

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The discussion of this chapter clarifies the similarities and dissimilarities between SEFL high achievers and low achievers in performing request strategies according to Blum-Kulka (1989) taxonomy. A more detailed account of SEFL proficiency levels of making requests, their degree of directness, their use of request strategies, and their pragmatic realization of request strategies are explained in the following section. As the first research question and second research question are discussed in depth in the previous chapter, this chapter focuses mainly on the third research question which presents the similarities and differences for both groups in terms of their pragmatic realization, which is the third aim of the current study. Furthermore, a summary of the research questions with findings is outlined.

5.2 The Similarities in the Production and Realization of Request Act by HAs and LAs

To answer the third research question that aims to identify the differences and similarities in making request strategies and realizing pragmatic competence between high achievers and low achievers SEFL. The findings concerning the similarities between HAs and LAs SEFLs show that both groups preferred direct request strategy. This finding is in line with Shahzadi et al. (2021)'s study that Pakistani ESL learners and Chinese EFL learners tended towards using mood derivable, particularly in situations of different social variables, power, and familiarity between the interlocutors.

The reason behind the inclination of both groups towards using direct strategy (HAs, 67% compared to LAs, 83.76%) might be attributed to the challenges they confront in formulating indirect request strategies in the target language. This finding is consistent with Taguchi (2012), who has inferred that indirect request strategies pose difficulties to EFL learners. EFL\ESL have insufficient linguistic repertoire which assumes that they tend to focus more on communication to transfer their purpose neglecting the sociocultural norms of the target language.

Their inclination towards using direct request strategies may reflect their lack of pragmatic realization and the challenges they confront in formulating indirect request strategies. This finding lends tremendous support to the study of Yazdanfar and Bonyadi (2016), which indicates that both Persian and English speakers tended to use direct request strategies. Moreover, HAs were similar to LA in showing awareness to social distance (familiarity), they were more direct in familiar than unfamiliar situations.

Regarding conventional indirect, the study summarized the request strategies employed by both groups according to the social power and distance variables. As for the power and social distance (+P, +D) between the requester and the requestee, the researcher found similarity in the use of query preparatory and want statement. The findings of this study are in line with Yassin and Abdul Razak (2018) that conventionally indirect request strategies by means of query preparatory are considered the most common.

Regarding internal modifications, On the other hand, both groups show their preference towards using grounder strategy (HAs=38% and LAs= 34%) by giving reason, justification and explanations. Thus, this result about using grounder strategy result is in line with Al Khasawneh (2021, p. 62) that the most frequent external mitigation request strategy among Saudi students is grounder.

The data (see Tables. 4.10 and 4.11) shows that there are differences and similarities in their use of conventions of means. Both LAs (n=41) and HAs (n=45) prefer Ability but are not statically different. However, there are also statistically significant differences between HAs (29.41) and LAs (2.40%) at the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the willingness according to the variable of the proficiency as the value of " Chi-Square " was (37.786) by a statistical significance of P-value (0.000*). In addition, it is observed only HAs employ suggestion strategies compared to LAs with no occurrence. Most important, Pearson Chi-Square pair comparisons revealed significant differences in their use of possibility as used by HAs (11.76%) significantly more compared with LAs (6.02%) at P-value (0.003*). This result is in line with Almathkuri (2021) that Saudi undergraduate participants are more inclined towards using direct request strategies the most, while non-conventionally indirect is the least request strategy used by the participants.

It is observed that both groups showed the most preference for politeness devices (HAs = 302, LAs= 164) with a significant difference at P-value=0.001. The reason behind the preference of SEFL learners in using politeness devices frequently may be attributed to follow Grice's cooperative maxims of clarity by employing evident and explicit utterances such as "please". The similarities pertaining external modifications between both groups manifested in using grounder external modification the most by both groups. The findings revealed that both groups were inclined towards using request strategies that imply politeness, such as "can I?, is it possible? I am asking for...". Similarly, LAs used request strategies that entail politeness, such as "is it possible? Can I ? I'm extremely sorry (negative politeness strategies according to FTA). Based on the foregoing, the above-mentioned request strategies performed by HAs and LAs are considered as save threatening acts on the parts of hearer because they begin with

request modals. To put it differently, the participants tend to use request mitigating devices, which are considered face-saving because it prevents the hearer from rejecting the request.

Regarding pragmatic realization there are no statistically significant differences at the level of significance (≤ 0.05) in the Familiarity ($=P, +D$), ($+P, -D$), in the Power ($-P, +D$), ($-P, -D$), ($=P, +D$), in the Difficulty ($+P, +D$), ($=P, -D$), in the Right ($-P, +D$), ($=P, -D$), ($-P, -D$), ($=P, +D$) and in the Obligation ($+P, +D$), ($-P, +D$), ($=P, +D$) according to the variable of the proficiency. Consequently, it can be deduced that both groups have a pragmatic realization and knowledge of making request strategies when there is an equity of power, but social distance between them and the hearer.

Considering the fourth variable, “right of performing request”, that influences the use of request strategy among HAs and LAs. The ability of both groups in performing requests by taking into account the right of performing requests. The findings showed that LAs assessed similar to HAs the right of performing requests for the following power and distance ($-P, +D$), ($=P, -D$), ($-P, -D$) and ($=P, +D$).

The above explanation indicates that there are few insignificant similarities between Saudi EFL learners at different language proficiency in producing and realizing request act which concludes that the differences are more between groups at different language proficiency as explained in the following section (5.3).

5.3 The Differences in the Production and Realization of Request Act by HAs and LAs

To shed light on the third question of the current study, the differences in pragmatic realization of making requests between HAs and LAs, the findings of the DCT and SRQ have shown that the lack of pragmatic competence affects low achievers’

communication in the second language due to their use of inaccurate expressions, which lead to unsuccessful communicative events. To illustrate, the use of mood derivable request indicates that their affects their use of request strategies i.e., their pragmatic incompetence hinders them from performing request in an appropriate manner. This finding is in line with Barron (2003) that negative pragmatic transfer is outlined as the occurrence of speaker's pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic knowledge onto target language contexts where such occurrence leads to realization and manners different from those of target language speakers. This sort of transfer causes miscommunication and misunderstanding.

