

The Pragmatic Competence of English Language Teachers in Secondary Schools in Iringa Rural, Tanzania: The Case of Requests

*Francis Kilowoko**

Abstract

This paper investigated English language teachers' pragmatic competence in making requests. The study adopted a descriptive case-study research design. Eight teachers from two schools were chosen and studied. The data were collected using Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs), stimulated recall and classroom observation, and were analysed following the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Pattern (CCSARP). The findings indicate that, to varying degrees, the studied English language teachers made requests using direct strategies or conventional and non-conventional indirect strategies, although they employed direct strategies more than conventional and non-conventional indirect strategies. However, the use of conventional and non-conventional indirect strategies was not in line with the social variables of relative power, distance and degree of imposition. It is therefore suggested that English language teachers should be orientated to using request strategies appropriately, with respect to such social variables.

Key words: *Pragmatics, pragmatic competence, communicative competence, requests speech act, politeness*

Introduction

People learn a foreign language best when they use it to do things in different situations rather than through studying how the target language works with regard to its grammatical rules (Richards, 2006). In this regard, foreign language learners need to develop not only knowledge of the grammar, lexical systems and phonological rules, but also the pragmatic elements encompassing the social and contextual variables that enable speakers of the target language to communicate competently. Becoming competent communicators is the goal of communicative-oriented instruction (Richards & Rodgers, 1999; Richards, 2006; Taguchi, 2014), which enables foreign language learners to use the target language.

Communicative competence enables users of the target language to know what to say and how to say it appropriately and successfully,

*Assistant Lecturer, Languages and Literature Unit, Mkwawa University College of Education, P.O. Box 2513 Iringa, Tanzania, Email: fravima@yahoo.com

based on the situation, and the role and intention of the participants in their interaction (Richards, 2006; Leech, 2014). Hymes (1966) coined the term 'communicative competence' to refer to the kind of knowledge and ability people need in order to use target language appropriately and successfully, whereby pragmatic competence is integral to the communicative competence of its user (Bachman, 1990; Martinez-Flor, 2004; Leech, 2014). Pragmatic competence involves linguistic and social features of the target language (Levinson, 1983; Leech, 1983), which enable the appropriate use of grammar and the social aspects of the language for the purpose of communicating, such as making requests, giving advice, making suggestions, describing wishes and needs in the target language (Richards, *op.cit.*).

The request speech act has received a lot of attention by studies on inter-language and cross-cultural pragmatics. It is a fundamental communicative act within the directive illocutionary speech act, which requires the addressee to act according to the wishes of the speaker (Searle, 1975; Elsayed, 2014). In this regard, the request act tends to impose on the addressee, because it shows the complex relationship between its form, meaning and pragmatics in conjunction with the social variables of distance, power and degree of imposition. This might be due to the fact that a request concerns two participants, the speaker and the addressee, whereby the speaker wants the addressee to act in a particular way (Alemi & Khanlarzadeh, 2016). Therefore, requesting could be perceived as a face-threatening act and the speaker perceived as impolite. This could lead to giving unintended offence and/or communication breakdown, if it is inappropriately performed (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This underscores the need for the speaker to make the request appropriately (Brown & Levinson, 1987) to sound courteous, so that the addressee does not feel threatened (Achiba, 2003; Blum-Kulka, 1987; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Leech, 2014). Therefore, it was considered important to find out how English language teachers employ the request when communicating with students.

Making a request is constrained by the social variables of relative power, distance and degree of imposition (Brown and Levinson, 1987), which work together in the sense that an addressee with a higher social status and a greater degree of social distance from the speaker has more power. Therefore, the speaker needs to avoid imposing on the addressee, which is a face-threatening act (Brown & Levinson, 1987; LoCastro, 2012). In this situation, the speaker would need to make the request appropriately with regard to the social

variables to achieve the goal of communicating. According to Blum-Kulka (1987), polite requests comprise conventional indirect strategies, such as query preparatory and suggestory formulae, unlike the direct and non-conventional indirect strategies.

Efforts were made from the 1970s aimed at achieving the communicative competence of learners of a target language, and so, in 2005, Tanzania adopted the communicative language teaching approach with a competence-based curriculum (TIE, 2005). The main goal was to promote meaningful interactions (Tello-Rueda, 2006).

