
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Examining Pragmatic Knowledge in Speech Acts of Request, Compliment Response, and Apology among Moroccan EFL Students

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| ABSTRACT

This research delves into the pragmatic competencies in interlanguage of Moroccan EFL learners, focusing on the speech acts of requests, apologies, and compliment responses. Utilizing Discourse Completion Tasks (DCT) as the cornerstone of data collection, the study scrutinizes 16 diverse situations involving advanced-level EFL learners in Morocco. The study not only reinforces existing theories about the role of social and relational factors in shaping linguistic behavior but also uncovers the nuanced interplay of variables such as power dynamics, relational distance, and imposition in influencing these speech acts. Significantly, the research reveals that Moroccan EFL learners are not mere passive recipients of established linguistic norms; they actively adapt their language choices in response to a complex array of sociocultural and sociolinguistic variables. The study concludes with a call for more explicit and targeted instruction in interlanguage pragmatics within the Moroccan EFL educational setting to better prepare students for authentic interactions. These insights have far-reaching pedagogical implications, particularly for the crafting of EFL curricula that are attuned to the nuanced sociolinguistic variables that influence language use.

| KEYWORDS

Interlanguage pragmatics, Speech act, Compliment response, Apology, Requests, Pragmatic competence.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Language, an intricate tapestry of sounds, symbols, and meanings, is deeply embedded within the socio-cultural matrices of communities worldwide. For centuries, the enigma of language has captivated scholars, linguists, and educators. Their collective endeavors have sought to decode its multifarious facets, from its phonetic rhythms to its semantic depths. Pioneering linguists, such as Chomsky (1965), have illuminated the generative aspects of language, emphasizing its innate structures and universal grammar. Yet, the essence of language transcends its structural boundaries. Hymes (1972) introduced the world to the concept of 'communicative competence', a paradigm shift that underscored the significance of both linguistic forms and their apt application across diverse societal settings.

As we navigate the vast expanse of linguistic studies, pragmatics emerges as a beacon, guiding our understanding of language in context. Grice (1975) eloquently characterized it as the study of context-driven meaning. This perspective, while seemingly straightforward, delves deep into the intricacies of how language functions in real-world scenarios. It's not just about what we say, but how, when, and why we say it. The interplay of words, their intended meanings, the context in which they're spoken, and the myriad cultural nuances that influence them form the crux of pragmatics. Geoffrey and Leech (1983) further refined this idea, accentuating the pivotal role context plays in interpreting language. His work suggests that without understanding context, our grasp of language remains superficial.

Building on these foundational insights, the relationship between language and context has consistently been a focal point in linguistic discourse. Levinson (1983) postulated that context doesn't merely influence language; it often defines and shapes it. This dynamic interplay between words and their contextual environment forms the bedrock of pragmatic studies. Mey (2001) expanded on this, viewing pragmatics as the lens through which societal norms, cultural idiosyncrasies, and individual experiences shape language use. This intricate dance between language and society suggests that every utterance, every word, and every pause is a reflection of the larger socio-cultural ecosystem we inhabit.

In the globalized world of the 21st century, the study of language acquisition, especially English as a Foreign Language (EFL), has gained unprecedented importance. Amidst this backdrop, Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP) stands out as a beacon of understanding. ILP delves into the challenges EFL learners face, from the subtle nuances of intonation to the complex norms governing politeness. Jenny Thomas (1983) introduced the term 'pragmatic competence', encapsulating the ability to use language appropriately in diverse social contexts. Bachman (1990) further segmented this competence, offering a more granular perspective that distinguishes between the functional use of language and its socio-cultural appropriateness.

Yet, what does it mean to be pragmatically competent? At the heart of this competence lies the mastery of speech acts. Shoshana Blum-Kulka's seminal research underscores the universal nature of speech acts, from the simple act of greeting to the complex dance of negotiation. These acts, be it requests, apologies, or compliments, are rich tapestries of cultural, societal, and individual nuances. They offer insights into a speaker's world, reflecting their intentions, their cultural upbringing, and their individual experiences.

In the Moroccan landscape, the challenges faced by EFL learners are both unique and universal. The rich cultural heritage of Morocco, with its blend of Arab, Berber, and French influences, offers a fascinating backdrop against which the journey of EFL learners unfolds. Researchers such as Talay (2022), Benlaghrissi (2023), El Fathi (2017), Benjelloun (2015) among others who have delved into the world of Moroccan EFL learners, uncovering the layers of their linguistic experiences. Existing studies, while insightful, often focus on contrasting native and non-native pragmatic capabilities. A holistic exploration, one that encompasses both pragmatological and sociopragmatic knowledge, remains a frontier yet to be fully explored. This study aims to traverse this uncharted territory, offering a comprehensive analysis of Moroccan EFL learners' interlanguage pragmatics, especially as they navigate the intricate world of speech acts like apologies, requests, and responses to compliments.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Interlanguage Pragmatics and pragmatic transfer

Interlanguage pragmatics, a fascinating domain that straddles between interlanguage and pragmatics, meticulously examines the means by which non-native speakers perceive and execute speech acts in a second language milieu (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). This field has burgeoned in scholarly circles, primarily because there's a burgeoning understanding that linguistic mastery doesn't equate to adeptness in pragmatic application. The subsequent review is an earnest endeavor to critically dissect and elucidate the vast expanse of literature that revolves around the pragmatics of Moroccan EFL learners, with a pronounced emphasis on three cardinal speech acts: request, compliment response, and apology.

In setting the stage for this discourse, it's imperative to recognize the genesis and trajectory of interlanguage pragmatics as a pivotal subfield within second language acquisition. It was the astute realization, underscored by seminal work like that of Kasper (1992), that highlighted a perplexing dichotomy: non-native speakers, even those boasting impeccable grammatical prowess, were often at sea when it came to calibrating their utterances to the sociocultural nuances of varied contexts. This conundrum wasn't a mere manifestation of lapses in vocabulary acquisition or syntactical intricacies. Instead, it plumbed the depths of a complex nexus that interwove culture, cognitive processes, and linguistic structures. Within this convoluted matrix, an intriguing pattern emerged. Learners, perhaps inadvertently, seemed to transpose their first language (L1) sociopragmatic constructs onto their second language (L2) interactions. Odlin (1989) coined a term for this—'pragmatic transfer.' It articulated the process by which the cultural underpinnings and nuances inherent to L1 permeated, influencing the L2 pragmatic expressions. Such transfers, though occasionally harmonizing interactions when shared pragmatic frameworks existed between languages, more often than not, laid the groundwork for communication pitfalls. These pitfalls, beyond causing mere misunderstandings, had the potential to engender substantive intercultural conflicts.