This result may be explained by the fact that low achievers are not able to produce utterances to communicate their "specific intentions" in a second language. However, HAs have shown pragmatic competence. To clarify, HAs inclined to use hedged performative phrases. Perhaps, their pragmatic competence affects their use of request strategies positively. HAs' use of request strategies reflects a high level of pragmatic competence as opposed to the use of mood derivable that is considered a face threatening act on part of the hearer. This finding agrees with Trosborg (2011) that the speaker's failure of employing pragmatic performance appropriately and effectively, the interlocutor may consider the utterances as a social affront and rude.

However, the findings showed that LAs used mood derivable, which begins with an imperative verb, using mood derivable in a situation that entails the existence of social power and distances between the interlocutors is considered impolite and denotes the lack of pragmatic knowledge of the LAs and this strategy comes under bald record strategy according to FTA. To clarify, when the speaker has a higher level of social, cultural, and hierarchy than the addressee, losing face is not probable to happen.

Therefore, a direct request may be performed. If the speaker is low power status, the

indirect request will be used. Therefore, using force is more probable to happen. Based on the foregoing, HAs were inclined towards using indirect request strategy more than LAs. This finding lends tremendous support to Jalilifar (2014) that advanced learners performed more indirect request acts. On the other hand, his finding is consistent with Febriani and Hanidar (2019) that mood derivable is the most commonly used request strategy among low achievers.

According to Mohamed (2019) mood derivable is the illocutionary force which is usually transferred by direct linguistic indicators. As stated by (Al Khasawneh, 2021), the most direct manner to make a request is the imperative or mood derivable by LAs learners. This imperative form of requesting directly indicates that the utterance is a command or an order. Moreover, Mohamed (2019) concluded that the participants were more inclined towards using direct request strategies. LAs used mood derivable regardless of the social power and distance of the hearer.

There are possibly two likely causes for the differences between high and low achiever students in producing request act. First, LAs do not study English as much as HAs students, therefore, their familiarity with the second language is limited. Second, their English level affects the pragmatic realization i.e., the high English level of HAs affects their use of request strategies positively, while the low English level of LAs affect their use of request strategies negatively.

As a matter of fact, the pragmatic realization of making requests between high achievers and low achievers is different. For example, HAs use of “could” suggests their ability to master the language and their pragmatic realization in using request strategies that are appropriate for addressing those with higher power and social distance such as the use of could in the sixth situation in which the student asks his professor to postpone the date of submission for the final homework.

On the other hand, LAs use of “can” suggests their lack of L2 pragmatic competence due to their inability to use the appropriate modal verb for addressing those with higher power and social distance such as using the following request strategy “can you postpone the date of submission”, which is considered informal as opposed to “could” that is considered more formal. Knowing that both groups were less inclined towards using suggestions.

Generally speaking, the internal modification politeness device is the most common among HAs . However, it is rarely used among LAs. The reason behind that might be attributed to the lack of pragmatic realization among LAs i.e. their ability to perform request by taking into account that the speaker has a power over the hearer, therefore, not all of them are aware of using politeness devices in making requests, particularly for addressing those of higher power meaning that HAs have a pragmatic knowledge of performing request, particularly when the speaker has a power over the hearer.

Regarding non-conventional classification, it is employed by HAs (4.35%) and no occurrence of this category by LAs which is employed to ask something implicitly using hints (strong hints), and (mild hints). Non-conventionally indirect was not used by any of LAs group, which might refer to the fact that the students were not even aware of them being a viable polite request act in the target language. Social power (+/-P) was an essential element that influenced the level of directness in the request strategies preferred by Saudi EFL learners. For instance, mild hint strategy (off-record) increased in use with increase in hearer’s power (+P). Using off record as a type of politeness strategies indicates that the speaker employs FTA by using indirect and ambiguous utterance. Exploiting this type of strategy needs the speaker to be competent in sociopragmatics and pragmalinguistic competence that is why HAs used this strategy

whereas LAs have not sufficient knowledge to perform such this type of request. In fact, non-conventionally indirect request strategies are less employed by HAs (4.35 % compared to CI (28.43%) and to D (67.22%). In addition, it is observed that NCI has never been used by LAs due to their insufficient sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic knowledge.

Generally speaking, LAs students tend to use the main verb for describing the act being performed by the utterance, therefore, they have used explicit performative, which is considered as a threatening act. On the other hand, HAs tend to use request mitigating devices, which are considered as face-saving because it prevents the hearer from rejecting the request. This finding is in line with Alakrash and Bustan (2020) that Arabs tend to employ an explicit form and direct request strategies.

The findings of the current study are in line with Félix-Brasdefer (2007), which showed that beginners use more direct expressions in request utterances contrasted to intermediate and advanced students. Moreover, their performance was not consistent with HAs regarding variety in using range of request act in different social power and status. A possible explanation of that is that LAs do not have the ability to use request strategy with the same impact as HAs. Therefore, LAs learners would be better if they be immersed in English language with all its fields in order to avoid the miscomprehension of using the speech act of request.

Moreover, the study found that the negative pragmatic transfer among LAs was evident in their perception of the factor in the right of the speaker to make a request. It is obvious that the use of the speech act of request from Arabic into English does not sound natural for English native speakers because Arab readers convey the meaning, they seek to convey by using their mode of thinking. All of which reveals the impact of cultural background in the use of speech act.