However, despite the adoption of this approach and the curriculum, studies indicate that English language teachers have not been successful in implementing and achieving communicative competence (Mlekwa, 1977; Kipacha, 1993; Kilowoko, 2010; Lyimo & Mapunda, 2016; Maliva, 2013), as they were still clinging to the approach to teaching English focusing on grammatical aspects, thereby overlooking pragmatic competence. This implies that the pragmatic competence needed by these teachers to make requests is questionable. Their lack of pragmatic competence in making requests may lead to miscommunication, resulting in misunderstanding, and may prevent them and learners from realising the importance of linking the linguistic part of the target language to the context in which it is used (Echeverria-Castillo, 2009). This study therefore investigated English language teachers' competence in making requests in the school environment in general and the classroom in particular.

Literature Review

The making of requests in classroom teaching and learning has been covered by various studies. For example, Safont (2004), analysing the production of pragmatics by learners of English for academic purposes, focusing on request forms, found that explicit instruction increased the amount of realisation of using appropriate request strategy in the classroom. Safont cites Trosborg (1995), who found that explicit request instruction significantly influenced the oral and written performance of the learners, whereby they used more conventional indirect rather than direct strategies. This implies that there was a definite improvement in their pragmatic competence after classroom instruction. Fabiola also (2008) posits that most of the components of students' requests were the product of pedagogical intervention and extensive practice inside and outside the classroom through relevant and meaningful activities in pairs and small

groups. Similarly, Halupka-Rešetar (2014) found that most participants managed to use the conventional indirect request strategy, although their linguistic development was far better than their pragmatic production.

A study by Jalilifar (2009) revealed the pragmatic development of learners' use of requests from direct to conventional indirect strategies after classroom instruction. Learners with greater proficiency overused indirect request strategies, while less proficient learners overused direct request strategies. Elsayed (2014) found similarities between English native and non-native speakers in utilising the direct request strategy and conventional and non-conventional indirect request strategies, although native speakers utilised indirect request strategies more than non-native speakers, who preferred to use the direct one. Wang (2011) conducted a study on two groups of learners, which revealed that they used the direct request strategy more frequently than the conventional indirect request strategy. This could be attributed to the method used for instructing, which focused on analysing the structure and grammatical rules of the language, indicating that this approach may not be successful when it comes to using pragmatic features of the target language like making requests.

Longitudinal studies (see Achiba, 2003; Ellis, 1992; Schmidt, 1983) focused on the learning of pragmatic aspects by second language learners, which found that they showed some improvement in learning request strategies once exposed to the second language environment. Studies in Tanzania (for example, Omar, 2005; Podobinska, 2002) that involved native speakers and learners of Kiswahili present similar results on the use of direct and indirect request strategies. For example, Omar (2005) found that native speakers prefer the direct request strategy to indirect request strategies, although learners employed indirect request strategies more than the direct one. Podobinska (2002) found that the direct request strategy dominates in Kiswahili regardless of the status of the participants, although there is frequent use of the lexical 'omba' within the direct request strategy to show politeness.

The findings indicate that learners exposed to pragmatic features managed to employ the conventional indirect request strategy. However, learners whose teachers still focused on the structurally oriented approach were unable to change and improve their pragmatic competence by making requests appropriately, as they employed the direct request strategy. The most salient feature of the

studies is that they compared native speakers to non-native speakers. So far, no study has focused on English language teachers' pragmatic competence in making requests in Tanzania. This study sought to answer the question, which request strategies do English language teachers employ inside and outside the classroom?

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive case study using the qualitative approach. The sample consisted of eight (8) English language teachers from two schools, A and B in Iringa Rural. The teachers, five males and three females, were purposively selected, four from each school. The district was chosen because it was the first to benefit from a Camfed international project, which provides teaching and learning resources, and equips English language teachers with content and pedagogical skills. The two schools are among the nineteen secondary schools included in the project, for which vulnerable female students received sponsorship. Of the nineteen schools, school A was the best performing school and school B was the worst performing school in the project's Form Four and Form Two English examinations. The data were collected through Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs), stimulated recall and classroom observation, and were analysed following Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Pattern (CCSARP) adopted from Blum-Kulka (1987). The speech act of request was divided into three strategies, namely the direct strategy and the conventional and non-conventional indirect strategies, which were sub-divided into nine micro strategies. Studies (for example, Blum-Kulka, 1987, Fabiola, 2008) indicate that conventional indirect requests are more polite than direct and non-conventional indirect requests. This is summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Request Categories and Strategies