2.2 Studies on speech acts in Morocco

Research into speech acts among Moroccan EFL learners has been on the rise, revealing crucial insights into their ability to communicate effectively in English. Hmouri (2021) examined the use of expressive speech acts among Moroccan university EFL students. Employing both quantitative and qualitative research methods, the study discovered that many students, even those with sound grammatical knowledge, often struggled to choose appropriate expressions for different contexts. This was evident in their challenges in distinguishing between formal and informal situations, leading to several pragmatic failures.

On the subject of complaints and modifications, Ezzaoua (2021) conducted an investigation among Moroccan EFL learners at the tertiary level. By comparing these learners with native American English speakers and Moroccan Arabic speakers, the study unearthed that Moroccan EFL learners displayed heightened sensitivity to distance, a trait thought to be a cultural transfer from Moroccan Arabic. Similarly, Laabidi & Bousfiha (2020) discussed the complexities of the complaint speech act in everyday dialogues, underscoring the cultural nuances in its application.

In a broader scope, El Hiani (2015) embarked on a study assessing the performance of fifteen prevalent speech acts like apologizing, requesting, and complimenting among advanced Moroccan EFL learners. Through Discourse Completion Tasks, the research highlighted a gap in understanding, especially at the university level, advocating for more in-depth studies in the Moroccan context. Taking a more focused approach, Ezzaoua (2020) delved into the strategies employed by Moroccan EFL learners when apologizing. The study revealed that while some leaned towards native-like norms, many deviated significantly from the desired strategies.

2.3 Speech act theory

Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), through their pioneering efforts, etched the foundational concepts underpinning speech act theory. Their groundbreaking propositions underscored that language transcended mere informational exchange; it was an instrument to enact actions, to affect outcomes. Nested within this overarching framework, the acts of request, compliment response, and apology assumed paramount importance. Their significance stemmed not just from their ubiquity but from their pronounced potential for cross-cultural ambiguities and misunderstandings.

Requests, when dissected, emerge as directive speech acts. At their core, they encapsulate the speaker's aspirations for the recipient to engage in a delineated action a perspective reinforced by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). But the waters run deep. The actual realization of such directives is ensnared in a web of societal power structures, relational proximities, and the inherent or perceived impositions they might engender. Trosborg (1995), through meticulous research, posited an intriguing hypothesis: it was the linguistic proficiency of learners, rather than the shadows of their cultural ethos, that predominantly dictated their request strategies. In the vibrant cultural tapestry of Morocco, marked by Arabic's distinct indirectness (Hassan, 1999), EFL learners might lean towards nuanced request strategies. While this serves them well within their cultural confines, in intercultural exchanges, these strategies could sow seeds of confusion.

Herbert (1990) masterfully illustrated that compliment responses weren't vacuous or perfunctory reactions. They were, instead, profound reflections of cultural imprints and societal value systems. This viewpoint finds resonance in the empirical study by Nelson et al. (1993), which highlighted discernable disparities in compliment response patterns between Egyptian Arabic and American English. Such observations point towards potential variances in strategies among Moroccan Arabic speakers. Pivoting to apologies, conceptualized by Holmes (1990) as harmonizing tools, they emerge as mechanisms to redress social disruptions. Yet, it's here that Cohen and Olshtain (1981) illuminated a critical aspect: non-native speakers, despite a robust grasp of linguistic formalities, often faltered in pragmatic application.

2.4 Speech acts realization

Taxonomy	Strategy	Example
1. Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs)	Expression of regret	I'm sorry
	Offer of apology	I apologise
	Request for forgiveness	Excuse me/ Forgive me/ Pardon me
2. Explanation or Account	Objective reasons for violation	I was sick and couldn't do it
	External mitigating circumstances	The traffic was terrible
3. Taking responsibility	Explicit self-blame	It's my fault
	Lack of intent	I didn't mean it
	Expressions of self-deficiency	I was confused
	Expressions of embracement	I feel awful about it
	Self-despraise	I'm super clumsy
	Justify the hearer	You're right to be angry
4. Concern for the hearer	Refuesal to acknowledge guilt	Blame, denial, offended : it wasn't my fault
		Are you alright ?
5. Offer of repair		I will make it up for you
6. Promise of forbearance		It won't happen again

Table 1: Cohen and Olshtain's (1981) taxonomy of the speech act of apology

In the study of speech acts, the seminal work by Olshtain and Cohen (1981) on apology strategies holds a pivotal role. Their taxonomy serves as a cornerstone in the field of interlanguage pragmatics, offering a nuanced framework for understanding the various strategies that speakers employ when apologizing. The first category in their taxonomy is Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices, which encompasses expressions of regret, offers of apology, and requests for forgiveness. The second category involves providing an explanation or account, which refers to citing external mitigating circumstances or objective reasons for the violation.

The third category, Taking on Responsibility, is further divided into several sub-strategies. These range from explicit self-blame and lack of intent to expressions of self-deficiency, embarrassment, and self-dispraise. This category also includes justifying the hearer and refusal to acknowledge guilt, which can manifest in various ways such as denial of responsibility or blaming the hearer.

The fourth category focuses on showing concern for the hearer, often articulated through phrases that inquire about the hearer's well-being. The fifth category, Offer of Repair, involves making amends for the harm caused. Lastly, the sixth category is the Promise of Forbearance, where the speaker commits to avoiding the offending action in the future (table 1). Olshtain and Cohen's taxonomy elucidates the multifaceted nature of apologies. It emphasizes that apologies are not a one-size-fits-all phenomenon but can be executed through a variety of linguistic and strategic means.