Furthermore, as the first variable in SRQ is the power, the findings indicated that LAs were unaware to perform requests when there is neither power nor social distance between the interlocutors (-P, -D); whereas HAs were inclined to use polite request for addressing person who is higher power. This result may be explained by the fact that low achievers are not able to produce utterances to communicate their "specific intentions" in a second language. However, the HAs have shown pragmatic competence.

With regard to the second variable, the findings revealed that LAs are not familiar with the right of performing request because of their unfamiliarity with the social power and distance as opposed to HA. On the other hand, HAs were inclined towards using politeness device. It is clear that LAs have used request strategies that are not as polite as the request strategies that are used by HAs; this could be attributed to the low proficiency level of LAs as opposed to the HAs.

As regards the third variable, which is the difficulty of performing requests, it influences the use of request strategy among HAs and LAs. HAs show in performing requests by taking into account the power and social distance variables. The findings showed that LAs insufficient pragmatic realization for the following power and distance (+P, +D), (-P, +D), (=P, -D) and (=P, -D).

Regarding the fifth variable, "imposition to carry out request", the fifth variable influences the use of request strategy among HAs and LAs.. The findings revealed that LAs were unable to perform requests by taking into consideration the fifth variable "the imposition to carry out a request", when there is an equity of power, but there is no social distance between the interlocutors (=P, -D). The findings of the SRQ have shown that the lack of pragmatic competence affects low achievers' communication in the second language due to their use of inaccurate expressions, which lead to

unsuccessful communicative events. LAs use of mood derivables shows that their pragmatic incompetence hinders them from performing request in an appropriate manner. According to Brown and Levinson (1987) there are social variables that affect language use, for instance, social power between speaker and hearer and imposition.

In conclusion, the study found that HAs pragmatic knowledge is higher than LAs. This finding agrees with (Al-Gahtani, and Roever, 2011; Xiao, 2015, Geyer, 2007; Pinto, 2005; Wannaruk, 2008) studies that High Achievers (HA) of language competence show increasing in performing the pragmatic competence compared to Low Achievers (LA). Moreover, LAs use of request strategies denotes negative pragmatic transfer as opposed to HAs. This finding is consistent with Wannaruk (2008) that LA learners are more inclined towards using negative pragmatic transfer. However, HAs have the ability to show positive pragmatic transfer in their speech and less negative pragmatic transfer.

Moreover, the findings of the current study are inconsistent with Taguchi (2006) which deduced that LAs gained lower appropriateness scores more than HAs, but in situations where power is high, the difference between groups is not significant. Whereas the power is low, both groups use direct utterances. Regarding the performance of request utterances, both groups tended to use fewer mitigation utterances, and increase the usage of hinting expressions.

There are differences between HAs and LAs that are attributed to the following reasons. LAs do not study English as much as HAs students, therefore, their familiarity with the second language is limited. Second, their English level affects the pragmatic realisation i.e., the high English level of HAs affects their use of request strategies positively, while the low English level of LAs affect their use of request strategies negatively.

Pragmatic realization of making request between high achievers and low achievers is different. For example, HAs use of “could” suggests their ability to master the language and their pragmatic realization in using request strategies that are appropriate for addressing those with higher power and social distance. LAs use direct more and less of internal modifications suggests their lack of L2 pragmatic competence due to their inability to use the appropriate modal verb (“could” and “please”) for addressing those with higher power and social distance.

All in all, HAs were able to perform requests by taking into account the social power and distance between the speaker and the hearer. Such ability is manifested in their use of requests that reflect their pragmatic realization such. However, LAs were unconscious of the effect of social power and social distance in performing request strategies. Such difference is manifested in their pragmatic realization. Moreover, LAs used less polite strategy than HA. Possibly, HA group showed more pragmatic knowledge in their usage of request act than LA group.

In respect to high and low differences, many interesting findings emerged. For example, Takahashi and Beebe (1987) claimed that there is an evident relationship between language proficiency and request realization; that means using external and internal modifications increased when the language proficiency inclined. Trosborg (1987) stated that there is a significant correlation between linguistic proficiency and utilizing lexical downgrades (such as politeness devices). To conclude, language proficiency pertaining to L2 learner effect on pragmatic competence in making and realizing request acts.

With regard to internal modification, it consists of politeness device, play down, conditional clause, subjective, embedding, understate, appealer, hedge, and consultative device. The findings reveal statistical differences between HAs ($n= 403$) and LAs (242)

with Chi-square (27.68) at P-value (0.000) in using internal modification. For instance, HAs show preference towards using politeness request strategies in addressing those of higher power and social status, whereas the LAs tend to use impolite request strategies such as mood derivable. Based on the above, the lack of proficiency levels among LAs hinders them from performing request strategies correctly. Thus, it can be deduced that HAs have more pragmatic knowledge and proficiency levels as opposed to LAs. The results pertaining to internal modifications used by LAs confirm Hassall's (2001) study as stated that L2 learners face difficulties to utilize internal modification in their speech. To sum up, using internal modifications does not only affect only the request act but also on the other everyday communication (Al-Momani, 2009).

According to the external modification, it was observed that HAs (n= 338) employed external modification statically more than LA(n=456) with Chi-square 917.53) at P-value (0.000). Compared to internal modification (see 4.2.3), groups overused extremal modification. The findings showed that there are significant differences between HAs (n= 456) and LAs (=338) with Chi-square (17.53) at P-value (0.000). These results confirmed with these previous studies which assumed intermediate and advanced learner inclined to use more of external modifications in their speech s (e.g., Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986; Hassall, 2001; House & Kasper, 1987; Rintell & Mitchell, 1989). Hassall (2001) claimed that using long request statement could show the speaker's intention to emphasize their linguistic knowledge; that is, to indicate that they are sufficiently proficient to perform verbosity statements in speech act context. The decline of using external modification by LAs may be referred to the assumption of the influence of their L1 and weakness in the language proficiency that may hinder them to produce sufficient pragmatic competence compared to HAs' performance.

