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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Anticipating Directness Strategies in Requests by Moroccan and Norwegian Speakers of English

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| ABSTRACT
Based on Brown and Levinson's Weightiness Formula of face-threatening acts, this study investigates the feasibility of anticipating the degree of (in)directness used by ESL and EFL speakers when making requests in critical incidents. Furthermore, the study also compares the similarities and differences in (in)directness strategies between Moroccans and Norwegians when requesting in English. To meet these objectives, 30 Moroccan and 30 Norwegian English speakers completed an open-ended Written Discourse Completion Task. The request situations were analyzed using Brown and Levinson's (1987) weightiness formula, whereas the requests were categorized based on Blum-Kulka's (1984) requesting categories. The findings reveal that it is not possible to predict (in)directness when requesting in critical incidents. The analysis also suggests that Norwegian ESL speakers tend to make more indirect requests than Moroccan EFL speakers in critical incidents. By highlighting these variations, the study provides valuable insights into the impact of linguistic and cultural backgrounds on (in)directness strategies.

| KEYWORDS

Weightiness Formula**,** Critical Incidents, Requests, (in)Directness, Moroccan EFL speakers, Norwegian ESL speakers.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Individuals acquire various skills throughout their lives, including verbal expression, writing, understanding others, and often proficiency in multiple languages. Among these, English holds a prominent global position as the most widely used language. It serves as a global lingua franca (Crystal, 2019) and plays a critical role in aviation, international events, and military commands (Seiler, 2009). The expansion of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has been rapid, with many choosing to learn it voluntarily. EFL speakers are not required to use English in their home countries and can study it in non-native environments, reducing the pressure associated with its use. In Morocco, English, introduced in public middle schools from the third grade, has grown in importance due to globalization (Belhassan, 2017).

English as a Second Language (ESL) differs from English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in that ESL is learned in environments where learners can practice daily, leading to faster acquisition. Both are taught similarly, but ESL is more effective due to its natural linguistic environment (Svoboda and Hrehovčík, 2006). In Norway, English is shifting from EFL to ESL, with instruction starting at age 8, resulting in fluency among teenagers (Nikel, 2018). Regardless of the context, achieving communicative competence (CC)—the ability to use grammatical and social knowledge of English—is crucial in language teaching.

In recent decades, there has been an increasing focus on developing communicative competence in EFL/ESL, emphasizing meaningful contexts and social interactions. Dell Hymes (1972) introduced "communicative competence" to describe the functional knowledge and control of language usage principles, including grammatical accuracy and appropriateness. Chen and Starosta (2008) highlight the importance of understanding context and responding appropriately to situational rules. Learning linguistic

competence alone is insufficient; socio-cultural and contextual factors are also essential (Holliday et al., 2004), and ignoring these factors can lead to communicative breakdowns (Shakirova, 2018). Therefore, effective communication requires the interplay of linguistic accuracy, social awareness, and context recognition, underscoring the importance of pragmatics in language learning.

Pragmatics focuses on how language is used in communication, emphasizing meaning, context, and interactions (Kecskes, 2014). It involves understanding explicit statements, implications, and cultural or situational nuances. Despite its importance, pragmatics is often overlooked in EFL/ESL classrooms (Taguchi, 2009). Pragmatics ensures social appropriateness in language use. Inadequate language learning can lead to pragmatic failure, where intended meanings are missed due to vague or misinterpreted instructions, highlighting the necessity of understanding pragmatics in language learning (Thomas, 1983).

2. Literature Review

1- Interlanguage Pragmatics and Cross-Cultural Pragmatics

Interlanguage pragmatics, distinct from general pragmatics, focuses on how non-native speakers acquire and apply pragmatic norms in their second language (L2) communication (Kasper & Dahl, 1991). This field explores how L2 learners comprehend and produce speech acts, investigating the development of their pragmatic competence. This research area has gained importance due to the recognition that L2 learners, even those with high proficiency, often make pragmatic errors, which are perceived as more significant than grammatical mistakes by their native English-speaking interlocutors (Blum-Kulka, 1987).

Cross-cultural pragmatics, which examines how different cultural values shape communication styles, aligns with interlanguage pragmatics, although there are distinctions between the two. Cross-cultural pragmatics emphasizes that individuals from different societies or communities adhere to their communication norms, often leading to misunderstandings (Boxer, 2002). It investigates the application of speech acts across cultures and how cultural norms influence politeness and pragmatic failures (House, 2002). In this respect, Selinker (1972) argues that interlanguage, a system developed by L2 learners incorporating features from their native language, can lead to language innovations, emphasizing the importance of notions like politeness and directness for successful communication in pragmatic competence development.