Category and Strategy Type	Example
Direct 1. Mood Derivable 2. Explicit Performative 3. Hedged Performative 4. Obligation Statement 5. Want Statement	Clean up the kitchen, Move your car I'm asking you to move your car I would like you to move your car You must move your car I want you to move your car
Conventionally indirect 6. Making a Suggestion	How about cleaning up? Why don't you come and clean up the mess you made last night?

7. Query Preparatory	Could you clean up the mess in the kitchen?
Unconventional indirect	Would you mind moving your car?
8. Strong Hints (A)	
9. Mild Hints (B)	You've left the kitchen in a right mess We don't want any overcrowding

Source: Blum-Kulka (1987: 133)

Results and Discussion of the Findings

This part of the paper analyses and discusses the data, whereby the findings followed the CCSARP framework developed by Blum-Kulka (1987), Elsayed (2015), Rue and Zhang (2008), and Wang (2011). Data from the DCTs, stimulated recall and classroom observation are presented focusing on the use of the direct request strategy and the conventional and non-conventional indirect request strategies. The way in which ungrammatical constructions were presented preserved the originality of the data obtained in the field.

Request Strategies Employed by English Language Teachers

The author sought to investigate the ability of English language teachers to make requests in line with the social variables of distance, relative power and the degree of imposition on the addressee. Data were collected through the DCTs, stimulated recall and classroom observation, and presented following the CCSARP.

Types of Requests

Data from the DCTs indicate that English language teachers employed five request strategies, namely mood derivable (24), explicit performatives (9), want statements (5), query preparatory (81) and strong hints (11), as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Request Category and Strategy Types Employed by Teachers from DCTs

Request Category	Strategy Type	Frequency
Direct type	Mood derivable	24
	Explicit	9
	performatives	5
	Want statements	
Conventional indirect	Query preparatory	81
Unconventional indirect	Strong hints	11
Total		130

Source: Field data (2016/2017)

The data in Table 2 show that the majority of English language teachers in both schools favoured the use of the query preparatory strategy (81), which dominated the other strategies, followed by the mood derivable strategy (24) and strong hints (11). Explicit performatives (9) and want statements (5) were barely utilised. The data imply that teachers did not employ hedged performatives, obligation statements, suggestory formulae and mild hints. With regard to the DCTs, the English language teachers in both schools used query preparatory more frequently than the rest of the request strategies. Examples are given below of the requests, whereby the head act is underlined.

1. (a) You are not allowed to use mobile phone while you are in library; would you please turn off your phone? (Female graduate teacher, school B: ST 1)
- (b) Excuse me; may you please tell me the direction to Kilimahewa secondary school? (Male graduate teacher, school A: ST 2)
- (c) Sorry, I need your assistance; I am new at this station. Will you help me to know the location of the institution? (Female graduate teacher, school B: ST 2)
- (d) Please, can you close the windows? (Male graduate teacher, school A: ST 5)
- (e) Can you close the windows? It is cold. (Male graduate teacher, school B: ST 5)

Examples 1 (a) to (e) are query preparatory, whereby the speakers used different indirect strategies to query the hearer's willingness to comply with the speaker's intention. For instance, in example (a) the speaker uses '*would you*' to indirectly ask the hearer to act accordingly. In (b) to (e), the speaker uses '*may you*', '*will you*' or '*can you*'. The examples use the hearer's perspective '*you*'. However, the indirect strategy '*would you*' is the most courteous.

On the other hand, the teachers utilised the direct strategies, such as mood derivable (24), explicit performatives (9) and want statements (5), showing that mood derivable requests were more frequently used than explicit performatives and want statements, as indicated in the following examples.

2. (a) It is too cold, please close the windows (Female graduate teacher, school B: ST 5).