As for the differences between HAs and LAs, the former group has more pragmatic competence and proficiency levels than LAs. Moreover, the proficiency levels and production levels of HAs were better than LAs. The study attributed these differences to the academic level, language proficiency level, and the pragmatic realization of both groups. Furthermore, LAs faced difficulties performing requests in terms of the following power and distance variables (-P, +D; +P, +D; =P, -D). In addition, the lack of pragmatic competence affects low achievers' communication in the second language due to their use of inaccurate expressions, which lead to unsuccessful communicative events. LAs inclined to use impolite request strategies. On the other hand, HAs exploit polite request strategies.

To sum up, the findings demonstrated that there were evident sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistics differences in the use of request strategies between two groups at different language proficiency as HAs and LAs. Findings indicate that language proficiency influences positively on producing and realizing pragmatic competence in the light of social variables (power and distance). In comparing the findings between two groups, HAs revealed a more sociopragmatic competence in using speech, as they showed more awareness of the influence of social power and distance compared with LAs performance. The findings of current study conform with Mohamed, H. (2019) that the sociopragmatic variables have a significant influence on using the level of request directness.

Pertaining to the third level of directness which is non-conventionally indirect, it seemed as the least commonly used strategies by HAs group (4.35%) with no occurrence of this strategy by LAs. For instance, HAs used strong hints in which speakers use part of reference which is required for implementation of the act more commonly than LAs. The finding shows that LAs had never used any type of non-

conventional indirect which lends tremendous support to Sari (2017) that the least commonly used request strategy in pride and prejudice movies is a strong hint. According to Levinson (1983, p. 24) “pragmatics is the study of the ability of language users to paint sentences with the context in which they would be appropriate”.

The negative relationship between language proficiency and LA's employing polite request act strategies can be referred to the effect of the mother tongue, their insufficient utterance, the necessity of avoiding grammatical mistakes, and lack of exposure with real life situations that used English language. This finding conforms with Al-Harbi and Mahfoodh (2021), they stated that there is a significant correlation between language proficiency and the production and comprehension of apology act whether negative or positive relationship. Hence, it is observed that high language proficiency influences the production of speech acts. In comparison, low language proficiency shows weakness in using a variety of request strategies along with poor structure in using speech act.

As observed based on Chi-square comparisons, results in the current study indicate more differences than similarities between HAs and LAs in their sensitivity to contextual variables. Pertaining level of directness, HAs show awareness in using requests according to power value, for instance they use more direct in (+p), and less in (=p) and the least in (-p).

Regarding the influence of social variables (Brown & Levinson, 1987) in using request strategies among HAs and LAs, findings demonstrated that HAs are sensitive to using direct levels in different social power categories. For instance, they changed their use of level of directness based on power status using less directness when they speak with high power (+P). regarding the influence of social power and distance on LAs performance, Chi-square results indicated no significant difference between social

power and distance categories meaning that LAs have weakness in realizing the influence of social power and distance in their daily communication. HAs shifted in using directness level according to social power, they were more direct when the speaker had more power over the hearer (+P ($S > H$)), the less direct when there is equal power ($S = H$) and showed the least power when there low power (-P ($S < H$)). Statistically, there is a significant difference between (+P and =P) and (=P and -P).

This finding is confirmed with the Farahat's (2009) results as stated that the effect of social power and distance appeared as the main determining factor of the linguistic politeness. However, LAs showed fractured shifting in using direct level which shows their inability to make control on using speech act based on power variable with no statically difference between any power relationships.

Regarding request perspective, HAs (30.0%) employed inclusive requests significantly more than LAs (7.20%) at p-value (0.000*). It is noteworthy that low achievers do not utilize impersonal requests in their responses, the reason behind may be due to their insufficient pragmatic competence that helps them to use a variety of request perspectives. HAs have more pragmatic knowledge in using requests strategies according to the speaker-oriented requests, hearer-oriented requests, impersonal requests, and inclusive-requests as stated by the chi-square value at (29.917) with significant p-value (0.000*) in comparison with LAs. Regarding request convention of means, the findings showed that there are significant differences between HAs ($n = 170$) and LAs ($n = 83$) with Chi-square (29.917) at P-value (0.000) in using conventions of means. The data presents that the participants have used the convention of means sub-strategies, such as ability, permission, possibility, willingness, and suggestion with either major or minor differences between them.

5.4 Summary of the Research Questions with Findings

Based on the findings of the DCT and SRQ, there are significant differences between both groups that are attributed to their academic level as well as language proficiency level. The study has deduced that LAs inclined to use imperative requests; whereas HAs inclined to use polite requests for addressing a hearer who is of higher power such as they use inclusive requests. Another interesting finding is that LAs students have encountered structural problems and grammatical challenges in making requests.

The findings showed that HAs proficiency and production of request strategies was better than LAs. Along similar lines, regarding the pragmalinguistic variability of producing request act for two proficiency groups for HAs and LAs, the findings showed that HAs performed better than LAs. Based on the findings of the DCT, there are significant differences between both groups that are attributed to their academic level, language proficiency level, and their pragmatic realization. The study has deduced that LAs tended to use imperative requests for asking the teacher, whereas HAs inclined to use polite requests for addressing the doctor who has a higher power. The possible explanation of the finding is that LAs use of mood derivable denotes their lack of pragmatic knowledge, particularly when addressing a speaker of higher power and social distance. These findings support the main statement problem of the current study which assumes that LAs have limited pragmatic knowledge in producing range of request strategies including internal and external modifications. Compared to LAs, HAs show ability to employ nonconventional indirect with internal and external modifications which may reflect their pragmatic competence in using speech act taking into consideration social variables.

