

A Pragmatic Analysis of Request Structures in Moroccan Arabic and American English

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Abstract: This study investigates the use of request structures in Moroccan Arabic (MA) and American English (AE). It examines the differences between MA and AE in the use of request structures with reference to some cultural dimensions, namely individualism-collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance. For data collection, two research instruments were used: a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) and Recording. The results of this study have revealed that Moroccan Arabic native speakers (MANSs) and American English native speakers (AENSs) are significantly different in the use of request structures. MANSs employ more alerters (attention-getters), internal lexical downgraders (ILDs), and mitigating supporting moves (MSMs); whereas, AENSs use more internal syntactic downgraders (ISDs). However, both groups do not use aggravating supporting moves (ASMs) and internal lexical upgraders (ILUs) frequently because of their face-threatening act nature. MANSs tend to use religious phrases such as alerters (attention-getters) and ILDs to modify their request structures while AENSs use ISDs. These findings could be attributed to Hofstede's cultural dimensions. MANSs employ request structures that show collectivism, large power distance, high uncertainty avoidance, and positive politeness (in-group high-context culture). AENSs, on the other hand, use request structures that show individualism, small power distance, low uncertainty avoidance, and negative politeness (out-group low-context culture). This article concludes with some recommendations to enhance the teaching of request structures in MA and AE.

Keywords: Request Structures, Cultural Dimensions, Negative Politeness, Positive Politeness

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I. INTRODUCTION

Requesting is one of the communicative acts that are repeatedly used in human interactions. Each individual makes requests in a variety of instances and situations in his/her daily life interactions with family members, peers, classmates, acquaintances and even with strangers. But, failure to apply appropriate request structures may cause misunderstanding between interlocutors. So, understanding and producing the speech acts that are appropriate to certain situations is at the core of the pragmatics domain generally and the speech act performance particularly.

When one makes a request, the receiver may feel that the request force is an intrusion on his/her freedom of action. Also, the requester may be reluctant to make a request for fear of exposing a threat or making the receiver lose face (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989)[1]. Therefore, request is a face-threatening act to both the requester and the recipient. As the speech act of request has the potential to be intrusive and demanding, there is a need for the requester to lessen the embarrassment involved in the intended request. In order to do so, the requester should employ appropriate request structures (alerters, head acts, and supporting moves).

In fact, cross-cultural interaction has become a necessity because we find ourselves obliged to interact with different people belonging to different societies or cultures such as Moroccan and American cultures. Because of the fact that interaction between cultures has an array of challenges and the potential to yield misunderstanding, conflict, prejudice and discrimination against the whole groups of people or communities, research in cross-cultural pragmatics (CCP) is made necessary so as to decrease misunderstanding between people who belong to different cultures.

A number of researchers have investigated the use of speech act of request in different languages and cultures (Blum-Kulka&Olshtain, 1984; [2]Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2002[3]; Eslamirasekh, 1993[4]). However, it has been remarked that the Arab society, particularly the Moroccan society, has been far less investigated in cross-cultural pragmatics, especially in request structures (Ichkhakh, 1987[5]; Abdou, 1999[6]; Latif, 2014[7]). In other words, speech acts in general and requests in particular have been under-represented in pragmatics literature in the Moroccan context.

The performance of *request structures* in Moroccan Arabic (MA) seems to be neglected in the analysis of requests in the Moroccan context. Therefore, this article aims at investigating the use of request structures in Moroccan Arabic (MA) and American English (AE) with reference to some cultural dimensions, namely individualism-collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance.

II. LITERATUREREVIEW

Cultural differences between two languages comprise a range of cultural value systems. The latter are created from a conception and beliefs. Cultures have different standards and factors such as behaviors, customs, and the communication of one culture may be viewed as irrelevant or threatening by other cultures. Such views can create cultural gaps between interlocutors who take part in certain communicative act such as '*request*'. Hence, this may increase the potential for conflict and disagreement (Hofstede, 1996)[8].

2. Definition of Culture

Defining culture is a very difficult task. The concept of culture has been regarded as one of the most complicated concepts by many sociologists; that is why it has a plethora of definitions (Williams, 1983 [9]; Hall, 1976)[10]. In fact, culture affects what individuals do in their society, and it is considered as a reflection of individuals' behaviors, norms and customs. It is not genetically inherited, and it cannot exist on its own. It is shared by members of a particular society who belong to the same community, and it is passed on from one generation to another (Hall, 1990)[11].

According to Hofstede (2001, p.4)[12], culture is defined as "*the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others*". These mental programs take two forms: visible and invisible. For example, the cultural meaning of certain practices is interpreted by individuals of a particular society, and this interpretation manifests the society values. Such mental programs have the potential to distinguish the members belonging to a certain group from another. For Hofstede (2001, pp.9-10)[12], mental programming is a way to obtain order and use concepts that represent certain culture. In fact, culture is an ongoing process because it is always moving and evolving. It is always changing since each generation adds new things to it before passing it on. We can say that culture is an elusive and complex concept because no single definition of it has reached agreement in the literature. However, in this study, Hofstede's definition of culture has been chosen to analyze the performance of request request structures.

2.1. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

In this study, three cultural dimensions are taken into consideration: individualism-collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance. These important dimensions help interpret the findings of this article and answer the stated research questions.

