1962) in his lectures published as *How to Do Things with Words*, was later expanded by his student Searle (1969, 1975, 1976, & 1979). According to Searle's (1976) classification, the speech act of requesting falls under the category of directives, which aim to prompt the hearer to perform an act. Requests are among the most frequently studied acts in pragmatics (ILP) literature and are one of the

most commonly used language functions in daily interactions. Trosborg (1995) defines a request as “an illocutionary act whereby a speaker (requester) conveys to a hearer (requestee) that he/she wants the requestee to perform an act which is for the benefit of the speaker” (p. 187). Thus, a request is a speech act that influences the behaviour of the requestee. As Blum-Kulka (1991) noted, “Requests are pre-event acts, intended to affect the hearer’s behaviour.”

Blum-Kulka (1989), House and Kasper (1987), and Trosborg (1995) identified three types of requests: (a) direct requests, (b) conventionally indirect requests, and (c) non-conventionally indirect requests. These categories range from the most direct to the least direct, with each type including various sub-strategies, as detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Request Strategies and their Sub-strategies (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 202)

Type of Strategy	Sub-category	Example
Direct (The speaker’s intention is clear and direct toward the thing the hearer is requested to do for the speaker.)	Mood derivable (bald on record)	Close the window
	Explicit performative	I’m asking you to open the window
	Hedged performative	I would like you to close the window.
	Locution derivable or Obligation statement	Sir, you will have to close the window.
	Scope stating or Want statement	I really hope you would close the window.
Conventionally indirect (Has more to do with conventional usage. The conventions of usage are composed of conventions of means and conventions of form)	Suggestory formula	How about closing the door?
	Preparatory conditions or Query preparatory	Could you clean the dishes please? Would mind moving your car please?
Non-conventionally indirect (off record) (considered as the most indirect way of performing a request by using hints)	Strong Hints	You left your room in a mess.
	Mild Hints	I’m a nun. (in response to a persistent boy)

Previous studies: Numerous studies have explored the speech act of requesting. This section examines the contributions of researchers to requests within various local contexts. Studies that applied the CCSARP model have approached requests from different perspectives in their native languages, highlighting research on requests and linguistic politeness in the Moroccan context. Abdou (1999) examined how Moroccan EFL learners make requests, using a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) to assess the impact of prior knowledge. The study found that Moroccan learners overused direct strategies compared to American native speakers. Proficiency level had no significant effect on request patterns, except that higher-proficiency learners used more syntactic categories to soften their requests. Alaoui (2011) conducted a comparative study and analysed requests, offers, and complaints between Moroccan Arabic and English native speakers. The study found that Moroccan Arabic speakers often exaggerate to show care, which can be seen as impolite in other cultures. English speakers, on the other hand, use syntactic downgraders to soften their speech, while Moroccan

Arabic speakers use lexical downgraders. Latif’s (2014) doctoral dissertation described Moroccan EFL learners’ request strategies and compared them to those of American native speakers. Using a DCT and role-plays, the study found that both groups used direct and conventionally indirect strategies, with limited hinting. However, Moroccan learners tended to use more directness and modification strategies than their American counterparts. Using the CCSARP framework, Loutfi (2016) compared the request strategies of Moroccan EFL learners at different university levels with those of native English speakers. The study found that Moroccan learners’ L1 influenced their L2 requests, showing a preference for direct strategies compared to native speakers. The study highlighted the developmental path of Moroccan EFL learners’ pragmatic competence. Hmouri (2022) explored politeness phenomena in the Drâa-Tafilalet region by examining the realisation patterns of requests in the Moroccan South-Eastern Amazigh variety. In terms of request production, a comparison was conducted between three main tribes: Ait Atta, Ait Merghad, and Ait Toudgha. His results revealed that direct requests were favoured by participants from all three tribes. The subjects were significantly direct and overused the lexical downgrader *ṣaha* ‘please’ alongside religious expressions. Furthermore, the linguistic productions revealed that the participants tended to employ positive politeness and bald-on-record strategies. His conclusions challenge Brown and Levinson’s universal assertion that requests and politeness are inherently seen as negative politeness strategies.