The findings revealed that HAs are more proficient in using request strategies appropriately unlike LAs. This finding is in line with Garcia (2004) that HAs are approaching native speakers in realizing the appropriate speech acts. Along similar lines, the findings of the current study agree with Geyer (2007), who claimed HAs use a range of lexicons and grammars in their speech acts, such as contrasting, adjusting opinions, and this production of discourse features is higher than the production of LAs. Owing to this reason, HAs have the ability to master the language, unlike their LAs counterparts.

It can be deduced from the previous findings that direct request strategies are commonly used by Saudi participants. The level of directness is used for the analysis to reveal how low and high achievers are different or similar in employing directness level. Umar (2004) indicates that Arab learners tend to use a high level of directness because of pragmatic transfer from the Arabic language, which permits using an extreme level of directness with lower status people and close friends. The reason behind that might be attributed to the fact that the English language has different methods in making requests compared to the Arabic language, which has only one way to make requests.

However, HAs appeared high level of pragmalinguistic knowledge when using variety of mitigation device such as consultative device, playdowns and downtoners compared with LAs who show less use of internal modifications and no occurrence of some strategies such as embedding, appealer and nonconventional indirect.

Generally speaking, there are significant differences between both groups that are attributed to their pragmalinguistic knowledge as well as sociopragmatic level. LAs have encountered grammatical challenges in making requests. HAs proficiency and production of request strategies was better than LAs. The following table presents the Research Questions and the Findings.

Table 5.1: Summary of the Research Questions and the Findings

Research question	Research tool	Type of analysis used	Findings
RQ: 1 What strategies do Saudi EFL learners at different levels of English language proficiency employ in making request act? Linguistic variability. Pertaining direct, internal, and external modifications.	DCT	SPSS Chi-square was used to explore differences and similarities between SEFL's English proficiency levels and strategies of making requests	1. Results indicate that both HAs and LAs inclined towards direct request strategies the most. However, LAs tend to use it more than HAs. The second commonly request strategy by both groups is conventionally indirect. HAs employed CI significantly (28.43%) more than LAs (16.24%) did ($p < 0.05$). Nevertheless, HAs inclined towards using it than LAs. The third frequently used request strategy among the participants is non-conventionally indirect (4.35%). Generally speaking, the ability of the participants to use indirect request strategies that are considered polite and face-saving reflect their high proficiency levels of using request strategies, whereas the participants' tendencies towards using direct request strategies that are considered impolite and face-threatening reflect their low proficiency levels of using request strategies. Linguistically, it is clearly obvious that LAs made a lot of mistakes in performing requests that are classified into grammatical mistakes, spelling errors, sentence structure errors such as fragment or incomplete sentences. 2. Regarding external modification, it observed there was a significant difference in the use of external strategies between HAs ($n = 456$) compared to LAs ($n = 338$) with Chi-square (17.53) at P value (0.000) 3. Pertaining Internal modifications. The use of this strategy is completely different with less use among two groups compared to external modifications. According to results which show that HAs ($n = 402$) employed significantly internal modifications more than LAs ($n = 242$) with Chi-square (27.68) at P value (0.000)

Table 5.1, continued

Research question	Research tool	Type of analysis used	Findings
RQ:2 What is the relationship between language proficiency and pragmatic realization of making requests by Saudi EFL learners? (Situational variability).	SRQ	Data from SRQ is analyzed using T-test to identify the differences and/or similarities between SEFL of different language proficiency in realizing the socio-pragmatic assessment.	The findings show that there was significant difference between HAs and LAs in their realization of contextual variables. Interestingly, it is evident statistically that there were 18 significant differences between groups at different language proficiency. Based on 5 contextual variables, the familiarity and difficulty aspects in performing requests appeared to be the most variation among HAs and LAs whereas the right of performing the request appeared to be the least variation.
RQ3: What are the similarities and differences in the production and realization of request act by HAs and LAs?	Results gained from both DCT and SRQ	Data from DCT and SRQ is analyzed qualitatively to identify the differences and/or similarities between HAs and LAs SEFL in the production of request act and the degree of differences between them in using request act.	Similarities Although there were many differences between groups in producing and realizing pragmatic competence. It was observed that both groups inclined to use Direct level the most. The study found that both groups declined in using internal modifications and inclined to use direct in performing request strategies. The similarities pertaining external modifications between both groups manifested in using grounder external modification the most by both groups. Regarding pragmatic realization there are no statistically significant differences at the level of significance (≤ 0.05) in the Familiarity (=P, +D), (+P, -D), in the Power (-P, +D), (-P, -D), (=P, +D), in the Difficulty (+P, +D), (=P, -D), in the Right (-P, +D), (=P, -D), (-P, -D), (=P, +D) and in the Obligation (+P, +D), (-P, +D), (=P, +D) according to the variable of the proficiency.

Table 5.1, continued

Research question	Research tool	Type of analysis used	Findings
RQ3 (cont.)			Differences Regarding directness level, HAs preferred conventionally indirect and non-conventionally indirect significantly more than LAs did. Regarding external modifications, the findings showed that there were significant differences between HAs (n= 456) and LAs (=338) with Chi-square (17.53) at P-value (0.000) in using sub strategies. Regarding internal modifications, HAs (n= 403) showed a high percentage in using internal modifications compared to LA (n=242) with Chi-square (27.689) at P-value (0.000). Regarding social variables, HAs were influenced significantly by social power and social distance in using external modifications compared with LAs who were not sensitive in shifting their use according to social variables.

CHAPTER 6

RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

The main objective of the current research is to investigate the linguistic and situational variability among Saudi EFL at different language proficiency in employing and realizing requests act as 50 participants as high achievers and 48 participants as low achievers. This chapter summarizes the results and findings from this study. Thus, it starts with a review of results according to research questions. The pedagogical implications and further recommendations are addressed. Finally, this chapter ends with limitations and conclusion sections.