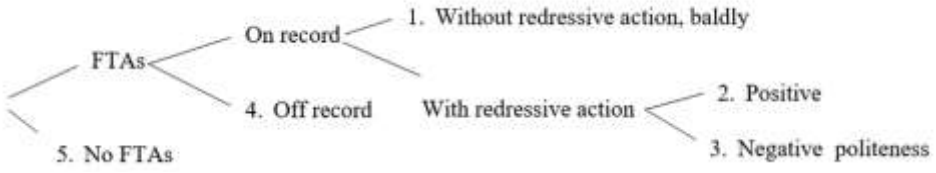
2. Face

Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) theory of politeness focuses on maintaining "face," either positive (desire for approval) or negative (desire to be unimpeded). People choose politeness and directness strategies based on these face needs in speech acts. In modern-day societies, interactions between strangers serve negative face wants, and would sound inappropriate to speak to someone with no regard for the distance between the speaker and the addressee (Meyerhoff, 2011). In cultures such as the Japanese and German, it is extremely important to address a professor appropriately considering the negative face, and utilize terms such as sensei (Japanese) and professor or dozent (German) to mark the distance between the speaker and the addressee. In other societies, the interactions between strangers are more friendly and natural as people pay more attention to positive face wants. Australians are a good example of this case as they generally tend to sound friendly and informal, and that separates them from other English speakers (e.g. British) (Meyerhoff, 2011).

In various cultures, directness norms depend on factors like power, social distance, and the rank of imposition. We might feel the importance of sounding more indirect to people we do not know as opposed to the people we know (e.g. friends). The weight of different types of requests varies; therefore, asking for the time is completely different and does not imply any big imposition compared to asking for a loan. Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory, influenced by Goffman (1967), outlines strategies for face-threatening acts, from direct to indirect strategies, based on the context and the threat to face.

The strategies encompass bald-on-record as the most direct and threatening (e.g. shut that window), and off-record as the least threatening (e.g. it is getting cold in here). Positive politeness emphasizes solidarity with the hearer (e.g. how about shutting the window for us?), while negative politeness respects the hearer's freedom of action (Could you shut the window?). Negative politeness is generally considered less threatening than positive politeness. These strategies guide people in maintaining politeness and navigating communication effectively. That said, the strategies can be classified as follows:

Figure 1. Politeness Strategies for Doing the FTAs



3. The Speech Act of Request

Scholars have categorized request strategies based on the level of directness in making a request. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) identified three levels of directness: the explicit level (the most direct, using imperatives), the conventionally indirect level (utilizing contextualized predictions like "could" and "would" in the request), and the non-conventional indirect level, where the request is hinted rather than explicitly stated. These levels were further subdivided into nine request categories, arranged on a scale from explicit to the most indirect forms of requests. These categories represent different levels of directness in making requests, with the mood derivable being the most direct and mild hints being the most indirect. Dittrich et al. (2011) suggest that face may be at risk when requests are impolite and direct. The following table summarizes these nine categories:

Table 1: Examples of Nine Request Categories (CCSARP)

Strategy Category	**Strategy Type**	**Examples**
Direct	1. Mood Derivable (MD)	Move your car
	2. Explicit Performatives (EP)	I am asking you to do your homework
	3. Hedged Performatives (HP)	I would like to ask you to clean up the kitchen
	4. Obligation Statements (OS)	You will have to/you must move your car
	5. Want Statements (WS)	I would like you to clean that mess
Conventionally indirect	6. Suggestory Formulae (SF)	How about cleaning the kitchen?
	7. Query Preparatory (QP)	Could you move the car? / Would you clean the kitchen?
Non-conventionally Indirect	8. Strong Hints (SH)	You have left your car in the doorway
	9. Mild Hints (MH)	We don't want any crowding (indirect request to move the car)

Brown and Levinson (1987) propose a formula to calculate the weightiness of requests, providing a structured approach to understanding the factors that influence how requests are made in social interactions. In this formula, "Request size" refers to the nature and extent of the request, considering how much imposition it places on the hearer. A larger request, which demands more effort, time, or resources from the hearer, typically requires greater indirectness to mitigate the potential burden and to maintain face. "Power" denotes the hierarchical relationship between the hearer and the speaker, highlighting the influence and authority the hearer has over the speaker. When the hearer holds significant power over the speaker, the request tends to be more indirect to show respect and deference. "Social distance" reflects the level of familiarity and intimacy between the speaker and the hearer, with greater social distance necessitating higher indirectness to avoid offense and to navigate the formality of the relationship. Thus, the formula captures the combined effect of these elements, illustrating how they collectively determine the degree of indirectness in requests. This theoretical framework emphasizes the importance of context and relational dynamics in shaping pragmatic strategies, providing valuable insights for understanding and teaching effective communication in various social settings. The following is the suggested formula based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory:

Weightiness of a request = Social distance (familiarity) + Power (of hearer over speaker) + Imposition (request size)

It should be noted that the nature of requests varies across cultures. In individualistic cultures, formal titles are preferred for face-threatening requests, emphasizing self and freedom, while communal-oriented cultures prioritize group belonging and show less reliance on formal titles, promoting equality and a sense of community (Kuchuk, 2012). These cultural distinctions affect speech acts, like requests, and the tolerance for direct or indirect communication, highlighting the diversity of societal norms across cultures. As discussed in Meyerhoff (2011), these differences can lead to pragmatic challenges for second language learners who may inadvertently mix communication norms of their own culture with those of the target language.