2.1.1. Individualism-collectivism

This dimension refers to the ties between an individual and his/her fellow individuals and the collectivity which exists in society (Kale, 1996, pp.22-23) [13]. It has to do with the degree of social integration, and it measures whether people prefer to work in group or alone. It describes the degree to which people are integrated into certain groups, and it explains the ways in which individuals live and work together. In other words, this dimension refers to people's self-image as 'we' or 'I'. People are supposed either to take care of a community, group or relatives (collectivism) or just care for themselves and their immediate families (individualism). For example, in individualistic societies, the emphasis is put on personal achievements and individual rights. By contrast, in collectivistic societies, individuals act predominantly as members of a lifelong and cohesive group. Collectivism is different from individualism with regard to social relationships between an individual and his/her in-group members (Cho & Yoon, 2001, pp.76-77)[14].

When we consider collectivism and individualism in America, we can say that individualism is more valued and favored, and the American identity is based on the individual rather than on society. It is typical of Americans to think in 'I' form. In this regard, according to Samovar and Porter (2004)[15], American people show strong feelings towards individualism. That is, individual initiative and achievement are stressed, and individual decision making is favored and valued. On the other hand, when we consider collectivism and individualism in Morocco, we can say that collectivism is valued and favored by Moroccan people. Moreover, Moroccan people's identity is based on a society as members of a group rather than on an individual. Moroccan people think in 'we'. This implies that collectivistic societies such as Moroccan society encourage cooperation and collective decision rather than competition or individualism (Hofstede, 1980)[16].

In conclusion, collectivistic societies (Arabs) have high-context cultures, and the communicative act such as 'request' is often indirect and implicit. This act is usually inferred from context or shared experience. Moreover, in high-context cultures, individuals focus on what is said and how or where it is said. In contrast, individualistic societies (North America) have low-context cultures, and their communicative act such as

'request' is often explicit and direct. In low-context cultures, what is communicated is more important than how or where it is said.

2.1.2. Power Distance

Power Distance is defined as the degree to which the less powerful people of within a community expect and admit that power is given unfairly. It refers to the degree of inequality that exists among interlocutors. In other words, this cultural dimension has to do with the degree to which unequal distribution of power is acknowledged, and the members of culture accept their social status as subordinates. It can be determined by the hierarchal level in a society and distance between social classes. This dimension expresses the attitude of the cultures towards these inequalities among people (Hofstede, 1991, p.28)[17].

In all societies, inequality is present whether we like it or not. However, the inequality in some societies is stronger than in others. For example, power distance between a boss and an employee is the difference between the degree to which the boss determines the behaviour of his/her employee, and the degree to which the employee determines the behaviour of his/her boss (Hofstede, 1980, pp.71-72)[16]. In this respect, Hofstede makes a distinction between *small and large power distance*. He asserts that small power distance refers to the relatively high value which is placed on egalitarianism, whereas large power distance entails a greater acceptance of and sensitivity to unequal distribution of power. Thus, small power distance is related to individualistic groups while large power distance is related to collectivistic groups.

As far as Moroccan society is concerned, Morocco is a hierarchical society. Individuals accept a hierarchical order and place each person in his/her social position. Hierarchy in the Moroccan society is seen as unequal, and subordinates expect to be told what to do. Moreover, the person who enjoys higher social status is expected to be obeyed as a benevolent leader or a boss. Morocco has a score of 70 in power distance compared to 40 for the United States. This means that Moroccans are at peace with things that are out of their hands, and content with their superiors to make choices for them (Hofstede, 2011)[18].

Unlike the Moroccan society, the American society stresses the importance of liberty and justice for all. The emphasis is placed on equal rights in all aspects of American life. Hierarchy is established for convenience. That is, people who are in powerful positions or social status are reachable and available, and they are usually dependent on their subordinates or employees. For example, a boss and an employee expect to be consulted, and information is frequently shared among them. Large power distance score indicates that society accepts an unequal distribution of power, and that individuals understand position or place in the system (Morocco). Small power distance means that power is shared and well distributed (Hofstede, 2011)[18]. It also means that individuals in a society view themselves as equal (American culture).

2.1.3. Uncertainty Avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance refers to a lack of tolerance for ambiguity, and it opts for formal rules (Kale, 1996, pp.21-22)[13]. It shows the degree to which a certain culture makes its members feel either comfortable or uncomfortable in surprising unexpected situations. Individuals usually try to avoid such situations by maintaining strict codes of behaviour and a belief in an absolute truth. In this regard, Hofstede (1980) [16] distinguishes between weak and strong uncertainty avoidance. He maintains that weak uncertainty avoidance refers to a relatively greater comfort with ambiguity, lack of structure, and unpredictability. It is associated with individualism. In contrast, strong uncertainty avoidance refers to the discomfort with ambiguity, and it is related to collectivism. Moreover, weak uncertainty avoidance countries (such as the United States of America) do not feel intimidated by ambiguity and uncertainty, and they do not feel the need to control environment, events or situations (Samovar & Porter, 2004)[15]. For example, the United States of America scores below average, with a low score of 46, on the uncertainty avoidance dimension. This means that the American society members tend to be more tolerant of ideas or opinions from anyone and allow the freedom of expression. They do not require a lot of rules, and they are less emotionally expressive than higher-scoring cultures.

Unlike the United States of America, Morocco scores above average, with a high score of 68, on the uncertainty avoidance dimension. This shows that Moroccan people have a very high preference for avoiding uncertainty. Thus, countries that show high uncertainty avoidance maintain rigid codes of belief and behavior, and they are often intolerant of unconventional behaviors and ideas. In such cultures, there is also an emotional need for rules (Hofstede, 1980)[16].