REQUEST DATA ANALYSIS BY STRATEGY

The study classifies Moroccan South-Eastern Amazigh request strategies into three categories: i) direct, ii) conventional indirect, and iii) non-conventional indirect based on the CCSARP model. It examines whether Blum-Kulka et al.’s universal claims about the three types of request strategies and the preference for conventional indirect strategies hold true in this context. The analysis, which involved counting 2,276 request head-acts from Hmouri (2022), was conducted across 12 situations to determine the frequency of each strategy. The percentages reflect the total occurrences of each strategy used by participants from three tribes, with detailed examples provided for each strategy and its sub-strategies. These examples are linguistically analysed by examining their main request features.

Direct Requests: The direct strategy involves utterances where the illocutionary act is clearly expressed. It includes five sub-strategies, ranked from the most to the least direct: (i) mood derivable (bald on record), (ii) explicit performative, (iii) hedged performative, (v) locution derivable or obligation statements, and (vi) want statements or scope stating strategies.

Mood Derivable: Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) describe mood derivable strategies as utterances in which the verb’s grammatical mood indicates illocutionary force. This direct request strategy typically employs the imperative mood and is regarded as the most direct among request sub-strategies. The data reveal that native speakers of the South-Eastern Moroccan Amazigh variety predominantly utilise mood-derivable strategies, accounting for 72.76% of all request head-acts across twelve situations, thereby indicating a high

frequency of use. The analysis further indicates that the majority of mood derivable strategies were modified with politeness markers, frequently in the form of religious expressions functioning as politeness devices. While such strategies may be perceived as impolite in languages like English, their use alongside internal or external downgraders and religious expressions, referred to as the "lexicon of Allah" by Morrow and Castleton (2007), renders them acceptable within the South-Eastern Moroccan Amazigh context. Examples of mood derivable strategies extracted from the participants' linguistic choices are illustrated in (1a), (1b), and (1c).

- a. *ç-id aɣrum šaħa.*
give-me-1st P.SG bread-ACC please-EXCL
'Give me bread, please.'
- b. *š-ayd kan uɣrum*
give-us-1st P.PL some-DET bread-ACC
'Give us some bread'
- c. *a-jamma / a-bba zzal-id aɣnaɣ nu-ɣrum.*
Hey-INTERJ mother/Father-NOM my-POSS PRO that-DEM bread-ACC
'Hey my mother, pass me that bread.'
'Lend me some money, may God have mercy on your parents.'
(Hmouri, 2022)

The examples are all characterised by the absence of a lexical subject and the agreement markers, except the second-person plural morpheme *-ayd* 'us' as in *ç-ayd* 'give us', *zzal-ayd* 'pass us', *ssakr-ayd* 'do for us', etc. The imperative is a mood in the Moroccan South-Eastern Amazigh variety whose verb is always in a bare verbal stem with no person, number, or gender inflection. The imperative of the second-person singular pronoun is formulated from the root of the verb with no change for the feminine or the masculine forms. For instance, *çid* 'give', *ssakrid* 'do paperwork', *zzalid* 'pass', etc. Furthermore, Moroccan South-Eastern Amazigh speakers frequently use plural morphemes in their requests, such as *ç-ayd* 'give us', *awɣ-ayd* 'bring us', etc. This preference for plural forms highlights the collective nature of their society.

Performative Strategies: Performatives are utterances in which the illocutionary force is explicitly articulated. There are two primary types: i) explicit performatives, where the force is directly named (e.g., *arak tɛtray/ssutury adur tsirist tumubil nnəç dady* "I am asking you not to park here"), and ii) hedged performatives, where the force is implied (e.g., *riɣk, šaħa, atanfət tiɣlut*. "I would like you, please, to open the door"). It is also observed that in MSEAV, performative verbs and modification categories used to express requests can indicate anything from a direct command to a sincere plea or even begging: *səqsa* 'ask', *až* 'let', *ssutr* 'request', *šaħa*, 'please', etc.