Concerning the predictability of directness and politeness, Susanne E. Hoebe (2001) explores the intricate mechanisms that underlie the use of politeness strategies in English interactions. Hoebe investigates how speakers manage social relationships and navigate face-threatening acts by employing various politeness tactics, drawing on Brown and Levinson's politeness theory as a foundational framework. She emphasizes the dynamic nature of politeness, which is influenced by factors such as social distance, power relations, and the severity of the imposition. The study utilizes a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to predict the likelihood of different politeness strategies being used in specific conversational contexts. Hoebe's research reveals that speakers often tailor their politeness strategies to align with the perceived expectations and norms of their interlocutors, highlighting the adaptive and context-dependent nature of polite communication. Furthermore, Hoebe's findings suggest that predicting politeness strategies can significantly enhance our understanding of interpersonal communication and the subtleties of language use. Hoebe concludes that a deeper comprehension of politeness strategies can inform the development of more

effective communication training programs and tools, particularly in multicultural and multilingual settings where miscommunication often arises from differing politeness norms.

Moreover, to forecast the directness of requests made by students at various proficiency levels, Trosborg (1995) used Brown and Levinson's weightiness formula, anticipating a rise in indirect methods as weightiness rose as a result of social distance, authority, and imposition. The study collected data on learners' speech acts using role-plays and DCTs. In high-weightiness scenarios, higher proficiency learners tended to follow the expected indirectness, whereas lower proficiency learners frequently used more direct tactics than expected. This suggests that pragmatic competence is a developing capacity.

Also, Schneider (2000) used the weightiness formula to forecast how direct a variety of speech actions, such as requests, would be. As weightiness rose, more indirect tactics were anticipated. To test these hypotheses, the study examined both spontaneously occurring conversations and speech acts that were triggered. While the formula was successful in predicting broad trends, individual differences and contextual factors frequently caused deviations from the expected levels of directness, which underscored the complexity of speech act production in the real world.

Another study by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2008) predicted that increasing weightiness would result in more indirect requests from Greek English language learners. To gather requests from the participants, the study used DCTs. According to the findings, learners overestimated their sensitivity to social factors even though they generally followed the predicted indirectness in high-weightiness scenarios. As a result, learners frequently employed less indirect techniques than planned.

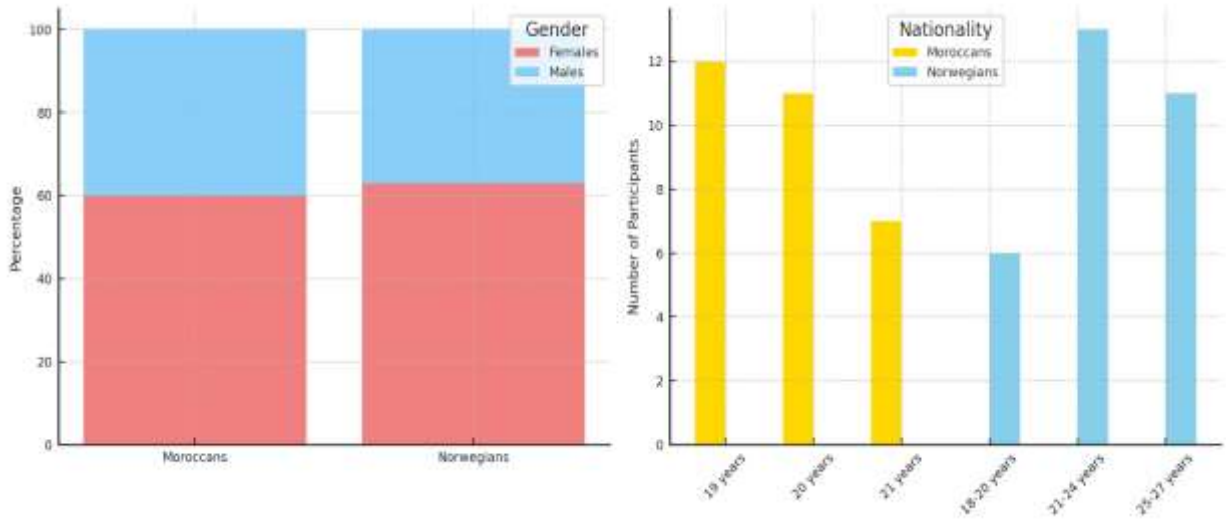
3. Methodology

This paper, based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) Weightiness Formula of face-threatening acts, tests the predictability of the degree of directness by Moroccan and Norwegian speakers of English as they produce requests in critical incidents, and uses Blum-Kulka's (1984) Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Patterns as a secondary tool and coding scheme to enrich the analysis. Given the nature of Brown and Levinson's model, only the request head acts are accounted for. The study does not focus on internal or external modifiers. The major questions that the present paper addresses are as follows:

1. To what extent are Moroccan EFL speakers and Norwegian ESL speakers' requesting strategies similar?
2. Can the requesting strategies' directness levels be anticipated based on the situational parameters of power, distance, and imposition?

This cross-sectional research attempts to gain a comprehensive understanding of informants' directness strategies in requests. In Morocco, the data were collected at Ibn Zohr University, Faculty of Languages, Arts, and Human Sciences. In Norway, the study was conducted at NTNU (Norges Teknisk-Naturvitenskapelige Universitet) university. To test the predictability of the degree of directness, Moroccans and Norwegians were chosen as study participants. They represent two polarizing societies, Moroccans representing a collective society and Norwegians representing an individualistic society (Ting-Toomey, 1998), indicating that the variables of power, social distance, and rank of imposition might be weighed in different ways. The following figure describes the study participants:

Figure 2: Gender and Age of Moroccan and Norwegian Students



3.1. Data Collection

3.1.1 The Written Discourse Completion Task

The WDCT utilized in the study comprises two sections. The first section focused on respondents' background information. The second section incorporated critical incidents (CIs) involving hypothetical scenarios. CIs, defined as problematic situations for cross-cultural communication, were utilized to assess pragmatic competence (e.g., Ebsworth & Ebsworth, 1997). The questionnaire included six CIs, each presenting a detailed hypothetical scenario where respondents were instructed to imagine themselves dealing with a native speaker of American English and produce a request accordingly.