Cultures with high uncertainty avoidance tend to be more expressive because people in such cultures use their hands and raise their voices while they talk, and they show emotions while they express themselves. They are also dynamic, emotional and sometimes pushy, and they usually avoid ambiguous situations. In contrast, cultures with low uncertainty avoidance tend to be less expressive, less openly anxious, and people in such cultures usually behave quietly without showing pushiness or aggression (strong emotions). To sum up, this dimension measures the degree of comfort or discomfort members of a society feel with ambiguity and uncertainty.

2.2. Previous Scholarship on the Speech Act of Request in Moroccan Context

In the Moroccan context, Latif (2014)[7] undertook an empirical research on Moroccan EFL learners' and American speakers' request strategies. The study focused on sociopragmatic transfer and pragmalinguistic transfer. His insightful study focused on interlanguage pragmatics and compares Moroccan EFL learners' request productions with American native speakers'. It investigated how Moroccan EFL learners' requests are affected by their first language, their academic level, and a number of situational factors. The results showed that conventionally-indirect strategies were preferred by both Moroccan learners and American native speakers in the sense that both groups opted for the three levels of request directness with varying degrees. Moroccan EFL learners overused the lexical downgrader "please" and they were more direct, whereas Americans used more external modifications. American native speakers were found to be more sensitive to situational factors at the level of request directness and request modification, while Moroccan EFL learners' interaction with situational factors showed some limitations and deviations. It was found that Moroccan EFL learners' requests are not significantly affected by their first language or by their academic level. Another important finding in this study is that the use of the politeness marker and imperatives by Moroccan EFL learners was significantly related to the effect of Moroccan Arabic (mother tongue).

There are few studies which have analyzed the linguistic forms of requests in Moroccan Arabic as compared to English. For example, Alaoui (2011)[19] wrote an insightful article on the difference between English and Moroccan Arabic concerning the politeness principles. She found that in both languages the speaker is socially motivated by the need to downplay the cost to the addressee. Thus, speakers gave high importance to negative politeness. That is, the requester and the addressee tried in their interaction not to threaten the other's face. Moreover, the analysis demonstrated that English native speakers seemed to opt for syntactic downgraders to lessen the influence of the speech act, whereas Moroccan Arabic speakers opted for lexical downgraders, especially politeness markers such as "*llahyxellik*" (may God protect you) to lessen the annoyance of speaker's *will* on the addressee. However, Alaoui (2011) [19] seems to overlook the importance of Hofstede's cultural dimensions in the performance requests. Besides, her insightful research compared Moroccan speakers' requests to English speakers' requests only in terms politeness principles (not in terms of request structures).

Latif's (2014)[7] insightful research seems to be crippled by the absence of a fully established taxonomy of request structures in Moroccan Arabic as he focused on Moroccan EFL learners' request strategies and modifications in terms of sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic transfer (interlanguage pragmatics). His study seems to target the Moroccan EFL learners (the focus was on the Moroccan learners of English). His study also overlooks the importance of cultural dimensions in the performance of request structures in Moroccan Arabic and American English (MA and AE). Moreover, Alaoui (2011)[19] only compared English requests to Moroccan Arabic requests concerning the politeness principles. However, her study did not seem to investigate request structures, and she did not relate her findings to Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Therefore, a clear gap in literature has been found concerning the making of requests in the Moroccan context.

2.2.1. Request Structures

Not only did Blum-Kulka et al. (1989)[1] categorized requests on nine exclusive categories which are valid across languages, but they also examined the structure of the speech act of requesting. The scholars divided requests in three main segments: Alerters, Head Acts, and Supporting Moves.

2.2.1.1. Alerters

They are linguistic devices that are used to get the interlocutor's attention. They refer to the formal and informal attention getters and greetings, and expressions of endearment. They can function as names, titles, role, apology, offence, vocative, pronouns, and aggravators. In other words, the alerters are opening elements that come before the actual request, and they are mainly used to catch the hearer's attention. They can be polite, intimate or offensive. They are optional to the realization of requests. For instance:

- *Fatima*, take the children to the school.
- *Darling*, close the window!
- *Excuse me!* Use the ashtray on the table.

2.2.1.2. Head Acts

They refer to the linguistic forms of request. They refer to the request itself or to the main strategy used to make the request. They are considered as the core parts of the request sequence which realizes the act of requesting independently of other elements. So, the request head acts are obligatory, and it is not possible to perform requests in the absence of head acts. For instance:

- *Clean the cups, will you?*
- *Help me lift this heavy chair?*

- *I really wish you would do it for me.*

The following table represents and illustrates the elements that make up *request structures*:

- *Jack, close the door please. I feel very cold.*

Table1. The Representation of Request Structures

Request Structure		
Alerter	Head Act	Supporting Move
Jack	Close the door, please.	I feel very cold.

In the example above, “*Jack*” is an alerter. It is a part of the request sequence that turns the hearer’s attention to the request that follows it. “*Close the door*” is the head act of request (also referred to as a ‘*core request*’ or ‘*request proper*’). It is a minimal unit of the request realization. “*Please*” is an optional downgrader, and it is an internal modifier or a supporting move of the head act that mitigates the impositive force of the head act. “*I feel very cold*” is an external modifier or a supporting move of the core request (head act).