6.2 Summary of Discussion of Finding

The general finding is this study shows that there is a significant impact of language proficiency in producing and realizing request act. As mentioned, this study focused on pragmalinguistic knowledge and sociopragmatic realizing between two groups as HAs and LAs to investigate the similarities and differences between groups in using request act. On the pragmalinguistic level, both groups heavily employed direct request strategies to make their requests, and within this category HAs mostly employ the hedge performative and query preparatory strategy, while LAs mostly employ mood derivable.

Additionally, when investigating usage of the nine request strategies between both groups, more statistical differences were noticed. Regardless of the fact that the results have shown that both groups employ direct strategy the most, HAs employed

conventional and non-conventional indirect significantly more than LAs performance. Further, LAs had never used non-conventional indirect. This finding supports the belief that although both groups tended to direct level, HAs still have ability to shift to less direct as using CI and N-CI through using strong and mild hints. Thus, LA seems to be less polite.

Pertaining external to modification, it is observed that HAs group (n= 456) used external modification significantly more than LAs group did (n= 338) with Chi square (17.537) at P-value (0.000*). Findings indicated that HA participants tend to use grounder the most with the percentage of (39.70%). However, the second most commonly used subtype of external modification by LAs was small talk (34.91%) that entails making an amiable request by firming the social rapport. Regarding to the influence of social variable on using external modification, Chi-comparison stated that HAs were more conscious to the effect of social power and distance in changing their strategy depending on the weight of power and existence of distance between interlocutors. However, LAs unaware of influence social distance as there were no significant difference between (+D and -D) in their performance.

Referring to internal modifications, Chi-square results showed that HAs (n= 402) employed significantly internal modifications more than LAs (n=242) with Chi-square (27.687) at P-value (0.000*), HAs use internal modification statistically different from LA. It is observed that HAs tended to use mitigating expressions to reduce the potential threat. HAs used conditional clause hedge, which are used by speakers to keep a distance from reality, that amounts to (2.43%).

The researcher found that LAs use few external modifications and the most focus was on politeness devices that may be attributed to their insufficient pragmalinguistic

knowledge that hinders them to use a variety of external modification as compared with HAs' paragramlinguistic competence.

From a sociopragmatic angle, HAs and LAs varied in their assessment of contextual variables. HA groups were more aware of the effect of social status in the use of directness, external and internal modifications. They significantly change their use of request strategies based on the social power and status between speaker and hearer. Whereas social power and distance did not influence the LAs' use of request strategies except in some situations although they were not significant. It is clearly obvious that LAs made a lot of mistakes in performing requests that are classified into grammatical mistakes, spelling errors, sentence structure errors such as fragment or incomplete sentences.

6.3 Implication of Study

The significance of this study lies in revealing request strategies employed by Saudi EFL learners at two different levels of English language proficiency use (linguistic and situational variability). More specifically, it aims to investigate the level of directness, internal and external modifications among learners from different language proficiency. To achieve this objective, the study demonstrated the study of Barnawi and Al-Hawsawi (2017) which stressed the necessity for Saudi government to have in-depth understanding of the interference of current English language policy and practices in both public and higher education, 'the globalization of education and 'local cultural identity' for successfully enhancing mass literacy in English in the country and accordingly preserve local interests.

Also, Elyas and Badawood (2016) stated that English Language Teaching policies in Saudi Arabia are primarily determined by the Curriculum Department Centre for

Development (CDCE). Their study came to the conclusion that the majority of English textbooks in Saudi Arabia focus on instilling lexical competence along with social values more than concentrating on the primary issue of teaching them English language as means of communication. Investigating interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) on second or foreign learners regarding their perception, performance, and their pragmatic ability assist decision-makers of the educational policies in developing curriculum, learning activities, and student needs.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) identified two essential methods to help second and foreign language learners to improve their pragmatic knowledge and performance: examining learner's needs and focusing on the appropriate competence and skills that the learners should have to employ them in the target language. Furthermore, focusing on the student's needs particularly will help in filling the gap between student's competence and their capability to employ language appropriately in various situations such as requesting, thanking, and apologizing, among others especially for learners with low abilities in the target language.

As indicated from the current findings, there is a significant gap between two groups in producing and realizing request act. Based on the results, there are important pedagogical implications of this study. LAs show significant pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic weakness in using request act. So, this finding may help teachers and course designers to improve the curricula to develop SEFL's pragmatic competence and reduce pragmatic failure by increasing the exposure to real-life situation to the target language and use a variety of speech act in each semester from the beginning stage (Bradovi-Harlig et al., 2015; Kasper, 1988)

The current study investigates linguistic and situational variability of using speech act including the common request strategies in the target language that helps to better

understand the appropriate linguistic knowledge which lead to successful communication and prevent any pragmatic failures taking into consideration the importance of social variables. As observed that both groups used less internal modification, it is necessary to append the curriculum with a variety of internal and external modifications to decrease their use of directness level.

It is crucial to improve students' pragmalinguistic knowledge and sociopragmatic competence. Hence, it is essential to center on both competences in teaching and learning English as EFL\ESL that develop communication and understand the other culture norms in speaking. For example, the results regarding Sociopragmatic competence present that social variables (distance and power) were essential in recognizing how speakers realize and perform request acts. Pertaining pragmalinguistic knowledge, it is noticed how LAs failed in employing a variety of request strategies and they are less aware of social variables in using request act in different situations. Although HAs employ many request strategies, there are some strategies that were rarely used by both groups, so there is a crucial need for ESL and EFL to understand the pragmatic function in depth in order to build sufficient pragmatic knowledge that enhance them in using speech acts appropriately.