The study investigates the dynamics of making requests across different scenarios, incorporating variations in power, social distance, and the degree of imposition. The critical incidents presented 2 scenarios (CI1 & CI2) with equal power (roommates and friends), 2 scenarios (CI3 & CI4) with lower power (professor-student), and 2 scenarios (CI5 & CI6) with higher power (manager-employee and teacher-student). Social distance, representing the familiarity between interactants, was manipulated across scenarios, ranging from high familiarity (roommates and friends) to medium familiarity (professor-student, employee, and teacher-student). The third variable, the degree of imposition, is also considered, with scenarios suggesting varying degrees of imposition influenced by power dynamics and social distance. The study acknowledges the challenges of achieving an equal distribution of all three variables to the assigned CIs and, therefore, prioritizes the power variable in its examination.

Unlike scenarios in typical DCTs that involve less face-threatening acts, CIs introduce conflict, presenting a challenging scenario for L2 English speakers. This added pressure prompts thorough consideration of communicative strategies, including directness, within the context. While WDCTs have limitations such as eliciting written instead of spoken responses and lacking a natural setting for observing spontaneous discourse, they prove valuable for investigating important research questions, as Golato (2003) highlighted. Moreover, this type of DCT employs CIs that are hypothetical, making it challenging to establish a connection with the CI, which may result in different answers if faced with a similar situation in real life. However, to ensure that the situations in this study are relevant, we opted for CIs that mimic everyday-life encounters, and relate to the participants' identities. The six scenarios are summarized below:

Scenario 1: request for the roommate not to talk on the phone after midnight
Scenario 2: request for a friend to return the money s/he borrowed
Scenario 3: request for the professor to get a second chance to turn in an assignment
Scenario 4: request for the professor to be excused from class for an important meeting
Scenario 5: request for an employee to finish tasks as scheduled.
Scenario 6: request for a student to not miss any further sessions.

The validity of the WDCT was ensured through multiple steps, including feedback from four researchers. Initial comments led to a redesign of the questionnaire, considering factors like diversity in critical incidents (CIs). Reliability was addressed by making instructions clear to elicit consistent data in the form of requests. The final WDCT reflects improvements based on valuable feedback, ensuring both validity and reliability in fulfilling its intended aims.

3.2 Data Analysis

3.2.1 Quantitative Analysis

Brown and Levinson (1987) coined the term 'face-threatening act' (FTA), referring to any verbal act directed from a speaker (S) to a hearer (H) with a specific communicative intention. The weightiness of an FTA, denoted as 'Wx,' is influenced by three universal variables: D (social distance between S and H), P (power of H over S), and R (degree or rank of imposition). The formula allows for the calculation of the weightiness of an FTA (Request in this case) based on these variables. The Weightiness Formula by Brown and Levinson (1987) is as follows:

$Wx = D(S, H) + P(H, S) + Rx$

To quantify the formula, numerical values were assigned to the variables D (social distance), P (power), and R (degree of imposition) to calculate the weightiness of a face-threatening act (FTA) as indicated by the formula. Hoebe's (2001) methodology for assigning numerical values to D, P, and R was adopted and adapted. Each variable was ranked on a scale, with P having values of 0 to 3, D with values of 0 to 3, and R with values of 1 to 3. The resulting W value indicated the anticipated level of indirectness in responding to CIs, providing a means to anticipate the directness strategies employed by study participants. The calculated numerical value of Face-Threat Degree (FTD) ranged from 1 to 9, reflecting the combination of social distance, power, and imposition rating on the respective scales.

Table 2: Numerical Value of Parameters

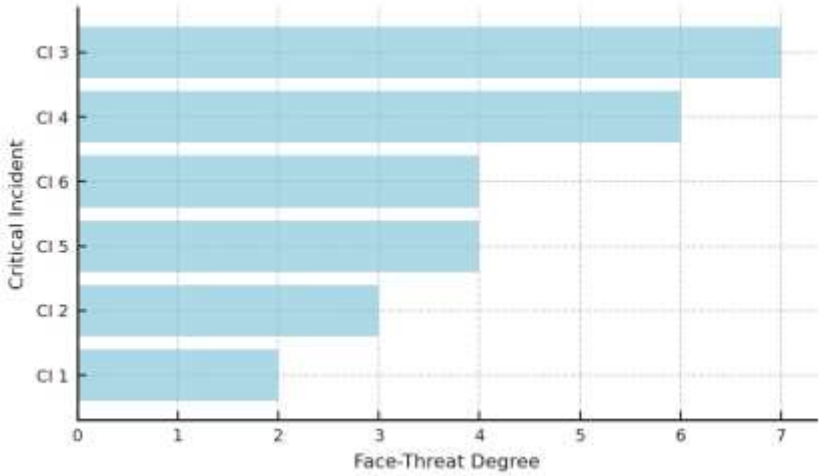
Parameter	**Rank**			
Social Distance (D)	Extra Close = 0	Low Distance = 1	Medium Distance = 2	High Distance = 3
Power (P)	Equal Power = 0	Low Power = 1	Medium Power = 2	High Power = 3
Rank of imposition (R)	----------	Low Rating = 1	Medium Rating = 2	High Rating = 3