2.2.1.3. Request Supporting Moves

They are peripheral elements that can change the intensity of requests, and they are not the request forms. They are strategies that accompany the head acts. They can come either before or after the head act. In other words, if the supporting moves are employed in the same statement that bears the request itself, they are called Internal Supporting Moves (ISMs). But, if they are employed in other statements that precede or follow the request that bears a statement, they are called External Supporting Moves (ESMs). So, ESMs can either be pre-posed or post-posed moves (Blum-Kulka, et al., 1989)[1]. The following examples show that ESMs can come either before or after the head act of a request:

- *I missed pragmatics class yesterday; can you give me your notes?*
- *May I borrow your umbrella? My sister took mine.*
- *I really feel bothered; could you lend me your car? The mechanic is still fixing mine!*

Request supporting moves are strategies employed by a requester to vary the impact of a request. They are in the form of linguistic elements that mitigate, reinforce or aggravate the impact of requests. Fraser (1978, p.13) argues that mitigators are elements that mitigate or lessen the force of the intended request intentionally. Reinforcers are employed to increase the request force. Aggravators are elements that change the request force. They are the opposite of mitigators. Such elements include: threats, insults, and moralizing statements (Blum-Kulka, 1982, pp.35-36)[20]. There are two types of supporting moves: **external supporting moves (ESMs) and internal supporting moves (ISMs)**.

- **External Supporting Moves (ESMs)**

They are external supporting statements used to mitigate or aggravate the desired request act. There are two types: mitigating supporting moves and aggravating supporting moves.

- **Mitigating Supporting Moves (MSMs):**

Their main function is to mitigate or alleviate the illocutionary force of the head act. They include: alerters, grounders, disarmers, imposition minimizers, preparators, and apology.

- **Aggravating Supporting Moves (ASMs)**

Their main function is to aggravate the impact of the request. They are impolite and unpopular in the speech act of requesting. There are five strong aggravating supporting moves categories: insult, moralizing and threat, complaint, and begging. However, only three categories are considered in this research: Complaint, Begging, and Moralizing.

- **Internal Supporting Moves (ISMs)**

They are pragmalinguistic devices and modifiers. They are used to modify the impact of the intended request. They are subdivided as Internal Upgraders and External Downgraders.

- **Internal Upgraders**

- **Internal Lexical Upgraders (ILUs)**

They are mainly used to increase the illocutionary force of a request. They are only lexical. They include some categories which are less frequently used such as intensifiers, time intensifiers, expletives, commitment indicators, and lexical up-toners.

- **Internal Downgraders**

They are mainly used to soften or modulate the illocutionary force of the intended request. They are subcategorized as Internal Lexical Downgraders (ILDs) and Internal Syntactic Downgraders (ISDs).

- **Internal Lexical Downgraders (ILDs)**

They are words, phrases or expressions that function as downgraders. They include the following: politeness markers, understaters/hedges, downtoners, and cajolers.

Internal Syntactic Downgraders (ISDs)

They refer to the structures that function as downgraders. They include: interrogative, modal/aspect, past tense, conditional clause, and negation of preparatory condition.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN AND INSTRUMENT

Researchers in the field of cross-cultural pragmatics (Tuckman, 1988)[21] have used three types of design: the experimental, quasi-experimental, and non-experimental designs. The experimental design requires an experiment while the non-experimental design does not (Campbell & Stanley, 1996)[22]. The present study is based on a non-experimental design, and it is exploratory and graphical in nature. It seeks to investigate and compare request structures employed by AENSs and MANSs. Two different data collection methods are used to answer the research questions: DCTs and recordings. They are used as combined instruments to collect the desired data. The data that were obtained via a tape recorder were quantified so as to fit the research design adopted in this study. The qualitative recorded data were transcribed verbatim first, and then they were quantified in a form of statistical numbers. The given DCT consists of 16 situations (scenarios).

Table 1: Distribution of Research Participants across Groups (MANSs & AENSs)

Group	English DCT	Recordings	Arabic DCT
Moroccan Arabic Native Speakers	-	10	64
American English Native Speakers	41	08	-

Research Questions

- ✓ Do MANSs and AENSs employ different request structures (internal supporting moves and external supporting moves)?
- ✓ How do the cultural dimensions of collectivism-individualism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance affect differently the performance of request structures in MA and AE?

Research Hypotheses

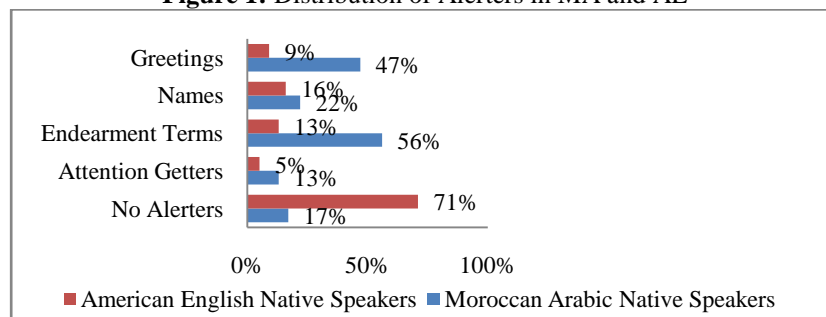
These are three hypotheses that emanate from the research questions:

- ✓ MANSs and AENSs differ in the use of request structures (internal supporting moves and external supporting moves).
- ✓ The cultural dimensions of collectivism-individualism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance affect differently the performance of request structures in MA and AE.

IV. FINDINGS

The graph below describes and compares the use of alerters in Moroccan Arabic (MA) and American English (AE). This comparison shows a clear difference between the two groups.