Macro level strategy	Micro level strategy	Example
Acceptance	Upgrading the utterance	Yeah, I know. It's brand new.
	Appreciation token	Thank you so much
	Agreeing utterance	Yeah, I think it's pretty cool.
	Return	Thank you. You look great too
Amend (deflect)	Downgrading	It's just an old used car
	Qualifying utterance	I'm glad you like it. I had a lot of fun
	Credit reassignment	My professor helped me a lot
	Explanatory comment	I spent so much time working on it
Avoid	Doubt/ reassurance	Really ?
	Ignore or change the topic	where are you going after this ?
	Laugh	Haha right
Reject	Joke	You owe me then
	Questioning sincerity	Do you really think so
Combination strategy	Disagreeing utterance	No, not at all
	Macro level combination	(Accept + reject) : thank you, but I don't deserve it
	Micro level combination	(Appreciation + agreeing) thank you, I think so too

Table 2: Yun .s (2015) compliment response categorization

Building upon Yun's (2015) comprehensive framework on compliment responses, the complexity and intricacy of reacting to compliments becomes strikingly evident. Yun meticulously categorizes these reactions into four primary macro strategies: Accept, Amend, Avoid, and Reject, with an added nuanced "Combination strategy", rooted in data suggesting the frequent blending of multiple strategies within a single response. The Accept strategy encapsulates the act of acknowledging and embracing the compliment, either overtly or subtly, and is further broken down into micro strategies like Upgrading utterances, Appreciation tokens, Agreeing utterances, and the act of Returning the compliment. The Amend strategy pivots towards deflection, incorporating Downgrading utterances, Qualifying utterances, Credit reassignment, Explanatory comments, and Doubting/Reassurance questions, which subtly seek reaffirmation. The Avoid strategy represents evasion techniques ranging from Ignoring the compliment, resorting to Laughter, or deflecting with a Joke. In contrast, the Reject strategy is anchored in challenging the compliment, either by Questioning its sincerity or by presenting Disagreeing utterances. Notably, the Combination strategy reflects the dynamic nature of real-life exchanges, acknowledging instances where respondents intertwine strategies, evident both at the macro (Inter-macro combination) and micro (Intra-macro combination) levels (see table 2).

This layered blueprint from Yun not only captures the multitude of ways in which compliments can be responded to but also emphasizes the sociocultural underpinnings and individual predilections that influence such reactions. It is a poignant reminder of how even commonplace linguistic exchanges carry profound undertones of societal values and cultural nuances.

Taxonomy	Strategies	Examples
I. Direct Expressions	Imperatives Performatives Implicit performatives Obligation Statements Want Statements	Open the window I'm asking you to give lend me a pen Could I perhaps borrow the book You have to give me the pen I want you to lend me a pen
II. Indirect expressions		
1. Conversational indirect	Preparatory questions Suggestions Permissions Mitigated preparatory Mitigated wants	Can you reach that? How about opening the window? Is it okay if you open the window? Would you possibly be able to help ? I'd appreciate it if you could explain
2. Non-conversational Indirect	Strong hint Mild hint	It's so hot in here I have this heavy beg

Table 3 : Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) taxonomy of request

Requests is another pivotal speech act. Blum-Kulka (1989) seminal study offers an insightful taxonomy of request strategies. Their paper underscores the intricate nature of making requests, which, far from being mere linguistic structures, are embedded in a matrix of politeness strategies, social dynamics, and cultural norms. Blum-Kulka proposed a multi-tiered categorization, ranging from direct strategies, like imperatives, to conventionally indirect strategies, such as suggesting formulas or querying the possibility of an action. At the core of their taxonomy lies the concept of 'mitigation,' which refers to the degree of indirectness employed in the request. The depth of their categorization reveals the profound considerations that speakers, consciously or unconsciously, undertake when formulating requests (See appendix 3). Whether it's to maintain face, respect social hierarchies, or simply adhere to cultural conventions, Blum-Kulka et al. elucidate that the act of requesting is a complex interplay of language and sociopragmatics.

2.5 The Moroccan Landscape

Morocco, steeped in a rich historical and cultural heritage, boasts an intricate tapestry of linguistic influences. Predominantly, Moroccan Arabic stands as a testament to the region's deep-rooted Arab traditions, while Amazigh reflects the indigenous Berber populations that have long thrived in the region. French, a legacy of the colonial era, remains a dominant language of administration, business, and education, ingraining itself into the fabric of modern Moroccan society. Meanwhile, English, as the lingua franca of the globalized world, has been making inroads, especially in urban centers and academic institutions, signaling Morocco's aspirations to integrate more seamlessly into the global community. This convergence of languages not only sets a dynamic stage for EFL learners but also embeds layers of complexity in their linguistic endeavors. As these learners strive to master English, they don't just grapple with grammatical rules or vocabulary; they wrestle with the challenge of meshing the sociopragmatic norms of multiple languages into their communicative repertoire. While studies, like that of Ezzaoua (2020), provide windows into the experiences of these learners, a broader view reveals glaring gaps in the academic narrative. Many contemporary research endeavors, despite their merits, often adopt a myopic lens, focusing perhaps on one or two facets and thereby only skimming the surface. There's a pressing need for comprehensive studies that dive deep into the complex sociocultural amalgam that shapes the pragmatic competencies and challenges of Moroccan EFL learners. Indeed, such endeavors can empower educators and policymakers to craft pedagogical tools that resonate with the multicultural ethos of Morocco, fostering more effective and nuanced language acquisition.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

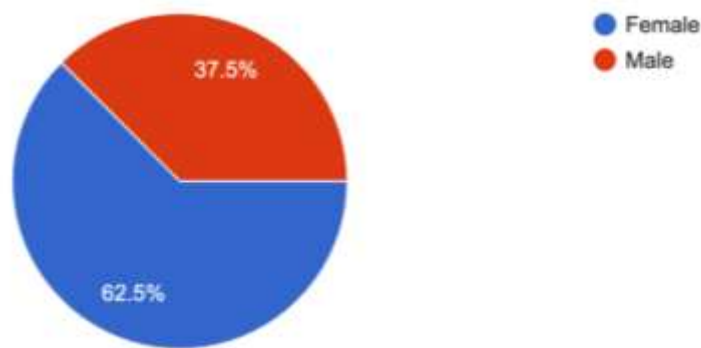
The inherently explorative nature of this study necessitates the adoption of a qualitative research design. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative approaches are particularly adept at exploring and understanding the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. In the context of interlanguage pragmatics, this design becomes crucial as it allows for a nuanced and intricate dissection of participants' responses. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) posit that qualitative research delves deep into the complexities and processes underlying human actions and intentions. By employing this approach, the study seeks to uncover the intricate layers, subtleties, and cultural underpinnings that shape the interlanguage pragmatic competencies of Moroccan EFL learners. Additionally, as Hatch (2002) notes, qualitative designs enable researchers to capture the lived experiences of participants, making them particularly suitable for studies, like the current one, that aim to tap into the authentic pragmatic expressions of language learners.