Depending on the aforementioned formula, the FTD of each CI is calculated. The FTD per each CI is an indicator of the indirectness level respondents should demonstrate in their requests. The following is the FTD per each CI:

CI1: 2 = 0 + 0 + 2 CI2: 3 = 0 + 0 + 3 CI3: 7 = 2 + 2 + 3
CI4: 6 = 2 + 2 + 2 CI5: 4 = 2 + 1 + 1 CI6: 4 = 2 + 1 + 1

To reach the Wx value, a questionnaire was completed by 7 native English speakers and 6 Moroccan English teachers. As part of piloting the instruments, these participants were asked to assign D, P, and R values to the scenarios, ensuring that the context was accurately reflected before using the data in the study. In CI1, distance and power are ranked 0 (extra close) because the two are roommate students. As for the degree of imposition, it is ranked 2 (medium rating). In CI2, the distance and power are ranked 0 because the two interlocutors are roommates. In terms of imposition, it is ranked 3 (high rating). In CI3, the distance and power are both ranked 2 (medium rating). Imposition, however, is ranked 3. In CI4, distance, power, and imposition are ranked 2. Lastly, in CI5 and CI6, distance is ranked 2. Power and imposition are ranked 1. Following this ranking, CI3 is considered the most face-threatening scenario, followed closely by CI4. CI5 and CI6 carry medium face-threatening degree, while CI1 and CI2 are considered to be the least face-threatening. The following figure ranks these CIs based on their face-threat degree:

Figure 3: Critical Incidents Ranking



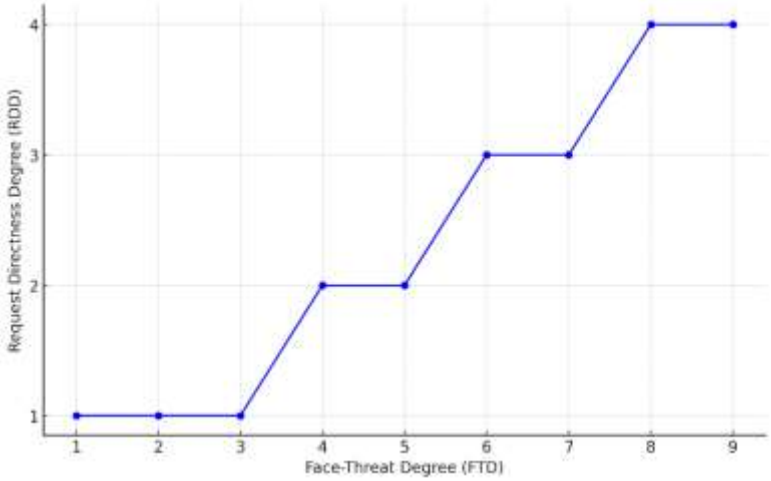
After calculating the FTD values, the study proceeded to determine the actual degree of directness exhibited by the respondents in their requests, labeled as Request Directness Degree (RDD). To quantify the RDD, the four face-threatening act (FTA) strategies—bald on record (BOR), positive politeness (+P), negative politeness (-P), and off-record (OR)—were ranked on a scale from 1 to 4, considering the minimized risk associated with each strategy. BOR was ranked 1, +P was ranked 2, -P was ranked 3, and OR was ranked 4. The scale aimed to reflect the degree of face threat associated with each strategy. The study then compared the values of FTD and RDD to assess the correlation between the expected and observed levels of directness, following Brown and Levinson's weightiness formula. The assumption was that a higher FTD should correspond to a higher RDD, and vice versa, aligning with the directness theory under investigation.

In this study, the alignment between FTD and RDD also integrates Blum-Kulka's (CCSARP) nine requesting categories, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding directness strategies in relation to FTAs. The CCSARP includes categories like Mood Derivable (MD), Explicit Performative (EP), Hedged Performative (HP), and Obligation Statement (OS), which correspond to the bold on record (BOR) strategy, aligning with RDD value 1 for the lowest levels of face-threat (FTD values 1, 2, 3). Similarly, strategies like Want Statement (WS), Suggestion Formula (SF), and Query Preparatory (QP) align with positive politeness (+P), reflected in RDD value 2 for FTD values 4 and 5. Hint Strategies (SH) correspond to negative politeness (-P), with RDD value 3 for FTD values 6 and 7. Finally, Mitigated Hint (MH) strategies align with off-record (OR) requests, reflected in RDD value 4 for the highest levels of face-threat (FTD values 8 and 9). To ensure a granular approach to the calibration of FTD and RDD, the following table and line chart function as a key to align the FTD and RDD:

Table 3: Face-Threat Degree and Request Directness Degree Alignment Key

FTD Range	RDD Value	FTA Strategy	Request Strategy (CCSARP)
1-3	1	Bold On Record (BOR)	MD, EP, HP, OS
4-5	2	Positive Politeness (+P)	WS, SF, QP
6-7	3	Negative Politeness (-P)	SH
8-9	4	Off Record (OR)	MH