- (b) Hey, your music is so loud, minimise the volume (Female graduate teacher, school B: ST 9).
- (c) Excuse me; I would like to inform you that my mother is seriously sick. I am also asking for permission so that I can take her to hospital. (Female graduate teacher, school B: ST 7).
- (d) I beg you to type letters for me. (Male graduate teacher, school B: ST 15)
- (e) Excuse me, I need your permission because my mother is sick, I want to go and see her. (Female graduate teacher, school B: ST 7).
- (f) I am not comfortable in teaching English subject so I want to change to Kiswahili. (Male graduate teacher, school A: ST 16).

Utterances (a) and (b) use the imperative form to directly request the addressee to do something. The requests (c) and (d) are explicit performatives in which the speakers openly make their demands known to the addressee. The last two utterances (e) and (f) are want statements, whereby the speakers plainly express their wants and needs to the hearer. The utterances show that the speakers were somewhat coercive to addressees.

The data from the DCTs indicate that English language teachers employed the query preparatory request strategy more frequently than mood derivable, explicit performatives, want statements and strong hints. However, the query preparatory strategy employed used the simple query structure, which is mostly used by non-native speakers of the language. Native speakers would be more likely to employ complex constructions, such as bi-clausal structures and conditionals, which are considered more polite than simple structures (Wang, 2011).

Data from stimulated recall show that English language teachers employed query preparatory (36), mood derivable (8), strong hints (5) and mild hint (1). This shows that the query preparatory request strategy dominated the other request strategies, as Table 3 indicates.

Table 3: Stimulated Recall Data Distribution of Request Strategies

Request Category	Strategy Type	Frequency
Direct request	Mood derivable	8
Conventional indirect	Query preparatory	36
Unconventional indirect	Strong hints	4
	Mild hint	1
Total		49

Source: Field data (2016/2017)

The data in Table 3 indicate that the four strategies of mood derivable (8), query preparatory (36), strong hints (4) and mild hint (1) were used, showing that three quarters of English language teachers used the query preparatory request strategy, whereas mood derivable and strong or mild hints were hardly used. Examples of the mood derivable request strategy are given below.

3. (a) Sorry sir/madam, it's cold today; please close the windows. (Male diploma teacher, school B: ST. 5)
- (b) Please help me to close the windows. (Male diploma teacher, school A: ST. 5).
- (c) I know you enjoy the music, but the loud is too high; please minimise the volume. (Female graduate teacher, school B: ST. 9).
- (d) Sorry my friend, please buy me a spring file. I will pay back your money while at home. (Female graduate teacher, school B: ST. 11)

Utterances 3 (a) to (d) are examples of the mood derivable strategy, whereby the speakers explicitly state their intention. The imperative expressions used here, such as *'please, close the windows'*, *'please, minimise the volume'*, *'please, buy me a spring file'* are the strongest and most face-threatening requests (Brown & Levinson, 1987), as they do not give the addressee the option of refusing. Nevertheless, the use of politeness markers like *'please'* minimally reduces the force of the mood derivable requests. Examples of the query preparatory request strategy are shown below.

4. (a) Excuse me sir, mobile phones are not allowed in the library, would you please turn off your phone? (Female graduate teacher, school B: ST.1)
- (b) Sorry sir, can you please switch off the mobile phone? (Male graduate teacher, school A: ST.1)

- (c) I am sorry sir, can you switch off your phone [?] as you know that it's not allowed to use the phone in the library? (Male graduate teacher, school A: ST.1)
- (d) Sorry my friend, will you help me to know the location of the school? (Female graduate teacher, school B: ST. 2).
- (e) Can I get your pen? I will return after using. (Male graduate teacher, school B: ST. 14)
- (f) Sorry sir/madam, may I use your pen for a while? (Male graduate teacher, school A: ST. 14).

Utterances 4 (a) to (f) are conventional indirect requests that encourage the addressee to willingly comply with the request. They offer the addressee two ways in which they can interpret the request, either literally or indirectly to discern the hidden meaning of the request. The use of *'can you switch off the phone?'* can be interpreted either literally, as asking whether the addressee is able to switch off the phone, or as a hidden way of being asked to switch off the phone. The utterances are conventional as they apply the most commonly used requesting formula, such as *'would you'*, *'can you'*, *'will you'*, *'can I'*, *'may I'*, to influence the addressee to comply with the request. According to Blum-Kulka (1987), conventional indirect request strategies are the most polite, since they are not coercive, as they give the addressee the option of complying with the request and are easily understood, so that the addressee does not need to make an effort to derive the intended meaning of the speaker. The categories used in the non-conventional indirect request strategy were strong and mild hints, as shown in the examples below.