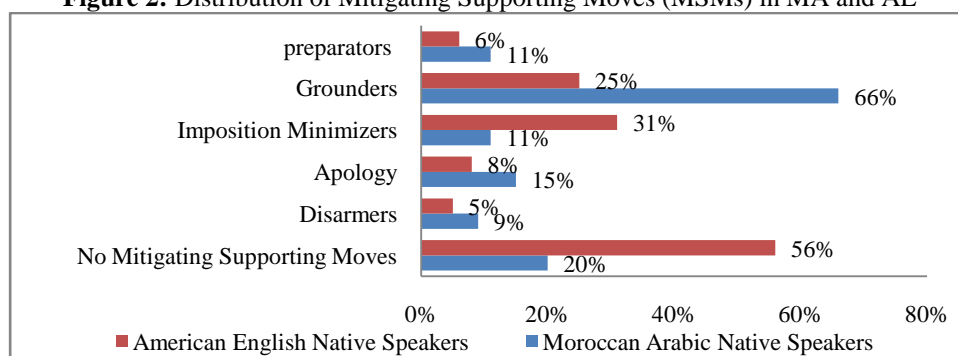
Figure 1: Distribution of Alerters in MA and AE



The graph indicates that MANSs have surprisingly employed more alerters than AENSs. This is clearly shown in all types of alerters. Concerning the use of No alerters, only 17% of MANSs do not employ alerters, whereas 71% of AENSs do not use them. Moreover, MANSs have abundantly employed the endearment terms and names more than AENSs. This evidently shows that MANSs are much more inclined to employ alerters in

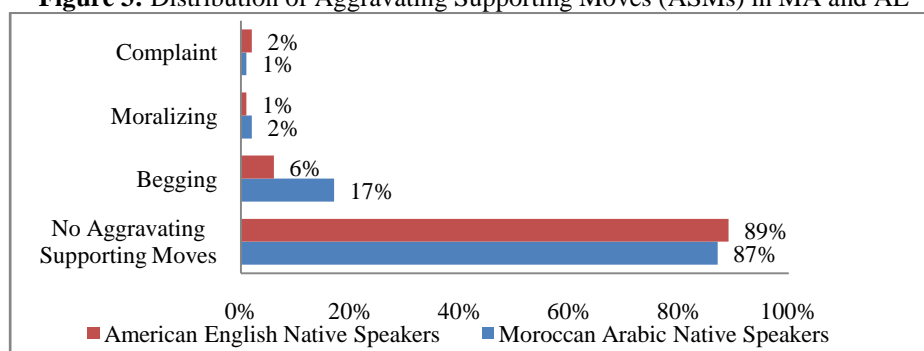
their requests.

Figure 2: Distribution of Mitigating Supporting Moves (MSMs) in MA and AE



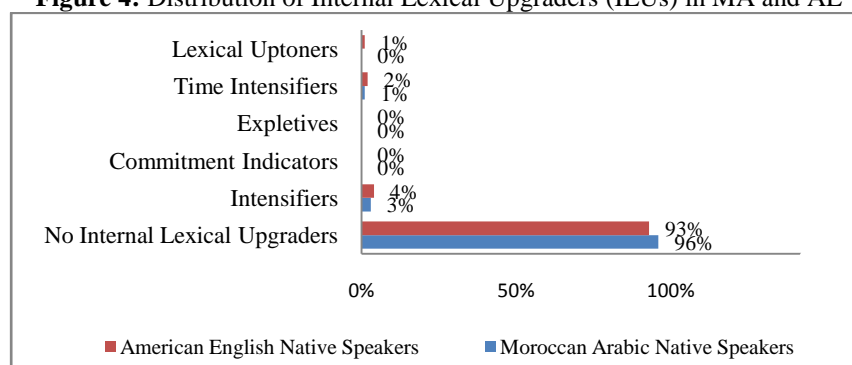
The graph shows that MANSs have employed a large amount of MSMs while 56% of AENSs do not employ them at all. This result also shows that MANSs outperform AENSs in all the strategies except in *imposition Minimizers*. That is, AENSs use MSMs more than MANSs.

Figure 3: Distribution of Aggravating Supporting Moves (ASMs) in MA and AE



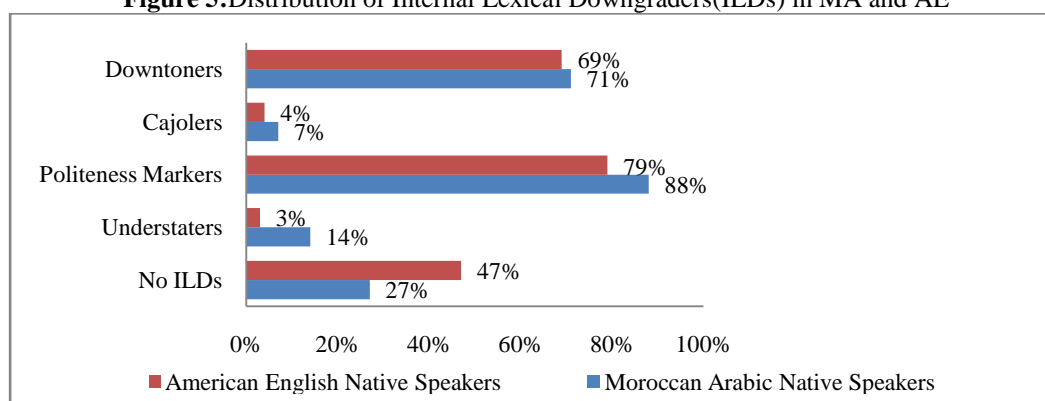
The graph shows that both MANSs and AENSs rarely employ ASMs. As it is clearly shown, (87%) of MANSs and (89%) of AENSs have employed very few ASMs. However, there are slight differences. For example, 2% of MANSs have employed moralizing moves while (1%) of AENSs have employed them. Complaints, on the other hand, are employed by (1%) of MANSs and (2%) of AENSs. As for begging, MANSs (17%) have outperformed AENSs (8%). Despite the slight differences in the use of ASMs between the two groups, it is concluded that MANSs use ASMs more than AENSs, especially in begging aggravating moves.