Figure 4: Alignment of FTD and RDD



4. Results

4.1. Analysis of Moroccan EFL and Norwegian ESL Speakers' speakers' FTA Requesting Strategies

In CI1, Moroccan respondents showed a preference for positive politeness, indicating a tendency to minimize the threat to the hearer's positive face. Similarly, in CI2, the respondents leaned towards negative politeness, using a strategy to lower imposition and reduce face-threat. CI3 emphasized a preference for negative politeness in situations with medium distance, equal power, and high imposition. CI4 mirrored the trend of preferring negative politeness in scenarios with similar distance and power but a lower imposition. Lastly, CI5 and CI6 showcased a preference for positive politeness, suggesting an effort to make the hearer feel good and reduce face-threat in scenarios with medium distance, low power, and low imposition.

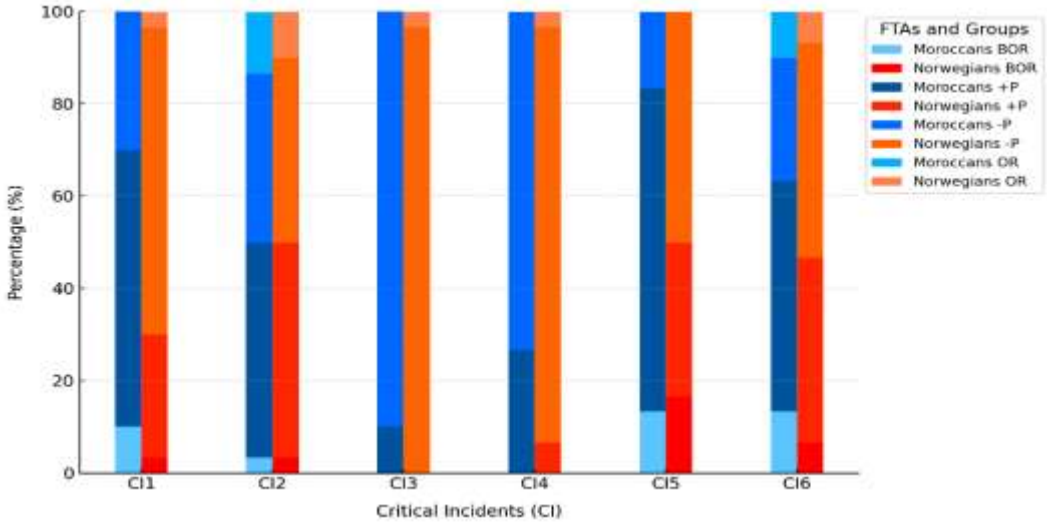
Regarding Norwegians, in CI1 and CI2, it is indicated that there is an inclination to minimize face threat and lower imposition in scenarios where the hearer's power is assumed to be higher. Similarly, in CI3 and CI4, the use of negative politeness is apparent in situations where the hearer is perceived as distant and holds higher power, leading to somewhat indirect requests. Conversely, in CI5, the Norwegian respondents tend to use positive politeness, implying a preference for sounding considerably direct when they have higher power. Also, CI6 suggests that in similar scenarios, Norwegian respondents employ both positive and negative politeness strategies. The mode of the Norwegian respondents' request strategies is also quantified to elicit more data. The following table shows the use and distribution of FTA strategies:

Table 4: Percentage and Distribution of Moroccan EFL (M) and Norwegian ESL (N) Speakers' Requesting Strategies across CIs

		CI1	CI2	CI3	CI4	CI5	CI6
BOR	**M**	10% (3)	3.3% (1)	0%	0%	13.3% (4)	13.3% (4)
	N	3.3% (1)	3.3% (1)	0%	0%	16.6.% (5)	6.6% (2)
+P	**M**	60% (18)	46.6% (14)	10% (3)	26.6% (8)	70% (21)	50% (15)
	N	26.6% (8)	46.6% (14)	0%	6.6% (2)	33.3% (10)	40% (12)
-P	**M**	30% (8)	36.6% (11)	90% (27)	73.3% (22)	16.6% (5)	26.6% (8)
	N	66.6% (20)	40% (12)	96.6% (29)	90% (27)	50% (15)	46.6% (14)
OR	**M**	0%	13.3% (4)	0%	0%	0%	10% (3)
	N	3.3% (1)	10% (3)	3.3% (1)	3.3% (1)	0%	6.6% (2)

Table 4 reveals distinct directness preferences between Moroccan and Norwegian speakers of English across various CIs, showcasing a tendency for Moroccan speakers to be more direct in CI1, while both groups favor positive politeness in CI2, and exhibit a preference for negative politeness in CI3 and CI4. However, in CI5 and CI6, Moroccans tend toward directness with positive politeness, contrasting with Norwegians who lean towards indirectness with negative politeness.

Figure 5: Comparison of the FTA Requesting Strategies Across Moroccans and Norwegians



For Moroccans, In CI1, there is a noticeable tendency to employ positive politeness as the predominant strategy. Examples of Moroccan EFL students' positive politeness strategies include:

Ex 1: I want you to call your parents some other time. How about that?

Ex 2: Hey mate! I hope you understand that you're bothering me. Is it possible to let me sleep?