5. (a) Sorry sir, we are not allowed to use mobile phones in the library. (Female graduate teacher, school B: ST. 1)
- (b) Ooh! I am very sorry; I want to reach at K sec school but I don't know the place. (Male graduate teacher, school A: ST. 2)
- (c) Sorry sir, just to remind you the library rules. (Female graduate teacher, school A: ST. 1)
- (d) It's too cold today. (Female graduate teacher, school B: ST. 5).
- (e) It has been a long time since we met, you know that am not familiar with the place, and your word might be a starting point. (Male graduate teacher, school A: ST. 2).

Utterances 5 (a) to (d) are strong hints, while 5 (e) is a mild hint. The people in the examples make the request indirectly so that the addressee has to work out what the speaker actually means. With strong hints, for example, *'sorry sir, we are not allowed to use mobile phones in the library'*, at least gives the addressee a clue as to what was meant by what was said, *'we are not allowed to use mobile phones in the library'*, leaving the addressee in no doubt that the speaker was actually requesting him or her not to use a mobile phone in the library. Since he/she was using the phone, what the speaker has done is to remind the addressee of the rules of using the library. This would enable the addressee to work out what the speaker meant. However, it is quite hard sometimes for an addressee to deduce the meaning of mild hint requests. No cues are explicitly employed to enable the addressee to get the meaning of what the speaker intends using mild hints. The speaker's intention is conveyed indirectly by explaining the situation. For example, in the example of the mild hint *'your word might be a starting point'*, the meaning is obtained implicitly through the conveyance of information on the situation, which means therefore that the addressee has to make an extra effort to deduce what was meant. The addressee had to depend solely on the context of the utterance and the relationship that exists between the speaker and the addressee.

Generally, teachers employed the query preparatory request strategy the most in the DCTs and stimulated recall, followed closely by mood derivable. Other request strategies, such as explicit performatives, want statements, strong and mild hints were hardly used. The recorded data show that mood derivable dominated the other request strategies, which is discussed in the following section.

Data from recorded classroom observation indicate that English language teachers utilised eight request strategy types in the three strategy categories, which were mood derivable (99), explicit performatives (8), hedged performatives (12), obligation statements (13), want statements (13), suggestory formulae (9), query preparatory (39) and strong hints (14), as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Classroom Observation Request Strategies

Request Category	Strategy Type	Frequency
Direct request	Mood derivable	99
	Explicit performatives	8
	Hedged performatives	12
	Obligation statements	13
	Want statements	13
Conventional indirect	Suggestory formulae	9
	Query preparatory	39
Unconventional indirect	Strong hints	14
Total		207

Source: Field data (2016/2017)

About half of the utterances indicate that mood derivable (99) dominated the other request strategies, followed by query preparatory (39), which is about a quarter of the request utterances, followed by strong hints (14), obligation and want statements (13) each, and hedged performatives (12). The remaining strategies of explicit performatives (8) and suggestory formulae (9) were hardly used in the classroom. Contrary to the DCT and stimulated recall data, which showed that the query preparatory request strategy dominated, classroom observation showed that English language teachers employed the mood derivable direct request strategy (99) more than the other request strategies. The main request acts shown below are underlined.

6.
 - (a) Yes, you go straight.
 - (b) For example, this is the road, you just go straight without turning left or right for about hundred metre.
 - (c) So, now let's read the ... this one as an example...this one as an example there.
 - (d) Read the following...read and follow the directions of the map.
 - (e) Prisca read the part of the woman.
 - (f) Make sure that your sentence is grammatically correct.
 - (g) Read the sentences.
 - (h) Hey, raise your hands, please!
 - (i) Repeat your sentence.
 - (j) Now, write this one.

The examples 6 (a) to (j) above of '*read the following*' or '*repeat your sentence*' or '*write this one*' indicate the lack of negotiation by the speaker, so that the addressees have to comply with the requests, which were expressed explicitly to them, and so, were coercive in nature. This implies that in the natural use of language, teachers tend to demand that students do something, thereby imposing on them. They are not free to choose whether or not to comply with the request imposed by the teacher, because of the power teachers have in the classroom.