Figure 4: Distribution of Internal Lexical Upgraders (ILUs) in MA and AE



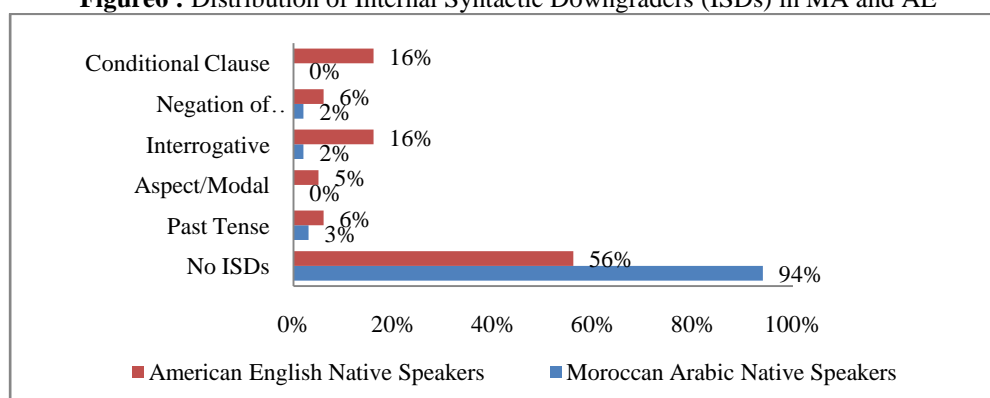
The graph shows that the use of ILUs by MANSs and AENSs is insignificant. That is, 93% of AENSs and 96% of MANSs do not employ them. The two groups opt for intensifiers infrequently (AENSs, 4%) and (MANSs, 3%).

Figure 5: Distribution of Internal Lexical Downgraders (ILDs) in MA and AE



The graph shows that MANSs have employed ILDs more than AENSs. That is 47% of AENSs do not employ ILDs, whereas only 27% of MANSs do not employ them. Moreover, the graph shows that the politeness markers and downtoners are the most frequently used downgraders by the two groups.

Figure 6 : Distribution of Internal Syntactic Downgraders (ISDs) in MA and AE



The graph shows that AENSs have outperformed MANSs in the performance of ISDs. A small number of MANSs opt for negation of preparatory condition, interrogative, and past tense forms. That is, 94% of MANSs do not employ ISDs. AENSs have employed conditional, modals, past tense and conditional clause structures. We can conclude that AENSs have employed ISDs more than MANSs.

Discussion and Interpretation of the Findings

It is found that there are differences in the use of request structures between MA and AE. The statistical analysis shows that MANSs frequently employ more alerters, internal lexical downgraders (ILDs), and mitigating supporting moves (MSMs); whereas AENSs employ more internal syntactic downgraders (ISDs). Also, the statistical analysis shows that both groups do not frequently employ the aggravating supporting moves (ASMs) and internal lexical upgraders (ILUs).

MANSs have employed far more alerters than AENSs. This evidently shows that MANSs are much more inclined to employ alerters in their request structures. For example, they use “*endearment terms*”, “*attention getters*”, and “*greetings*” abundantly. This could suggest that MANSs have a tendency to appeal to the positive face wants while they make the intended request. MANSs’ requests are frequently modified by alerters, whereas AENSs’ requests are less frequently modified by alerters. Here are some examples taken from situations ten (*asking your friend’s mother/father for more food*) and sixteen (*asking a stranger to close the window*):

[*ʕami/ xalti! zidnišwiya! had maklabninabzzaf!*] (MA)
(Uncle/aunt! Add a little more food! This meal is so delicious)

[*xuya /xti /ʕami! Seddeksarjim, ʕafak*] (MA)
(Brother/sister/uncle, close that window, please)

Sir/madam! Could you close that window, please? It is a bit chilly! (AE)

The examples stated above indicate that MANSs have abundantly employed ‘*alserter*’ that show brotherhood, sisterhood, and kinship (*xuya*, *xiti*, and ξ *ami*) in their request structures. The expression “*Smehliya/semhiliyansewlaq*” (*excuse me! May I ask you?*) is also used as attention getters. It is usually followed or preceded by (*xuya*, *xiti*, or ξ *ami*). These alerters show a tendency for solidarity and social closeness (in-group culture). For example, sharing or adding food, calling a stranger brother or sister is an indication that MANSs’ request structures are shaped by cultural dimensions such as collectivism-individualism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance.

The use of kinship terms as alerters to perform requests shows that the power distance dimension in collectivistic societies (such as Moroccan society) is rather large. In contrast, the infrequent use of such terms in the performance of requests shows that power distance in individualistic societies (such as America) is rather small (Hofstede, 2011). AENSs opt for names, titles (*sir*, *madam*) or greetings when they want to get the attention of the hearer.