In CI2, positive politeness emerges as the dominant strategy, closely followed by negative politeness, suggesting a relatively balanced use of these two strategies. The following are some examples:

Ex 1: Could you possibly give me back my 30$? I really need it. (Negative Politeness)

Ex 2: I need money urgently. You should give me what I owe you. (Positive Politeness)

In CI3, negative politeness emerges as the dominant strategy. Similarly, in CI4, the mode is negative politeness, reflecting a pattern where Moroccan respondents favor negative politeness in situations with low imposition to minimize face-threat. Negative politeness request examples in CI3 and CI4 are:

Ex 1: Excuse me, sir! I forgot my homework. Could you please give me a second chance to submit it next week? (CI3)

Ex 2: Sir! Would it be possible for me to leave the class? I have an important meeting with the club members. (CI4)

In CI5, the prevalent strategy is positive politeness. This indicates that in scenarios where the speaker holds higher power, positive politeness strategies are predominantly employed. A similar pattern is observed in CI6, reinforcing the inclination to utilize positive politeness when the speaker assumes higher power. The following are some request samples showing in CI5:

Ex 1: Is it okay for you to speed up your work? You are behind the schedule. (CI5/Positive politeness)

Ex 2: Please make sure you're at every session to share your valuable insights. (CI6/Positive politeness)

For Norwegians, In CI1, negative politeness is the predominant strategy, indicating a preference for it in situations with extra close distance, equal power, and medium imposition. The following is an example of negative politeness in CI1:

Ex 1: Would you mind going to the bathroom while talking on the phone?

In CI2, positive politeness is the predominant strategy, followed by negative politeness, yet indicating a reliance on both strategies when making requests with high imposition. Here are two sample requests:

Ex 1: Oh, Mary, it just came to my mind. You borrowed $30 from me some days ago and did not return it. Maybe, you can pay for lunch now. (Negative politeness)

Ex 2: Hey mate, remember the $30 you borrowed from me? Well, I need it now. (Positive politeness)

In CI3 and CI4, the mode of negative politeness is preferred among Norwegian participants in scenarios with medium distance, medium power, and high imposition. Similarly, in CI4, the mode is negative politeness, indicating a continued preference for negative politeness in situations with similar parameters. Here are some examples to illustrate:

Ex 1: Professor! I have already completed my homework but forgot it at home. Could you please allow me to bring it tomorrow? (CI3)

Ex 2: It's really inappropriate! But there is a club meeting taking place. Can you please allow me to attend it? (CI4)

In CI5 and CI6, negative politeness is the mode, followed by positive politeness, suggesting that Norwegian respondents tend to employ both strategies in scenarios with medium-distance, low power, and low imposition. To illustrate:

Ex 1: Could you possibly work faster? (CI5)

Ex 2: You have missed three sessions thus far. Would you mind if I ask you to be more serious about attendance? (CI6)

4.2. Analysis of Speakers' CCSARP Requesting Strategies

Along with FTD and RDD analysis, a classification of FTAs in terms of how direct or indirect they are has been conducted using Blum-Kulka's (1984) nine requesting categories.

Table 5: Nine Request Categories of the Moroccan (M) and Norwegian (N) Respondents

	CI1 M/N	CI2 M/N	CI3 M/N	CI4 M/N	CI5 M/N	CI6 M/N	Total M/N
MD	1/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	1/0	3/0	5/0
EP	4/0	4/0	0/0	0/0	2/0	5/0	15/0
HP	0/1	1/1	0/0	1/1	1/3	0/0	3/6
OS	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	5/3	7/2	12/5
WS	2/0	6/0	4/2	4/0	2/4	2/7	20/13
SF	0/1	2/1	0/0	1/1	0/3	0/0	3/6
QP	22/26	15/19	21/22	21/27	16/13	7/12	102/119
SH	1/2	2/9	5/6	3/1	3/4	6/9	20/31
MH	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0

Table 5 reveals that the preferred strategy among Moroccan and Norwegian respondents is the query preparatory, marked by modals or expressions indicating preparatory conditions and demonstrating a tendency to sound indirect across various scenarios. The table also highlights varying request types between the two groups, with Norwegian speakers showing a tendency towards indirect patterns. In CIs where the hearer assumes higher power (CI3 and CI4), there is a notable absence of direct strategies. Lastly, mild hint strategies are completely absent.

3. Anticipating Request Directness Degree

Given the nature of the data, the study opted for the Spearman correlation test because it measures the strength and direction of the monotonic relationship between FTD and RDD. It is a non-parametric test, meaning it does not require the data to be normally distributed or the relationship to be linear, making it suitable for assessing the rank-based association in this dataset, which may contain variability or inconsistencies. The study also employed ordinal logistic regression to examine how the RDD can be predicted based on changes in FTD. In this analysis, FTD served as the independent variable, representing the increasing or decreasing degree of face-threat in each scenario, while the RDD was the dependent variable, reflecting the participants' level of directness in response to those scenarios. The FTD values range from 1 to 9, representing different degrees of face-threat in a request, with 1 being the least face-threatening and 9 representing the most face-threatening. Similarly, the RDD is categorized from 1 to 4, where 1 represents the most indirect request and 4 is the most direct request. Together, these measures offer insights into both the direction and consistency of participants' behavior in relation to the FTD.