Explicit performatives also belong to the direct request category, but were less frequently used than mood derivable, as shown in Table 4. Explicit performatives were used by only two English language teachers during classroom observation, both at school A. Only eight (8) utterances of explicit performatives were observed to be used by English language teachers in the classroom. One teacher used it six times, and the other twice. For example:

7. (a) Now, I am giving you this work to do...this work to do and you'll collect those books.
- (b) I advise you to do it everyday.

Hedged performatives were used slightly more than explicit performatives, although compared with mood derivable, they were only marginally used. During classroom observation, it was found that only two English language teachers utilised them. The first teacher at school A used them nine times and the teacher from school B employed them three times.

8. (a) So, there now you can use the statement 'can...can you' is that clear? (Male graduate teacher, school A)
- (b) Now, I would like you to arrange these activities from the first to the last. (Male diploma teacher, school B)

The examples 8 (a) and (b) have some hedges which, to some extent, reduce the force of the direct request made to the addressees. For example, the use of '*you can use*' or '*I would like you to*' mitigate the force of the direct request.

Classroom observation showed that obligation and want statements were equally employed by teachers, with 13 utterances each. Both obligation and want statements were employed by two English language teachers at schools A and B. An obligation statement

logically requires the addressee to do what the speaker wants. The following are examples in which the head acts are underlined.

9. (a) So, these papers you've to read it in groups of three.
- (b) So, if there's the church road, it means you should go with that road until the end of that road.
- (c) So, when...when in conversation, you read about turn left into beach road, it means you should turn left into beach road.
- (d) So, there's a language that we...you're supposed to use when you ask for and give directions.

The use of '*you've to*', '*you should*', '*you're supposed to*' 9 (a) to (d) obliges the addressees to act according to the speaker's intention. However, want statements differ significantly from obligation statements as shown in the examples 10 (a) to (e) below. Want statements sound more courteous to addressees than obligation statements.

- 10 (a) Yes...I need you to find for me the ...which place is post office, and which place is bookshop
- (b) So, now I want you to read the conversation between a man and a woman and there now you can relate in this map that where is post office and where is bookshop.
- (c) Now, I want you to identify which letter is either a post office or police station or a bookshop, understood?
- (d) Uh! I need someone to find the...to find this place ...post office.
- (e) You'll identify them by following that conversation between a man and a woman that turn right on your left side there's post office next to the beach road.

The requests 10 (a) to (e) belong to the direct strategy category, whereby the force is greater than the conventional and non-conventional indirect request categories. In the classroom session, the teachers favoured the direct request strategy rather than the conventional and non-conventional indirect request strategies. This could be due to the fact that the teachers were communicating with their students, who are socially distanced. Teachers are considered more powerful than their students, and so, a certain degree of imposition is to be expected. It could be said that teachers have a

higher social status than students, which means that the teacher has the right to make a request, and the student has the obligation to obey (Jalilifar, 2009). On the other hand, the overuse of the direct request strategy by teachers might suggest their insufficient pragmatic competence, which makes them unable to use the necessary pragma-linguistic means to make the request appropriately (Jalilifar, *ibid*).

Suggestory formulae were used by three teachers, one from school A and two from school B. The teacher from school A utilised it five times, a teacher from school B three times, and another teacher from school B employed it only once.

11. (a) What do you say about the post office... where's the post office? (Male graduate teacher, school A)
- (b) How about here? (Male graduate teacher, school A)
- (c) How can you tell someone to go to the park...to go to the park? (Male graduate teacher, school A)
- (d) How can you direct someone to go to the supermarket? (Male graduate teacher, school A)
- (e) I think another activity is to wear school uniform! (Male diploma teacher, school B)
- (f) What can we say about the setting of our novel? (Male graduate teacher, school B)

Utterances 11 (a) to (f) are providing suggestions, which are used to solicit information from the addressees. In this case, the speaker requests the hearer's willingness through suggestive questions, giving the addressees the chance to comply voluntarily without much coercion. Sometimes, the speaker used the first person plural pronoun 'we' as in the example 'what *can we say about the setting of our novel?*' The speaker is identifying with the addressee being asked to respond, in which case, he or she will not feel forced to act on the intention of the speaker. Therefore, the use of the inclusive pronoun 'we' in this case is the speaker's polite way of requesting something of the addressee.