Obligation Statements: An obligatory request is a sub-strategy used to reduce the chance of refusal. According to Hmouri (2022), only 14 instances of the locution derivable strategy were identified, making up 0.6% of the 2,276 request head-acts. Consider, for example:

- a. *hat ixšša at-naqst i-lmusiqa nnay-nnun gilmyi.*
you-2P.SG have-V to-PRE reduce-V music-NOM that.DEM your-2P.PL now-ADV
'You have to reduce that music of yours now.'
- b. *hat qqad-akixšsu / akmixšsu at-naqst iwjnnay n-lmusiqa.*

- you-2P.SG.MASC / you-2P.SG.FEM will-FUT have-V to-PRE reduce-V that-DEM music-NOM*
'You will have to turn down the music volume.'
- c. *hat qqad-akixšsu / akmixšsu atssuzət l-šərd.*
you-2P.SG.MASC / you-2P.SG.FEM will-FUT have-V to-PRE prepare-V the-DEF.ART presentation-NOM
'You will have to make the presentation.'
- d. *hat ixššak/ixššakm adi tarɔalt kan idrimn/iqqariɔn.*
You-2P.SG.MASC/ You-2P.SG.FEM have-V to-PRE lend-V some-DET money-ACC
'You have to lend me some money.'
- e. *hat qqad-akixšsu/akmixšsu adi tsənfulləst.*
you-2P.SG.MASC/You-2P.SG.FEM will-FUT have-V to-PRE lend-V me-1PS-OC money-ACC
'You will have to lend me money.'

Examples (2a), (2b), and (2c) were identified in Hmouri's (2022) DCT (situations 4 and 9), while examples (2d) and (2e), among others, were observed in participants' daily conversations. In example (2c), the prefix *qqad-* is attached to the verb stem to construct the future tense, followed by the intended request. In situation 9 (Hmouri, 2022), the speaker possesses greater authority over the listener, rendering the use of *ixšša-ç/ixšša-çm* 'you have to' polite. Additionally, the suffixes *-ç* 'you-2PSG.MASC' and *-çm* 'you-2PSG.FEM' indicate that the addressee is capable of delivering the presentation despite the impending midterm exams. This usage underscores that the listener is obliged to obey the request.

Scope Sating: The less direct request sub-strategy, referred to as "scope stating," involves the requester expressing their desire for the hearer to perform a specific act. This strategy conveys the speaker's genuine intention for X to be accomplished, creating a sense of obligation for the hearer. According to Hmouri (2022), this sub-strategy was infrequently employed, except in situation 9, where a teacher requested a student to present earlier than scheduled. The following are examples from the South-Eastern Moroccan Amazigh variety (MSEAV):

- a. *a-mər ufi-ɣ adi tsənfulləst.*
if-CONJ find-PAST I-1P.SG.MASC.FEM to-PRE lend-V me-1PS-OC money-ACC
'I wish you could lend me some money.'
- b. *hat ri-ɣ-ç / ri-ɣ- çəm adi tarɔalt kan idrimn/iqqariɔn.*
I-1stPS want-V you-2P.SG.MASC / You-2P.SG.FEM to-PRE lend-V some-DET money-ACC
'I want you to lend me some money.'
- c. *a-mər ufi-ɣ adi tsmutit l-šərd səkan wass jaɣnin.*
if-CONJ find-PAST I-1P.SG to-PRE replace-V the-DEF ART presentation-NOM to-PRE day-NOM another-DET
'I wish you would postpone the coming presentation to another day.' (Situation 8)
- d. *hat riɣk / riɣkkəm at-skərt l-šərd simana indəy diddan.*

I-1stPS want-V you-2P.SG.MASC / You-2P.SG.FEM to-PRE the-DEF.ART presentation-NOM week-NOM that-DEMO coming-GER

'I want you to make the presentation in the coming week.'

In examples (3a) and (3c), the participants conveyed their wishes by employing the utterance *a-mər ufi-ɣ* 'I wish' following the main verb, thereby indicating their desire to complete the action. In examples (3b) and (3d), the speakers utilised the expressions *hat ri-ɣ-k ad* ('I want you-

2P.SG.MASC to') and *ri-γ-kkəm ad* ('I want you-2P.SG.FEM to') following the main verb to articulate their desire for the hearer to perform the requested action. Through this linguistic choice, interlocutors seek to render their requests less direct, thereby encouraging the hearer to empathise with them and comply with the desired act.

Conventionally Indirect Requests: A conventional indirect strategy involves making a request or suggestion indirectly. There are two main sub-strategies: i) suggestory formulae and ii) query preparatory sub-strategies. Hmouri (2022) found that the query preparatory strategy is the most commonly used, followed by suggestory formulae.