Concerning external supporting moves (ESMs), MANSs have obviously outperformed AENSs in all the types of mitigating supporting moves (MSMs), except in the performance of imposition minimizers. The use of MSMs such as grounders, preparators, disarmers, promise of reward, and apology seems to explain the significant differences in request structures. Here are some examples that are obtained from the DCTs and taken from situation nine (*borrowing class notes from a classmate*) and situation fourteen (*a student asking for permission to leave a class earlier*):

[*smahlia-ustad! britnextrujqbelwaqt*] (MA)
(*Sorry professor! I want to leave earlier*)

[*xuyaMohamed!Anaξaref b-li makat tξtišidfatardyalak l-htahed! wa-lakinξ-taberniana?istitna? britdftardyalakw-radarejξu-lik.*] (alserter-disarmers+ promise of reward) (MA)
(*brother , Mohamed ! I know that you don’t give your notebooks to anybody, but consider me an exception, I want your notebook! I will bring it back to you tomorrow.*)

[*xiti Fatima! L-barahkuntmešghol b-zzaf w-mahdart-šidarsdyalfelsafa, britdftardyalak*] (attention getter+grounder) (MA)
(*Sister Fatima, yesterday I was so busy, and I could not attend a philosophy class, I want your notebook.*)

The examples above represent the most frequent MSMs that are employed by MANSs. It is observed that MANSs favor combinations as well. They combine different MSMs (such as combining alerters, disarmers, and promise of reward). This finding could be explained by the important role the cultural dimension “*uncertainty avoidance*” plays in modifying MANSs’ request structures. In other words, cultures with high uncertainty avoidance, like the Moroccan culture, tend to be more expressive, where people use their hands, raise their voices, and show emotions. They usually try to avoid ambiguous situations. Therefore, they tend to combine MSMs to alleviate the request illocutionary force (Hofstede, 2011)[18]. This shows that MANSs have a high preference for uncertainty avoidance.

In contrast, the underuse of ESMs by AENSs could be interpreted by the fact that American culture has low uncertainty avoidance. That is, Americans tend to be less expressive, less openly anxious, and people usually behave quietly without showing strong emotions such as raising their voices or moving their hands. Hence, almost most of MSMs are not frequently employed by AENSs. However, it is found that AENSs have outperformed MANSs in the use of imposition minimizers. This could be explained by the frequent use of *would like structure* by AENSs as in (*I would like to ask for an extra time for my paper, just for a few days*). In such scenario, the requester tries to minimize the imposition of his/her request (situation six: *a student asking the supervisor to extend his/her thesis deadline*).

In regard to aggravating supporting moves (ASMs), there are three aggravating categories which are considered in this study: complaint, moralizing, and begging. They are used to modify requests externally. Their main function is to aggravate the impact of the illocutionary force of requests. *Insult and threat* are not considered in this study because no one would insult or threaten in inauthentic situations. The statistical analysis shows that the two groups do not use ASMs frequently because such moves increase the likelihood of face damage. They are impolite and unpopular in the speech act of requesting. Yet, it is found that MANSs have outperformed AENSs in the use of ASMs, especially in “*begging moves*”.

MANSs have employed begging structures more than AENSs. Here are some examples taken from the given DCTs in situation nine (*a student borrowing class notes from his/her classmate*):

[*llahyerhamyemak/babak al-xawadyali! ξtinidftardyalak! rah madxoltšihesa d-bbarah*] (MA)
(*May God bless your mother/father my brother! Give me your copybook! I did not attend yesterday class!*)

[*Lah yxelli-lik memtak! Brit dftar dyalak.*] (MA)
(*May God bless your mother! I want your copybook*)

The example one given above shows there are moves that support and modify the structure of the given request. First, the requester starts with begging phrases *llahyerhamyemak/babak al-xawadyali*(May God bless your mother/father my brother). Second, he makes his request ξ tinidftardyalak (Give me your copybook). Third, the requester uses external supporting moves *rah madxoltšihesa d-bbarah*(I did not attend yesterday class!) to alleviate the illocutionary force of his request (head act).

MANSs employ begging structures such as the repetition of the phrase “ ξ afak! ξ aafak!...” (Please! Please!), *llahyerhamlikbiha l-walidin* (May Allah bless your parents), *llahyxelli-likmemtak* (May God protect your mother), and *llahyxelik ma ξ ziz ξ lik* (May Allah protect whom you love). It is surprisingly found that AENSs employ only the phrase marker “*please*” for begging purposes.

We can deduce from the examples above that MANSs’ request structure consists of religious phrases, taken the form of begging and parental expressions. Such phrases usually start with the phrase “*llah...*” accompanied with parental expressions (*father/mother*) such as “*llahyerhamlikbiha l-walidin*” (may God bless your parents) and “*llahyxellik*(May God protect you). Sometimes, there is a combination of these expressions. This combination reflects the sense of collectivism, and it shows that religion and family or parental relations always have a high priority. However, the use of the politeness marker “*please*” by AENSs on its own with the head act of request indicates that there is a tendency for individualism. That is, for AENSs, individualism is more valued and favored, and the American identity is based on the individual rather than on family ties or kinship. In this respect, Samovar and Porter’s (2004) [15].argue that Americans show strong feelings towards individualism in the sense that individual initiative and achievement are stressed, and individual decision making is favored and valued

All in all, this finding could be explained by referring to uncertainty avoidance cultural dimension. In high-context cultures, such as Moroccan culture, people tend to have high uncertainty avoidance. For example, people tend to be more expressive, dynamic, emotional, and sometimes a little pushy. They usually avoid ambiguous and annoying situations. This could clearly justify why MANSs outperform AENSs in the use of ASMs as well. In contrast, in low-context cultures with low uncertainty avoidance, such as American culture, people tend to be less expressive, less openly anxious with ambiguity or annoyance. People usually behave quietly without showing pushiness or strong emotions.