As observed from the finding, both groups showed preference in using directness level in making request act so learner's attention may be centered to a certain of mitigated input such as internal and external modifications strategies that increase L2 pragmatic competence. Situations for 2L learners can involve play-downs, consultative devices, and downtoners/hedges. Because of the importance of social factors based on Brown and Levinson (1987) that influence the speakers' production and realizing speech act, learners can be provided situations including the interlocutor's status, familiarity, rights, and obligations. However, HAs group generally seemed to have

enough pragmatic knowledge of L2 request due to influence of language proficiency on using a variety of request strategies. Hence, LAs need more linguistic competence to develop their pragmatic competence and that happens by increasing the pragmatic input to avoid miscommunication and to be able to perform and realize request act adequately.

Regarding to implication of researcher design, Cross-Cultural Speech Act Pattern (Blum-Kulka et. Al (1989) and politeness theory (Brown and levinson, 1987) are indispensable for coding and analyzing the gathered data in the field of speech act as it is exploited in the current study. However, it is necessary to update the coding scheme to fit recent research and studies that reflect the pragmatic knowledge of various speakers of English.

Pertaining to research and methodological implications, Chang (2011) reported that the nexus between sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic competencies is strong and both aspects should be studied simultaneously. Hence, addressing pragmatic knowledge of 2L learners should cover the pragmalinguistic strategies in relation to the sociopragmatic competence. Further, in order to minimize pragmatic failure, L2 learners should recognize pragmalinguistic as well as sociopragmatic aspects of the TL (Schauer, 2009; Trosborg, 2010; Yates 2010). Accordingly, this study investigates the sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic competencies of speech act of request by SEFL at different language proficiency.

Two methods were used to gather data, DCT was employed to elicit pragmalinguistic knowledge (level of directness and internal and external modifications) from two groups as high achievers and low achievers and SRQ was employed to elicit Sociopragmatic competence (contextual variables). Further, using these tools may help to understand how groups at different language proficiency use

and realize request act. Findings revealed that language proficiency has a significant impact on making and realizing request strategies.

Speech act is treated as one of the most prominent theories in the domain of pragmatic studies which was presented by Austin (1962) stating that language is not just used for saying things, but for doing things. Austin (1962) proposed three crucial factors of speech acts as follows: locutionary (any utterance having a precise meaning), illocutionary (the speaker's intention such as requesting, promising and compliment) and perlocutionary (the influence of the meaningful utterance of the feelings and thoughts of the hearer in performing the expressions). The current study focused on the illocutionary act of request made by two groups at different language proficiency. Cohen (20004) clarified speech acts as a constant interest for second and foreign language learners because they face difficulties continually in exploiting speech acts like apologizing and request due to the lack of pragmatic competence that help them to make a successful communication.

Politeness theory is used in the pragmatic field to support and maintain social rapport in language use from different cultures. Politeness theory was conducted on the ground of speech acts theory. Hence, it is reported that any investigation of speech act requires the concept of politeness (Bella, 2014; Kousar, 2015; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Fraser, 1990; Gilks, 2010; Goffman, 1967). Brown and Levinson (1987) politeness theory is conducted in this research for its influence in human communication (Al- Adaileh, 2007; Al-Momani, 2009; Al-Shboul, 2013; Alfattah, 2010; Aydin, 2013; Shardakova, 2005; Thijittang, 2010)

Brown and Levinson (1987)'s theory rooted from Goffman's (1967) notion of face which supposed that some types of acts are intrinsically Face Threatening Acts.

The concept of face, as introduced in this research, is categorized as positive and

negative face; Negative face happens when the speaker keeps a personal space and freedom and shows dislike of interruption. Threatening Hearer negative face happens when hearer is asked to do something. Positive happens when a person should be accepted by others. However, the hearer 's positive face is threatened when the is no agreement between speaker and hearer by showing different views.

Brown and Levinson (1987) asserted that there are social variables that affect language use, for instance, social power between speaker and hearer, distance and imposition. As he stated, the weightiness of the speech act will maximize if social variables increase. For example, the imposition for asking for the book is less than the imposition for requesting money. Brown & Levinson model of politeness model has been conducted by researchers, pragmatists, linguists in examining and investigating their studies (Chen, 2001). as Brown and Levinson (1987)' classification of power and distance is adopted in the current study to reveal the pragmatic realization among HA and LA in performing request act which will be discussed in the answering the second question of the present study which aims at investigating the pragmatic realization of making requests across high and low SEFL proficiency learners (situational variability). Because of the value of the concept of "Face" in communication and social interaction, many researchers have examined this notion from different perspectives.

To underestimate the notion of politeness, Brown and Levinson (1987) suggested five scales from the most magnificent loss face to lowest loss face as follows:

1. Bald on record: using direct request act
2. Off-record: using FTA but vaguely the interpretation depends on the hearer (such as hints)
3. Negative politeness: using redressive actions when performing an FTA, which influences the negative face of the hearer.

4. Positive politeness: using redressive actions when performing an FTA, which influences the positive face of the hearer.

When the speaker is a high level of social, cultural, and hierarchy than the addressee, losing face is not probable to happen. Therefore, a direct request may be performed. If the speaker is low power status, the indirect request will be used. Therefore, using force is more probable to happen. For example, HAs used terms such (*"dear doctor"*) to show solidarity and closeness to the hearer (as a positive politeness strategy). Regarding the influence of social variables (Brown and Levinson, 1987), HAs' performance was influenced significantly by power and distance factors more than LAs performance. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), as assumed that request acts are considered as FTAs that damage the speaker's positive face and save the hearer's negative face. Moreover, Brown and Levinson (1987) reported that requests are intrinsically negative politeness strategies. In this respect, HAs groups use off record strategy by using strong and mild hints as type of FTA whereas no occurrence of this strategy by LAs may be connected with low pragmatic competence of LAs in using request act.

6.4 Limitation and Recommendation of the Study

The participants enrolled in this research were Saudi EFL learners from Preparatory Year Program (PYP), Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University (PSAU). The findings of this study cannot be generalized to other students from different colleges or another university or schools in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The gathered data was collected via DCT and SRQ that means using any other tool may lead to different results. Moreover, the aim of this study is to compare between two groups of Saudi EFL

so another group as native speakers of English is not included. So future studies should add another group as native speakers of English which strengthen the results and use the data as a baseline.