Suggestory Formulae: Here, the requester employs the 'formulae' to transform a request into a suggestion, typically serving the interests of both the speaker and hearer. In using these expressions, the requester does not refer to any specific condition related to the hearer. Rather, they assess the hearer's general willingness to cooperate by inquiring whether any obstacles might hinder the hearer from performing the requested act (Trosborg, 1995).

- a. majd-ak/majd-am ibajjən adin tasit ar ammas n-tamdint?*
What-you-2P.SG.MASC / you-2P.SG.FEM think-V to-PRE lift-NOM me-1P.SG to-PRE center-NOM of city.
'How about giving me a lift to the city centre?'
- b. is-ur tnnit adaγn tawit ar ammas n-tamdint?*
Whether-SN to-PRE us-1P.SG take-V to the centre of city?
'wouldn't you mind taking us to the city centre?'
- c. is-ur tənnt i-rəbb-i adi ɽardalt kan iqqaridn/idrimn?*
Whether-SN mind-V for God my-PSS PRO to-PRE lend-V me-1P.SG.MASC.FEM some-DET money-NOM
'Wouldn't you mind lending me some money, for God's sake?' (Situation 1, AA)
- d. majd-ak/majd-am ibajjən adi ɽardalt?*
What-you-2P.SG.MASC/you-2P.SG.FEM think-V to-PRE lend me some money?

'How about lending me some money?' (Hmouri, 2022)
In examples (4a) and (4c), the request employs the suggestion formula *majd-ak/majd-am ibajjən* ('How about you...?') to request the borrowing of money or a lift. In contrast, in examples (4b) and (4d), the speaker utilises the negative particle *ur*, indicating to the hearer that the speaker has lower expectations regarding the execution of X. However, unlike their English equivalents, MSEAV formulae imply that the addressee should have already undertaken the appropriate action. These expressions can also function as 'politeness formulae,' persistently requesting the addressee to perform an act entirely beneficial for them, a practice esteemed in Moroccan South-Eastern Amazigh culture, as seen in the phrase *may ad-ur təttašt uggar* ('Why don't you eat more?').

Query Preparatory Strategies: The second sub-category, known as query-preparatory, was infrequently utilised by speakers of the South-Eastern Moroccan Amazigh variety, accounting for 15.4% of the 2276 head-acts (Hmouri, 2022). This strategy was predominantly employed in situations 6, 8, 11, and 12, owing to the high degree of imposition involved. Query-preparatory strategies consist of utterances referencing preparatory conditions such as ability or willingness, as standardised in any given language (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). According to Searle (1979), there are two types of illocutionary acts: the primary illocutionary act, which pertains

to the literal meaning of the utterance, and the secondary illocutionary act, which reflects the speaker's intended meaning. Asking questions is considered more polite than issuing direct requests, as it alleviates pressure on the hearer to perform the act, providing them with the option to either respond to the inquiry or carry out the action. There are two forms of query-preparatory strategies: inquiring about the hearer's willingness to perform the act and inquiring about their ability to do so. Among the participants, the most frequently observed form involved asking about the hearer's ability to perform the act.

When asking about the hearer's ability to perform the act, the requester considers the hearer's ability to perform the desired action. It involves two conditions: the inherent physical and mental capacities of the requestee, and the external circumstances such as time and place (Trosborg, 1995). Examples from Moroccan South-Eastern Amazigh speakers illustrate this:

- a. is t-γij-t ad-aγ t-snja-t aydd-aγ n-tawriqin?*
Whether-CONJ can-MOD you-2P.SG to-PRE us-1P.PL sign-V these-DEMO papers-NOM?
'Can you sign us these papers?'
- b. is t-γij-t a-lustad / t-alusta-t adi t-smutti-t l-ɽarɽ s-kan was yaɽnin.*
Whether can-MOD you-2P.SG teacher-MASC / teacher-FEM to-PRE postpone-V the-DEF.ART presentation-NOM for-PRE some-DET day-NOM other-ADJ
'Can you schedule the presentation for some other day, teacher?'
- c. ɽniγ qqad a t-iγij-t a-tskar-t l-ɽarɽ a-mimm-i?*
Maybe-ADV will-FUT you-2ndP.SG able-ADJ to-PRE make-V the presentation son my-POSS.PRO?
'Maybe you will be able to make the presentation my son?'
- d. is t-γij-t adin t-awi-t ar ammas n-tamdint?*
Whether can-MOD you-2P.SG take-V along me-1P.SG to the city centre?