With regard to internal lexical upgraders (ILUs), they are only **lexical**. It has been expected at first that both groups do not employ such upgraders. MANS (94%) and AENSs (96%) have employed very few ILUs in their requests. Moreover, the slight difference in the use of ILUs between the two groups is insignificant. A plausible explanation for this infrequency of use in both groups is that the main function of ILUs is to increase the impact of the request illocutionary force on the addressee and put more pressure on him/her so as to get compliance. Hence, they are inappropriate modifiers (impolite), and they do not save the face of the hearer. This could be the reason why they are not frequently employed by both groups.

At the level of downgraders, both groups use internal lexical downgraders (ILDs). It is found that MANSs have significantly outperformed AENSs in the use of ILDs. For example, 47% of AENSs do not employ ILDs, whereas only 27% of MANSs do not employ them. However, the politeness markers and downtoners are the most frequently used downgraders by the two groups. Here are some examples taken from the given DCTs in situation one (*asking a stranger to keep quiet at the library*) and in situation thirteen (*asking a neighbor to help you carry a heavy box*):

[ξ afak!Llahyxellik !wašmumkint-hez m ξ aya had kartuna l-dar?](MA)

(Please! May God protect you! Could you possibly carry with me this box to my house?)

Is it possible to give me a hand lifting this box, please! (AE)

[wašmumkinteskutšwiyalahyxellik? rah naskayqraw!](MA)

(Could you possibly be quiet a bit! May Allah protect you? People are studying!)

This significant difference between MANSs and AENSs in the use of ILDs could suggest that there are cultural dimensions that shape and affect their request structures. For example, the overuse and combination of the politeness marker “ ξ afak” (please) or “*llahyxellik*” (may God protect you), and the downtoner “*wašmumkin*” (if possible) by MANSs could be a plausible justification for such differences. Moreover, MANSs tend to combine such phrases to lessen the annoyance of speaker’s *want* on the addressee.

This finding seems to confirm that people in societies with strong and high uncertainty avoidance (Moroccan society) feel intimidated by annoyance and uncertainty; that’s why they usually feel the need to express themselves by adding more phrases to the head act such as ILDs. On the contrary, AENSs belong to a culture with weak certainty avoidance. Americans tend to be more tolerant of ideas or opinions from anyone and allow the freedom of expression (Hofstede, 2001). We can conclude that MANSs have high certainty avoidance,

and they belong to a collectivistic culture (a high context culture), whereas AENSs have low certainty avoidance, and they belong to an individualistic culture (a low-context culture). Individualism-collectivism and uncertainty avoidance dimensions shape the request structures of both speakers. These dimensions affect how AENSs and MANSs structure their requests.

Internal syntactic downgraders (ISDs) are internal modifiers. They come before and after the head act of request and constitute its structure. They function as downgraders because they modify the request head act by means of syntactic elements. In this study, the main focus is on these ISDs: *Interrogative, modal/aspect, past tense, conditional clause, and negation of preparatory condition*.

With regard to the findings, it is found that AENSs outperform MANSs in the use of all the ISDs. That is, 94% of MANSs do not employ the ISDs. The significant difference could be explained by the fact that Moroccan Arabic (MA) and American English (AE) are different from grammatical structure to sound system. The difference becomes obvious when syntactic structures are considered in language meaning and function. In other words, MA and AE are different in terms language structure. For example, *I wonder if, I was wondering if, will you, and don't suppose* structures are rarely found in MA. Besides, this difference could be explained by the nature of the direct request strategies employed by MANSs. Request strategies like the imperatives do not allow for the use of structures like the "conditional clause". The conditional structure is often linked to the use of conventionally indirect request strategies. That is, this structure seems to exist only in AE.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The two hypotheses stated in this study are confirmed. MANSs and AENSs tend to employ different request structures (internal supporting moves and external supporting moves). MANSs have outperformed AENSs in the use of alerters, internal lexical downgraders (ILDs), and mitigating supporting moves (MSMs); whereas, AENSs have outperformed MANSs in the use of internal syntactic downgraders (ISDs). Aggravating supporting moves (ASMs) and internal lexical upgraders (ILUs) are employed less frequently by the two groups because the nature of these moves is impolite. However, MANSs employ *begging* moves more than AENSs by opting for different religious phrases. It is concluded that the cultural dimensions of collectivism-individualism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance affect differently how MANSs and AENSs structure their requests.

The textbooks of English used in Moroccan high school EFL classes seem to overlook the importance of teaching request structures, namely alerters, external supporting moves and internal supporting moves (request modifiers). Such modifiers are considered as necessary elements to produce contextually appropriate requests. Therefore, language teachers should give their students enough contextual elements which could help the learners understand the effect of the cultural dimensions and social variables on the formulation of the head act of request and its internal/external supporting moves.

Textbook writers and language teachers should reconsider the teaching of request structures. They should structure requests into three main segments, namely alerters, head acts and supporting moves (external and internal modifiers). However, this does not mean that students are obliged to use all of them, but at least to be aware of them when they make their requests in English. For example, Pre-head acts usually involve alerters and at least one type of external modifiers such as preparators and grounders. The main head act includes the main request accompanied with internal modifiers, whereas the post-head act usually involves other types of external modifiers.

Finally, more insightful studies are needed in the near future to deepen our knowledge of the teaching and learning of requests in MA and AE. Also, we should, as educators, take into account the cultural dimensions of individualism-collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance while dealing with requests.

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