The study, then, aims to answer the following research questions.

1. What are the patterns of the speech act of compliment response, apology, and request of Moroccan EFL learners?
2. How do Moroccan EFL learners navigate through the variable of power, distance, and imposition while performing speech act?

3.2 Participants

The research population encompasses 16 adult students currently enrolled at the American Language Center in Tangier. These students have surpassed the intermediate 6 level, equivalent to B1 English proficiency, as defined within the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The B1 level, occupying the third tier within the CEFR, marks a significant juncture where individuals possess the ability to effectively communicate on familiar subjects, engage in rudimentary conversations, and adeptly navigate everyday scenarios.



Aligned with Creswell's (2014) recommendations for qualitative research, the study deliberately maintains a relatively modest participant count to facilitate robust data collection and analysis, steering clear of superficial outcomes. Eligibility criteria for participation were twofold: first, participants needed to be enrolled as students at the American Language Center in Tangier, the study's site; second, they were required to be enrolled at the intermediate 6 level or higher. This tailored selection process ensures a focused and contextually relevant study cohort, allowing for in-depth exploration and meaningful insights to emerge from the research endeavor.

3.3 Data Collection Procedures

The primary instrument employed was the Written Discourse Completion Task (WDCT). This tool, recognized globally, is frequently employed to assess interlanguage pragmatic acumen. Several motivations underpin the adoption of the WDCT. First and foremost, given the research's objective to appraise learners' interlanguage pragmatic aptitude, the WDCT stands out as an ideal medium for data collection. Logistically, the WDCT is efficient, facilitating streamlined preparation and administration, especially with larger participant groups. Moreover, it allows respondents an extended temporal frame for reflection, leading to potentially richer strategic responses. The study's ambition to delve into both pragmalinguistic competencies and sociopragmatic understanding, especially in contexts influenced by social power, relational distance, and imposition, further reinforces the WDCT's relevance. Supporting this methodological stance, Kasper (2000, p. 329) accentuates the WDCT's capacity to highlight both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic insights. Similarly, Flor (2006) posits that the WDCT proficiently illuminates the intricacies of interlocutors' interlanguage pragmatic deployment.

This investigation gauges pragmatic knowledge via the execution of speech acts encompassing compliment responses, apologies, and requests. The assessment was facilitated through Google Forms, deploying twenty-four meticulously crafted scenarios mirroring real-life situations. These scenarios underwent preliminary evaluation in a pilot study, where participants provided feedback regarding the intricacy and clarity of the presented situations. The speech acts selected for are not chosen arbitrarily; they play a pivotal role in everyday interactions, being particularly salient in the domain of interlanguage pragmatics. Emphasizing their significance, these speech acts serve as both face-threatening and face-keeping maneuvers. Rooted deeply in politeness and speech act theories, their execution demands adept redressive action. Requests, for example, pose challenges to the hearer's face by imposing upon them, while apologies are geared towards rectifying potential damage to the speaker's face. Compliment responses, on the other hand, tread a fine line, often oscillating between acknowledging a positive remark and countering potential face threats. This intricate dance of face negotiation and preservation is adeptly highlighted in foundational studies, a notable mention being the work of Blum-Kulka et al. (1989).

Concerning variables, the study targets three foundational sociopragmatic variables that underpin the dynamics of speech acts: power, distance, and imposition. Brown and Levinson (1987) have posited that power encompasses the hierarchical distinctions or authority gradients between speakers, which can sway the choice of politeness strategies they employ. Thus, the speaker may be in a lower, a higher, or equal status to the hearer. Distance, as conceptualized by Scollon and Scollon (2001), speaks to the relational closeness or social familiarity between interlocutors, with implications for the degree of directness or mitigation present in their communicative exchanges. In other words, the speaker and hearer may or may not know each other. Imposition, as discussed by Trosborg (1995), is indicative of the perceived burden or intrusion a speech act might impose on a listener, which in turn affects the structure and depth of utterances such as requests or apologies. The collective interaction of these variables not only affects the formulation of speech acts but also their interpretation, making their in-depth exploration a necessity for a comprehensive grasp of interlanguage pragmatics within this study. Additionally, it should be noted that the data collection via the Google form encompassed 24 situations, with each situation specifically designed to target a distinct set of variables for every speech act.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedures

The data derived from the Discourse Completion Task (DCT) has been systematically analyzed in accordance with the established taxonomies pertinent to each specific speech act. A detailed overview of these categorizations was provided in Section 2.3. The analytical frameworks adopted include Cohen and Olshtain's (1981) delineation of apology strategies, Yun's (2015) framework for compliment responses, and the taxonomy of requests as articulated by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). These taxonomies have been extensively employed in prior research and have been duly validated for their applicability and relevance. A comprehensive exposition of each taxonomy is presented in the appendix sections.

4. Results and Discussion

The essence of this research was to gauge learners' adeptness in the nuanced domain of interlanguage pragmatics. This involved evaluating their capacity to articulate in three specific speech acts, encompassing compliment responses, requests, and apologies. Again, the overarching goal was two-fold: First, to determine the learners' ability to harness accurate and contextually apt speech act strategies or linguistic formulations. Second, to ascertain their comprehension and application of three critical sociolinguistic dimensions, the dynamics of social power, the relational distance between interlocutors, and the degree of imposition inherent in the communicative act.

4.1 Apology strategy

In the study of the pragmatics of apologizing, the taxonomy developed by Cohen and Olshtain in 1981 serves as a foundational framework. Utilizing this taxonomy to categorize data collected from a Discourse Completion Test (DCT), several intriguing patterns emerge, offering insights into how Moroccan EFL learners employ various apology strategies in different social contexts.

Among the most striking findings is the overwhelming prevalence of Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs), which appear in a significant 82% of all responses. This category is further subdivided into several strategies, with "regret" being the most frequently employed, accounting for 64.1% of all IFID-related responses. Following "regret," the strategy of "apology" is used in 15.6% of responses, and "asking for forgiveness" is the least common, appearing in just 3.9% of cases. The data also reveals nuanced shifts in the use of these subcategories when variables such as power, distance, and imposition come into play. For instance, in interactions involving a power differential, "regret" is more commonly used, appearing in 71.9% of responses to higher-status individuals, as opposed to 56.3% when interacting with equals. This suggests that Moroccan EFL learners are more inclined to express regret when navigating social hierarchies. Conversely, the frequency of "apology" increases to 21.9% in equal-status interactions but decreases to 9.4% in higher-status interactions.