This study concentrates on the influence of language proficiency on producing request act so other factors such as length of residence is not investigated. Moreover, this study addresses the sociopragmatic realization depending on the social variables (distance and power) in its investigation so other social factors are not taken into consideration.

This study is one of the few studies that tackles the influence of language proficiency in using request act under the aspects of sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic levels. There is a crucial need to develop this study to cover other factors such as length of residence in improving pragmatic competence and also to expand the sample to cover both gender and age from different universities and high schools. It is necessary to point out that this study presents the producing and realizing speech act without focusing on the obstacles and difficulties that face L2 in using pragmatic knowledge. So future studies may benefit from this study to expand the scope of this research to investigate pragmatic difficulties and solutions to improve pragmatic competence.

Regarding data collection, this research adopted DCT as the most applicable tool that has many advantages in ILP research. For example, it can make a control on the social variables (power, status, distance) that helps the researcher to gather sufficient data in a short period. Moreover, using this tool also reduces the anxiety and nervousness among participants when they are asked to participate in an English survey. Otherwise, this tool has not been administered to collect data pertaining to interaction such as hesitation, prosody and turn taking and the designed situations occur in

academic issues so they may not represent all of real -life situations. It is highly recommended for further studies to employ another tool such as interview and role play then compare with the current finding to show which is the more effective tool. Future research may expand the end of the current study to encompass situations that draw more social settings (home, street, market, restaurant, hotel) that support ILP studies with more insight of using request act from a wide range of social situations.

The field of teaching and instructing pragmatics into teaching policy is a field that needs more investigation. Insufficient studies depict the need for L2 learners and the importance of teaching pragmatics in increasing their pragmatic competence. Further studies also should entail teaching speech acts such as apology, complaint, refusal to grasp the problematic issues that may obstacle communication for L2 learners.

6.5 Conclusion

A lot of studies among Arab scholars and researchers shed light on limited cross-cultural differences (Bataineh, 2014). Thus, more studies should be conducted to centre on cross-cultural pragmatics. As far as the researcher is concerned, inadequate studies have dealt with request acts among Saudi learners as ESL and EFL in the academic field. It is then hoped that by conducting this investigation, possible obstacles that face learners in using speech acts can further be explored especially in the context of Saudi English for Foreign language (EFL) speakers.

The present study presents the findings pertaining to the pragmatic competence between two groups at different language proficiency in employing request act. The analysis shed light on adopted pattern (CCSARP) including levels of directness and internal and external modifications based on contextual variables (power and distance).

Regarding Directness (D, CI and NCI), the main although both groups inclined to

direct level but LAs group used significantly direct requests compared with HAs. Moreover, HAs shifted to employ indirect request strategy that links with politeness and they show more polite in using request act than LAs. However, HAs manifest a good pragmatic competence-to some extent- in using a variety of request strategies. To sum up, language proficiency has an influence in producing sufficient pragmatic competence.

Based on the level of directness (D, CI and N-CI), both groups resorted to use more direct levels than conventional indirect and nonconventional indirect in performing FTA. This finding conforms with previous studies (Al-Khaza'leh, House & Kasper, 1987; Trosborg, 1995) that stated EFL/ESL inclined to be more direct in using speech act. Atawneh (1991) revealed the reason for Arabs' choice for directness to the Arabic linguistic style. He claimed that "Arabic does not have the same elaborate modal system as English for making indirect requests" (p. 212).

As there are scarce studies that cover the influence of language proficiency, the current research shows that LA is more direct (less polite) compared with HAs. The summary of the obtained results displays an evident difference of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence between groups in using request act. Moreover, this study investigates the influence of language proficiency in producing and realizing pragmatic competence which show that LAs have not received a sufficient pragmatic input which actually led to pragmatic failure that appeared in their performance and realization of speech act of request. So, the findings are in line with previous research which claimed that the L2 educational environment should have a significant impact on their pragmatic performance (Al-Momani, 2009).

Pertaining modifiers (external and internal), It is observed from the results the social status (-p/+p/=p) play significant role in choosing these strategies for HA groups

more than LA group but HAs show more conscious when employing the appropriate modifier with different social status situations that is they increase using internal modification when there are social distance and power with interlocutor. Finally, results from SRQ tool demonstrated that there was a significant difference between HAs and LAs in their realizing the contextual variables (difficulty, power, imposition, right and familiarity). Interestingly, it was evident statistically that there were 18 significant differences between groups in assessing these variables. The significant differences in favor of high achievers at the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) were as follows: in familiarity (+P, +D), (-P, +D) (=P, -D) and (-P, -D), in power variable as follows (+P, +D), -P, +D) (=P, -D) and (=P, -D), in difficulty as follows (-P, +D), (-P, -D), =P, +D) and (+P, -D), in the right as follows (-P, +D), (=P, -D), (-P, -D), (=P, +D) and in imposition as follows: (-P, +D), (=P, -D), (-P, -D) and (+P, -D).

With regard to social variable consciousness, LAs seemed to be less sensitive to social variables than HAs as LAs inclined to employ more direct styles in forming their FTAs than HAs. Further, LAs also appeared to employ less external and internal modification to soften their FTAs compared to HAs. This finding may be referred to students' insufficient linguistic ability which may hinder them from achieving the level of politeness they hope to gain in their TL.

In terms of directness, LAs group employed more direct FTAs than HAs as they seemed to soften their FTAs by heavy use of softeners and politeness markers (positive politeness strategy) (e.g., *"my dear brother"*, *"please"*, *"I wonder if"* and off record strategy (strong and mild hint). Comparatively, LAs used less mitigated and politeness devices (on record strategy), which made their utterances seem linguistically less adequate and pragmatically less polite.