Query preparatory was the next most used conventional indirect strategy. Five out of eight teachers, four males and one female, used this strategy. Two were from school A and three from school B. One male teacher at school A had the highest frequency (17) of using query preparatory, followed by two male teachers from school B, each using it eight times. One male teacher at school A used it less frequently (4) than the others. The female teacher only used it twice.

However, all the teachers made short simple requests, as shown below.

12. (a) Can anyone read the first sentence? (Male diploma teacher, school A)
- (b) May you read the sentences from the first to the last? (Male diploma teacher, school A)
- (c) May I give an exercise that you can do it on your own? (Male diploma teacher, school A)
- (d) Can you try to make a sentence using any clause of concession? (Male diploma teacher, school A)
- (e) Could you formulate another sentence in clause concession? (Male diploma teacher, school A)
- (f) Can we say anything about a plot in a novel? (Male graduate teacher, school B)
- (g) Can someone with a book read chapter one page one? (Male graduate teacher, school B)
- (h) Can you define dialogue? (Female graduate teacher, school B)
- (i) Can you mention a verb in simple present? (Male diploma teacher, school B)

These examples show that the teachers employed simple expressions to make requests of the hearers. The use of the first person plural pronoun ‘*we*’ to indicate that the speaker is included in the provision of a response to a request is a mitigation strategy that is used to increase the likelihood that the hearers will respond to the request. When a speaker uses ‘*anyone*’ or ‘*someone*’, as shown above, not pointing to anyone in particular, this is referred to as impersonal request perspective (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984), which seems to be more indirect and polite, increasing the chances of somebody to respond. When the speaker avoids naming a specific addressee it softens the impact of the request (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, *ibid*; Marquez-Reiter, 2000). Generally, query preparatory is the most polite request strategy as it is conventional and indirect. It provides addressees with the option to either consider the request literally or in context as a real request.

Strong hints were the third frequently (14) used strategy, slightly higher than the obligation (13) and want statements (13), as shown in Table 4 above. Strong hints are non-conventional indirect request strategy. Only one teacher at school A displayed the use of strong hints in the classroom. The other five observed teachers did not use

this strategy, and no-one used mild hints during classroom observation. The examples below indicate how the teacher at school A displayed the use of strong hints.

13. (a) Do you know the meaning of the word straight?
- (b) Any one who will read on the part of man?
- (c) Have you seen those letters?

Most of the strong hint examples appeared in short questions, which were not explicit enough to allow addressees to get the intended meaning of the speaker outside the contextual cues. In each of the examples 13 (a) to (c), there is no explicit statement indicating that the speaker is requesting a hearer to behave according to the speaker's wish. In this regard, only questions were given, and addressees were left to get the intended meaning of the speaker within the context utilising available cues, like the map in this context.

Generally, classroom observation data indicate that mood derivable dominated, whereas DCTs and stimulated recall showed that query preparatory was used far more than the rest of the strategies. However, teachers were observed to use only short and simple structures of query preparatory. Longer and complex structures like bi-clausal and a combination with conditionals were not used. This implies that teachers have not mastered the norms of using pragmatic features in the target language.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study has shown that, to some extent, the teachers had developed the use of request strategies, but they did not resonate with those used by native speakers. Through DCTs and stimulated recall, the findings showed that the conventional indirect request strategies were used more frequently than the direct and non-conventional indirect request strategies. The teachers in this case employed simpler and shorter constructions than the complex bi-clausal and other much longer constructions. As regards classroom observation, the study revealed that the mood derivable category of the direct request strategy was the one that was used the most. The conventional and non-conventional indirect strategies were rarely employed in the classroom. It can be concluded that English language teachers employed the direct request strategy more than the conventional and non-conventional indirect request strategies.

It is therefore recommended that the teacher education curriculum and syllabi should explicitly contain features of pragmatic competence in making requests so that English language teachers are equipped to teach it. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology should ensure that in-service English language teachers are given training in the various request strategies through in-service programmes, such as short courses, seminars and workshops, to ensure that teachers master the pragmatic competence pertinent to making requests. In addition, the classroom environment needs to be conducive to allow learners to participate effectively in learning and communicating in the target language.

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