The variable of social distance also has a discernible impact on the choice of apology strategies. Respondents are more likely to use "regret" when they are unfamiliar with the other person, with a frequency of 70.3%, compared to 57.8% when they are familiar. This indicates a tendency to default to a more formal or cautious form of apologizing when the social distance is greater. Interestingly, the variable of imposition seems to exert an influence opposite to that of power and distance. In scenarios characterized by low imposition, the frequency of "regret" rises sharply to 76.6%, while in high-imposition situations, it drops to 51.6%.

The "explanation and account" strategy is the second most commonly employed, appearing in 45.3% of all responses. However, this strategy is not uniformly distributed across different social variables. In interactions with higher-status individuals, it is used 53.1% of the time, compared to 37.5% with equals. The data also shows a pronounced shift based on the distance variable; the strategy is employed in 56.3% of interactions where respondents are familiar with each other, but only in 34.4% of interactions where they are not. In terms of imposition, the frequency is slightly higher in high-imposition scenarios at 48.4%, compared to 42.2% in low-imposition situations. Conversely, The "taking on responsibility" strategy is generally stable across different variables, with an overall frequency of 25.8%. However, it does show some variability based on the distance variable, rising to 29.7% when

respondents are unfamiliar with the other party and dropping to 18.8% when they are. The subcategory "lack of intent" is particularly noteworthy, as its frequency spikes to 9.4% in low-imposition scenarios.

Among the less commonly employed strategies are "concern for the hearer," which appears in only 1.6% of all responses, and "offer of repair," with an overall frequency of 19.5%. Interestingly, "concern for the hearer" rises to 3.1% in higher-status interactions, suggesting that this strategy may be reserved for more formal or deferential contexts. The "offer of repair" strategy is the most variable, peaking at 39.1% in higher-status interactions. It also varies significantly based on distance and imposition, appearing in 28.1% of interactions where respondents are unfamiliar with each other and in 31.3% of low-imposition scenarios. Finally, the "promise of forbearance" strategy is employed in 25% of all responses, with a notable increase to 50% in higher-status interactions. It remains consistent across the distance variable but shows a slight variation with imposition, appearing in 28.1% of low-imposition and 21.9% of high-imposition scenarios (see table 4).

		Overall		Power				Distance				Imposition				
		all	F	p	To higher	To equal	To lower	know	Don't know	High	Low	F	P	f	p	
1. IFIDs	Regret	82	64,1%	46	71,9%	36	56,3%	37	57,8%	45	70,3%	33	51,6%	49	76,6%	
	Apology	82,0%	20	15,6%	6	9,4%	14	21,9%	11	17,2%	10	15,6%	12	18,8%	8	12,5%
	Forgiveness	5	3,9%	1	1,6%	4	6,3%	4	6,3%	1	1,6%	5	7,8%	0	0,0%	
2. Explanation & account	Objective reason	45	35,2%	25	39,1%	20	31,3%	26	40,6%	19	29,7%	21	32,8%	24	37,5%	
	external circumstances	45,3%	13	10,2%	9	14,1%	4	6,3%	10	15,6%	3	4,7%	10	15,6%	3	4,7%
3. Taking on Responsibility	self-blame	10	7,8%	4	6,3%	6	9,4%	8	12,5%	3	4,7%	5	7,8%	5	7,8%	
	Lack of intent	6	4,7%	6	9,4%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	6	9,4%	0	0,0%	6	9,4%	
	self deficiency	4	3,1%	0	0,0%	4	6,3%	1	1,6%	3	4,7%	3	4,7%	1	1,6%	
	Embarecement	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	
	Self-despraise	25,8%	4	3,1%	1	1,6%	3	4,7%	0	0,0%	4	6,3%	3	4,7%	1	1,6%
	Justify the hearer	2	1,6%	1	1,6%	1	1,6%	1	1,6%	1	1,6%	1	1,6%	1	1,6%	
	Refuese to acknowledge guilt	6	4,7%	3	4,7%	3	4,7%	3	4,7%	3	4,7%	3	4,7%	3	4,7%	
4. Concern for the hearer		1,6%		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
5. Offer of repair		19,5%		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
6. Promise of forbearance		25,0%		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	

Table 4: Frequency and percentage of apology strategies

4.2 Compliment response

The subsequent table (table 5) showcases the descriptive outcomes derived from the frequency with which compliment response strategies were employed, along with the relevant percentages for each context. It's imperative to note that the questionnaire items were crafted to vary in aspects such as social distance, power dynamics, and the degree of imposition, aiming to probe learners' proficiency in deploying diverse strategies.

In light of Yun's (2015) intricate and detailed model on compliment responses, an exhaustive analysis of Moroccan EFL learners' methods of reacting to compliments provides several fascinating insights. Most prominently, the "Acceptance" macro strategy emerges as a predominant choice, covering an impressive 93.8% of the participants' responses. Within this overarching category, the micro strategy labeled "Acceptance" is most favored, making up 77.3% of the total responses. The participants' choices underscore their tendency to express gratitude, be it in straightforward affirmations like "thank you" or more elaborate gestures such as "I appreciate." Quite often, participants initiated their reactions with these affirmative expressions, smoothly segueing into other response strategies, which highlighted the multi-faceted dynamics of their communication.

Following this trend of acceptance, the "Amend" macro strategy is also noticeable, though to a lesser extent, appearing in 37.5% of the responses. An in-depth breakdown of this strategy uncovers preferences for "credit reassignment" (13.3%) and "explanatory comments" (11.7%). Such choices indicate the participants' inclination to redirect the source or cause of the compliment or provide context, thereby modulating the force of the compliment received. Although "Qualifying utterances" were observed less frequently, they were nonetheless significant, represented in 9.4% of responses. In a contrasting vein, both "Avoidance" and "Rejection" strategies seemed to be more in the backdrop, tallying at 4.7% and 1.6% respectively. These trends can be further examined in table 1 for a more detailed distribution.