'Can you take me along to the city centre?'

From the examples provided, it is evident that the speaker inquires about the hearer's ability to carry out the action. For instance, in utterance (5d), the speaker uses a question with a future action and the modal verb *t-γij-t* 'Can you' to ask about the hearer's capability. This request is made by a student to a teacher, indicating a high degree of imposition due to the student's lower status and lack of familiarity with the teacher.

Non-Conventional Indirect Requests: In non-conventional indirect strategies, the illocutionary act is implied rather than explicitly stated. The requester often hints at the desired action, leaving it to the hearer to interpret the message. This approach relies heavily on context to avoid misunderstandings. There are two types of hints: strong hints, where the action is not mentioned at all, and mild hints, where the action is partially mentioned. Examples were gathered from natural conversations and Hmouri (2022).

- a. taqqur ɽtabla-nnun.*
Strong-ADJ table-NOM your-POSS.PRO.PL
'your table seems strong.'
- b. wəlaɽjnni taɽha ɽtabla-ddəγ!*
What-EXCL strong-ADJ table-NOM this-DEMO.
'What a strong table this is!'

c. *tərrzəm imzyan-nnəy.*

Break-V.PAST you-2P.PL ears-NOM our-POSS.PRO.PL
'You hurt our ears.'

d. *tu-yn PC-nw diy.*

Forget-V.PAST PC-NOM my-POSS.PRO again-ADV
'I forgot my laptop again.'

Based on Hmouri's (2022) DCT results, in situation 3, Ait Atta native speakers of the South-Eastern Amazigh variety employed mild hints, the most indirect form of requesting. Participants demonstrate this strategy when someone seeks to implicitly request a loaf of bread, using expressions such as *təqqur ttabla-nnun* ('your table is strong') or *wələjənni təšha ttabla-ddəy!* ('What a strong table this is!'), while knocking on the table. These expressions provide minimal clues for the listener to infer the desired action, relying on the reference to a related component (the table) and leaving interpretation to the listener. Observations of daily conversations show that Ait Atta speakers occasionally employ mild hints to make requests, particularly in situations where a direct request might cause embarrassment.

Conversely, strong hints offer more substantial clues for the listener to infer the desired action, though the request's purpose remains implicit. Examples (6c) and (6d) illustrate the use of strong hints drawn from natural conversations and interviews. In example (6c), the speaker does not explicitly mention the requested action but instead comments on the loud music being harmful and preventing sleep, implicitly asking the listener to lower the volume. By stating *tərrzəm imzyan-nnəy* ('you hurt our ears'), the speaker highlights the issue and indirectly requests the cessation of the loud music. In example (6d), the speaker mentions forgetting to bring his laptop, which is interpreted as a request since it suggests the need for the listener to assist in fulfilling the desired action. The speaker merely identifies the problem (forgetting the laptop), anticipating that the listener will understand the need to borrow the device temporarily.

CONCLUSION

The most distinctive feature of request expressions in the Moroccan South-Eastern Amazigh variety (MSEAV) is the utilisation of basic action verbs that directly indicate the desired action (83.5% of 2276 request head-acts). Consequently, native speakers of MSEAV consider imperatives to be the most appropriate and efficient method for making requests (Hmouri, 2022). In contrast, imperatives are the least frequently employed form for requests in English. Due to this discrepancy, the term *šaha* ('please') and religious expressions embody a greater sense of politeness. They are more frequently utilised to achieve politeness compared to modal verbs such as *would* or *could* in English. Furthermore, common English expressions such as *Would you mind* are seldom associated with avoiding imperatives in Tamazight to convey moderate politeness.

Other notable aspects of MSEAV reveal that certain linguistic strategies in this speech act are either unavailable or inapplicable in English. Based on these differences, it is evident that MSEAV does not conform to the universal category of conventionally indirect requests as proposed by the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project (CCSARP).

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