4.3 Moroccan Participants

Table 6: Spearman Correlation Test

Test	Correlation Coefficient	P-value	Findings
Spearman Correlation	0.323	$p<0.0001$	Weak correlation

The Spearman correlation across CIs is around 0.323, indicating a weak association and suggesting that the connection between FTD and RDD is neither particularly strong nor consistent. The p-value suggests a weak monotonic relationship between the variables. In terms of RDD prediction, the regression test shows that FTD is a weak predictor of (in)directness strategies.

Table 7: Ordinal Logistic Regression

Test	Pseudo R^2	P-value	Findings
Ordinal Logistic Regression	0.1065	$p<0.0001$	No significant prediction for RDD

4.4. Norwegian Participants

Table 8: Spearman Correlation Test

Test	Correlation Coefficient	P-value	Findings
Spearman Correlation	0.252	$p<0.0001$	Weak correlation

Similar to Moroccans, the Spearman correlation test indicates a weak correlation between FTD and RDD. Regression shows that FTD does not significantly predict RDD.

Table 9: Ordinal Logistic Regression

Test	Pseudo R^2	P-value	Findings
Ordinal Logistic Regression	0.072	p<0.0001	No significant prediction for RDD

Looking at both groups, the ordinal logistic regression reveals very low coefficients of determination indicating a very weak or non-existent effect size of FTD on RDD. This conclusion suggests that formula used in this study does not predict degrees of (in)directness in critical incidents.

5. Discussion

The study aimed to explore the directness strategies employed by Moroccan EFL and Norwegian ESL speakers when making requests in critical incidents. Using Brown and Levinson's (1987) weightiness formula and Blum-Kulka's (1984) nine categories of requests, the study investigates the predictability of strategies used by the two groups. The findings reveal variations in directness strategies across critical incidents, indicating both similarities and differences between Moroccan and Norwegian speakers, with shared approaches in certain situations (CI2, CI3, and CI4) and distinct strategies in others (CI1, CI5, and CI6).

Regarding the first research question, the study reveals that Norwegian ESL speakers employ more indirect strategies compared to Moroccan EFL speakers. The results show that Moroccans tend to use more direct strategies (positive politeness) when they have equal or higher power while employing indirect strategies (negative politeness) in situations with lower power. In contrast, Norwegians generally adopt more indirect approaches. The study also highlights the diversity of request strategies employed by both Moroccan EFL and Norwegian ESL speakers. Following Blum-Kulka's (1984) requesting categories, both groups heavily utilize query preparatory expressions. This strategy involves referencing preparatory conditions, indicating assumptions about the hearer's compliance with the requested act. Moroccans predominantly use query preparatory in specific contexts where the addressee holds higher power and social distance (CI3 and CI4), while Norwegians use it across various scenarios but less in situations where they perceive higher power. A noticeable distinction arises in the use of more direct strategies between the Norwegian and Moroccan respondents. The Norwegian group avoids the use of mood-derivable and performative statements entirely, indicating a preference for not sounding extremely direct in their requests. It is noteworthy that both groups avoid the use of mild hints, possibly reflecting a shared inclination not to sound excessively indirect.

Regarding the second research question, it is concluded that the weightiness formula used in this study can only weakly predict (in)directness in critical incidents falling under RDD=3 where the FTD is higher than 6, observed in CI3 and CI4 across both groups, with the addition of CI5 in the case of Moroccans (FTD is 4). In the other CIs, where weightiness is decreased, the RDD significantly differed from the FTD. This conclusion eliminates the possibility of using the weightiness formula to predict how direct or indirect a request would be in different scenarios. This underscores the idea that distinct cultural backgrounds influence how individuals manifest directness, meaning that it is not possible to predict directness based on Brown and Levinson's theory.

This study, constrained by practical limitations, did not account for an equal distribution of power, social distance, and imposition as that would result in a high number of scenarios in the WDCT (promoting task burden). Also, limited time and participant availability restricted recruitment, with only thirty respondents joining the study in each country. Future research should address these issues by designing tasks that equitably distribute and balance power, social distance, and imposition to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how they influence directness strategies. Moreover, recruiting larger and more diverse samples is also recommended and allows for more effective exploration of directness in different cultural contexts.

Pedagogically, these findings suggest that by understanding how different levels of face-threat influence the directness of requests, educators can design lessons for learners to recognize and produce context-appropriate language. Instruction should focus on raising awareness of the relationship between social factors (like power, distance, and imposition) and the appropriate level of politeness and directness in communication. Teaching pragmatic strategies, such as using more indirect requests in high face-threat situations, can improve learners' ability to navigate social interactions effectively in real-world contexts.

6. Conclusion

This study aimed to explore (in)directness strategies in requests made by Moroccan EFL and Norwegian ESL speakers in response to critical incidents. Using Brown and Levinson's weightiness formula, the study investigated the predictability of directness in requests. Additionally, Blum-Kulka's requesting categories were used for a nuanced analysis of direct and indirect strategies. The findings revealed similarities and differences between the two groups, with Moroccan speakers generally employing more direct strategies compared to their Norwegian counterparts who favored indirect approaches. Notably, both groups exhibited a tendency towards indirectness when addressing a higher-power addressee. The study examined the notion of predictability of (in)directness, emphasizing cultural specificity in expressions among diverse language speakers.

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