As for the combination strategies, which amalgamate various responses, they were prominently used, as depicted in figure 1. Of these, macro-level combinations dominated at 36.7%, while their micro-level counterparts stood at 26.6%.

Shifting focus to power dynamics and their impact on response strategies, data from the DCT indicates a clear bias among participants. In situations where conversational partners were of equal status, participants leaned heavily towards the appreciation and return strategies. Within such balanced power scenarios, participants often infused humor through jokes and occasionally probed the veracity of compliments by questioning their sincerity. Conversely, when navigating conversations with individuals holding a higher status, participants exhibited a discernible shift. They frequently employed qualifying utterances, credit reassignment, and both upgrading and agreeing strategies. The nuances of power dynamics appeared to influence the macro-level combination usage, especially in high-status scenarios, a trend displayed in table 1.

The relational distance between participants and their interlocutors significantly influenced response strategy selection. Notably, when participants interacted with familiar individuals, they leaned towards the return strategy in a significant 39% of instances. This sharply contrasts the 12.5% frequency observed in exchanges with strangers. Furthermore, credit reassignment was more prevalent in interactions with familiar people, accounting for 21.9%, as opposed to a mere 4.7% with strangers. Alongside these shifts, a heightened adoption of macro-level strategies was evident: participants opted for these in 46.9% of conversations with known individuals and 26% with unknown interlocutors.

Considering the variable of imposition, participants displayed discerning response strategies. Scenarios with high imposition saw an increased usage of the agreement strategy, noted in 18.8% of such instances, compared to 4.7% in low imposition settings. Additionally, both return and credit reassignment strategies were more favored in low imposition scenarios. For instance, the return strategy was chosen in 32.8% of low imposition interactions, as against 18.8% in high imposition ones. Credit reassignment followed a similar pattern. However, the laughter strategy was unique, exclusively appearing in high imposition scenarios. Intriguingly, this laughter strategy was particularly prevalent in high imposition contexts where the speakers were unfamiliar with each other.

		Overall		Power variable				Distance variable				Imposition				
		All	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P		
Acceptance	Upgrading		6	4,7%	4	6,3%	2	3,1%	3	4,7%	3	4,7%	4	6,3%	2	3,1%
	Appreciation	93,8%	99	77,3%	45	70,3%	54	84,4%	52	81,3%	47	73,4%	43	67,2%	56	87,5%
	Agreeing		15	11,7%	9	14,1%	6	9,4%	7	10,9%	8	12,5%	12	18,8%	3	4,7%
	Return		33	25,8%	16	25,0%	17	26,6%	25	39,1%	8	12,5%	12	18,8%	21	32,8%
Amend	4		3,1%	1	1,6%	3	4,7%	2	3,1%	2	3,1%	3	4,7%	1	1,6%	
(deflect)	Downgrading		4	3,1%	1	1,6%	3	4,7%	2	3,1%	2	3,1%	3	4,7%	1	1,6%
	Qualifying	37,5%	12	9,4%	10	15,6%	2	3,1%	5	7,8%	7	10,9%	6	9,4%	6	9,4%
	Reassignment		17	13,3%	11	17,2%	6	9,4%	14	21,9%	3	4,7%	5	7,8%	12	18,8%
	Explanatory		15	11,7%	8	12,5%	7	10,9%	9	14,1%	6	9,4%	11	17,2%	4	6,3%
reassurance	8		6,3%	4	6,3%	4	6,3%	4	6,3%	4	6,3%	2	3,1%	6	9,4%	
Avoid	Change topic		3	2,3%	1	1,6%	2	3,1%	1	1,6%	2	3,1%	2	3,1%	1	1,6%
	Laugh	4,7%	2	1,6%	0	0,0%	2	3,1%	0	0,0%	2	3,1%	2	3,1%	0	0,0%
	Joke		1	0,8%	0	0,0%	1	1,6%	0	0,0%	1	1,6%	1	1,6%	0	0,0%
Reject	Sincerity		1,60%	2	1,6%	0	0,0%	2	3,1%	1	1,6%	1	1,6%	2	3,1%	0
Disagreeing	0	0,0%		0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	
Combination	Macro level	50,80%	47	36,7%	26	40,6%	21	32,8%	30	46,9%	17	26,6%	23	35,9%	24	37,5%
	Micro level		34	26,6%	17	26,6%	17	26,6%	23	35,9%	11	17,2%	16	25,0%	18	28,1%

Table 5: Compliment response strategies

4.3 Request strategy

The request strategy, as presented in Table 6, offers a comprehensive breakdown of the frequency and percentage of apology strategies across three key sociolinguistic dimensions: power dynamics, relational distance, and the degree of imposition. The data reveals that "Implicit Performatives" were the most frequently employed strategy, accounting for 49.2% of the overall responses. This suggests that participants often opted for indirect ways of making requests, especially when navigating complex sociolinguistic terrains. Direct expressions like "Imperatives" were also notable, though they constituted a smaller portion at 60.9%. Interestingly, "Obligation" and "Suggestions" strategies were not utilized by the participants, indicating a possible aversion to overtly direct or commanding request forms. On the other hand, indirect expressions such as "Preparatory Questions" and "Mitigated Preparatory" were prevalent, with frequencies of 50% and 27.3%, respectively. The "Strong Hint" strategy, falling under the non-conventional indirect category, was also significant at 13.3%.

Delving deeper into the influence of power dynamics on request strategies, it's evident that participants' choices varied based on the perceived status of their interlocutors. In situations of equal status, "Implicit Performatives" emerged as the preferred strategy, constituting 57.8% of responses, compared to 40.6% when interacting with higher-status individuals. Conversely, in higher status scenarios, "Mitigated Preparatory" strategies took precedence, appearing in 34.4% of cases, in contrast to the 20.3% observed in equal status interactions. These findings underscore the participants' sensitivity to power dynamics and their ability to adjust their request strategies accordingly as shown in table 2 below.

The data underscores the significant impact of relational distance on participants' choice of request strategies. From the variable of distance point, when participants are familiar with the other party, they predominantly rely on "Implicit Performatives," using them in a substantial 59.4% of interactions. In contrast, when the other party is unknown, the use of this strategy drops to 39.1%. Conversely, the use of "Preparatory Questions" and "Mitigated Preparatory" strategies increases when participants are unfamiliar with their interlocutor. Specifically, "Preparatory Questions" are employed in 21.9% of cases with unfamiliar parties, compared to a mere 7.8% when the other party is known. Similarly, "Mitigated Preparatory" strategies are used in 32.8% of interactions with unknown individuals, while they account for 21.9% when participants are familiar with the other party. These findings highlight the nuanced ways in which individuals navigate their linguistic choices based on their relationship with their interlocutor.

The degree of imposition distinctly influences participants' choice of request strategies, with variations observed across multiple strategies based on the level of imposition. Notably, "Implicit Performatives" are more prevalent in low imposition scenarios, accounting for 56.3% of cases, as opposed to the reduced 42.2% observed in high imposition contexts. "Want" statements also demonstrate a preference for low imposition situations, registering at 6.3%, compared to a mere 1.6% in high imposition interactions. Similarly, "Permissions," "Wants," and "Mitigated Preparatory" strategies are more commonly employed in low imposition contexts, recording frequencies of 10.9%, 6.3%, and 31.3% respectively. In contrast, their usage drops to 3.1%, 1.6%, and 23.4% in high imposition scenarios. Interestingly, high imposition prompts participants to lean towards "Imperatives," which constitute 4.7% of such interactions, yet are conspicuously absent in low imposition responses. Additionally, "Preparatory Questions" and "Hints" are more favored in high imposition contexts, with frequencies of 17.2% and 15.6% for strong hints, respectively. In comparison, these strategies are less frequent in low imposition situations, registering at 12.5% and 7.8% for strong hints. These patterns underscore the adaptability of participants in tailoring their linguistic choices based on the perceived level of imposition.

		Overall		Power variable				Distance variable				Imposition variable				
		All	F	P	To higher		To equal		Know		don't know		High		Low	
					F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
Direct expressions	Imperatives	60.9%	3	2,3%	3	4,7%	0	0,0%	1	1,6%	2	3,1%	3	4,7%	0	0,0%
	Performatives		6	4,7%	3	4,7%	3	4,7%	2	3,1%	4	6,3%	2	3,1%	4	6,3%
	Implicit performatives		63	49,2%	26	40,6%	37	57,8%	38	59,4%	25	39,1%	27	42,2%	36	56,3%
	Obligation		0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%
Indirect expressions	Want		5	3,9%	3	4,7%	2	3,1%	2	3,1%	3	4,7%	1	1,6%	4	6,3%
	Preparatory questions	50%	19	14,8%	10	15,6%	9	14,1%	5	7,8%	14	21,9%	11	17,2%	8	12,5%
	Suggestions		0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%	0	0,0%
	Permissions		9	7,0%	6	9,4%	3	4,7%	5	7,8%	4	6,3%	2	3,1%	7	10,9%

	Mitigated preparatory mitigated wants		35 27,3%	22 34,4%	13 20,3%	14 21,9%	21 32,8%	15 23,4%	20 31,3%
			13 10,2%	6 9,4%	7 10,9%	8 12,5%	5 7,8%	8 12,5%	5 7,8%
Non-conversational	Strong hint	13.3%	15 11,7%	8 12,5%	7 10,9%	8 12,5%	7 10,9%	10 15,6%	5 7,8%
	Mild hint		2 1,6%	1 1,6%	1 1,6%	1 1,6%	1 1,6%	2 3,1%	0 0,0%

Table 6: The frequency and percentage of request strategies

4.4 Discussion

The findings present a rich tapestry of insights that not only corroborate existing theories but also open new avenues for future research, especially in the Moroccan context. One of the most striking findings is the overwhelming preference for the "Acceptance" macro strategy in the realm of compliment responses, covering 93.8% of the participants' responses. This aligns with Yun's (2015) intricate model on compliment responses, suggesting that Moroccan EFL learners are adept at expressing gratitude in various forms. The micro strategy labeled "Acceptance" was most favored, making up 77.3% of the total responses. This suggests that learners are not merely relying on rote-learned phrases but are capable of nuanced expressions of gratitude, ranging from straightforward affirmations like "thank you" to more elaborate gestures such as "I appreciate."

The data also reveals a complex interplay of strategies influenced by sociolinguistic variables such as power dynamics, relational distance, and the degree of imposition. For instance, in situations where conversational partners were of equal status, participants leaned heavily towards appreciation and return strategies. This suggests a level of sociolinguistic awareness that goes beyond mere formulaic expressions, allowing for a more dynamic and context-sensitive use of language. This nuanced understanding of how power dynamics influence linguistic choices is a significant contribution to the field, particularly in the Moroccan context, echoing seminal works by Brown and Levinson (1987) and Scollon and Scollon (2001).

In the domain of request strategies, our study reveals a noteworthy trend: a marked preference for the use of "Implicit Performatives," which suggests an inclination toward more indirect methods of making requests. This is particularly evident when Moroccan EFL learners find themselves navigating intricate sociolinguistic landscapes, such as those involving power imbalances or unfamiliar social relations. The data shows that in such contexts, "Implicit Performatives" become the go-to strategy, possibly as a way to mitigate the potential face-threatening nature of the request. Interestingly, the data also highlights the conspicuous absence of "Obligation" and "Suggestions" strategies in the participants' responses. This could be interpreted as a reflection of specific cultural norms that frown upon overtly direct or commanding forms of requests. In other words, Moroccan EFL learners appear to be sensitive to the nuances of politeness and imposition, opting for strategies that are less likely to be perceived as intrusive or disrespectful. This observation aligns well with existing literature on the subject, notably the seminal work by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), which also emphasizes the role of indirectness in request strategies across various cultures.

Furthermore, the absence of "Obligation" and "Suggestions" strategies is not just a statistical anomaly; it opens up a plethora of questions that warrant further investigation. For instance, is this absence a result of explicit pedagogical choices within the Moroccan EFL curriculum, or is it more a byproduct of broader cultural attitudes toward politeness and social harmony? Additionally, how do these findings compare with the request strategies employed by Moroccan speakers in their native language? Such questions could provide fertile ground for future research, especially in the field of interlanguage pragmatics, offering deeper insights into the interplay between language, culture, and social norms.

Moreover, the preference for "Implicit Performatives" could also be indicative of a broader communicative style that values subtlety and indirectness, not just in the realm of requests but potentially in other types of speech acts as well. This could have significant implications for how EFL instruction is approached in Morocco, particularly in terms of developing curricula that are sensitive to these cultural and sociolinguistic nuances.

Within the speech act of apology, our study uncovers a compelling pattern: an overwhelming preference for the use of Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs), specifically the term "regret," which constituted a significant 64.1% of all IFID-related responses. While this finding aligns with the foundational taxonomy of apology strategies developed by Cohen and Olshtain in 1981, it also adds a layer of complexity by highlighting the nuanced ways in which Moroccan EFL learners adapt their apology strategies based on sociolinguistic variables.

For example, the frequent use of "regret" was not uniformly distributed across all types of interactions. Instead, it was noticeably more prevalent in scenarios involving a power differential between the interlocutors. This suggests that Moroccan EFL learners are not just mechanically applying a set of learned linguistic forms; they are actively tailoring their language to fit the social context. Specifically, the increased use of "regret" in interactions with higher-status individuals implies a heightened sensitivity to social hierarchies and the importance of showing deference in such situations. Furthermore, the data reveals that the choice of "regret" as an IFID was not merely a default option but appeared to be a deliberate strategy to navigate complex social dynamics. This could be indicative of a cultural norm or expectation that places a high value on expressing remorse as a form of deference, especially when the social stakes are high. It's also worth noting that the use of "regret" was not just limited to verbal apologies but was often accompanied by other linguistic and non-linguistic cues, such as tone of voice and body language, further emphasizing its importance as a multifaceted communicative strategy. Similarly, the prominence of "regret" in our findings also raises questions about the role of language instruction and exposure in shaping these patterns. Are Moroccan EFL learners being explicitly taught to use "regret" in apology situations, or is this a strategy they have picked up through exposure to real-world English interactions, either in person or through media? These questions point to the need for further research to understand the underlying factors that influence the choice of apology strategies among Moroccan EFL learners.

The divergence between our findings and Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory is particularly noteworthy and warrants further discussion. According to Brown and Levinson, the speaker should be keenly aware of three primary contextual factors—distance, power, and imposition—when performing face-threatening acts such as requests or apologies. These factors are considered universal and are expected to influence the choice of linguistic strategies across different cultures and languages. However, our study presents a more nuanced picture that challenges the universality of this theory, at least in the context of Moroccan EFL learners.

Relying on the data observed, it was noticed that Moroccan EFL learners did not strictly adhere to Brown and Levinson's framework. For instance, while the theory would predict a greater use of indirect strategies in situations involving higher power distance or greater imposition, our participants often opted for "Implicit Performatives" even in scenarios where power imbalances were not overtly present. This suggests that the learners are not merely following a universal set of politeness norms but are instead adapting their language use based on a more complex set of sociolinguistic variables, possibly influenced by their cultural background. Moreover, the theory posits that the speaker should adjust their language based on the degree of 'face-threatening' potential of the act, which is calculated by considering the three aforementioned factors. However, our participants demonstrated a more flexible approach. For example, in the realm of apologies, the frequent use of Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs) like "regret" was not strictly correlated with the level of imposition or power distance, as would be expected according to Brown and Levinson's model. Instead, the choice seemed to be influenced by a broader range of factors, including the perceived severity of the offense and the relationship between the interlocutors.

This divergence from Brown and Levinson's theory could be interpreted in several ways. One possibility is that Moroccan EFL learners possess a unique set of sociopragmatic competencies that are not adequately captured by existing theories. Alternatively, it could suggest that the theory itself may need to be revised or expanded to account for the specificities of different linguistic and cultural contexts. Either way, the discrepancy between our findings and the predictions of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory raises important questions about the universality of sociolinguistic norms and provides fertile ground for future research.

The study's findings have several pedagogical implications. Understanding the influence of sociolinguistic variables can help educators tailor their instruction to better prepare learners for real-world interactions. For instance, the absence of certain strategies, such as "Obligation" in request strategies, could be indicative of cultural norms that discourage overtly direct or commanding forms of requests. This could be integrated into EFL curricula to help learners navigate both the linguistic and cultural aspects of English communication more effectively.

These findings, taken together, paint a picture of Moroccan EFL learners as active agents in their linguistic interactions, adapting their language use according to a complex interplay of social and cultural variables. This nuanced understanding challenges simplistic or universalist theories of language use and politeness, suggesting instead that the pragmatics of language are deeply rooted in specific cultural contexts (Levinson's (1987)). As Tannen (1994) argues, the complexity of language use cannot be fully understood without considering the cultural and social variables that influence it. Therefore, future research and pedagogical approaches in this area would benefit from taking these cultural specificities into account.

5. Conclusion

From this study, it can be concluded that Moroccan EFL learners exhibit a nuanced understanding of sociolinguistic variables, particularly in the areas of compliment responses, requests, and apologies. The findings suggest that these learners are culturally predisposed to express gratitude and are sensitive to power dynamics and relational distance. However, there is a noticeable

absence of certain request strategies like "Obligation" and "Suggestions," which could be indicative of cultural norms that discourage overtly direct forms of requests.

In comparison to existing literature, our study reveals that Moroccan EFL learners are not merely passive recipients of linguistic norms but actively adapt their linguistic choices based on the social and relational context. This divergence from established theories opens new avenues for research that are specifically tailored to the Moroccan context. It raises questions about the applicability of Western-centric theories of politeness and pragmatics to diverse linguistic and cultural settings. It also suggests the need for more localized studies that take into account the unique sociocultural factors that influence language use among Moroccan EFL learners. Such research could yield insights that are not only academically enriching but also pedagogically useful, helping educators to develop curricula that are more aligned with the actual linguistic behaviors and needs of their students.

Given the findings, this paper proposes that EFL instruction in Morocco should be sensitive to the sociolinguistic variables that influence linguistic choices. Curricula should be developed to help learners navigate both the linguistic and cultural aspects of English communication more effectively. This is particularly crucial given the absence of certain strategies and the overwhelming preference for others, which could serve as a starting point for future research aimed at understanding the cultural underpinnings of these choices.

The present study has several limitations that should be addressed in future research. While the study offers valuable insights into the sociolinguistic variables affecting Moroccan EFL learners, it does not explore the pedagogical aspects of EFL instruction in Morocco, such as the quality and availability of pragmatic input in classroom settings, an area emphasized by Schmidt (1995). Additionally, the study's focus is limited to specific sociolinguistic variables like power dynamics and relational distance, leaving out other potentially influential factors such as age and gender, which have been explored in studies like Tannen's (1994). The geographical scope of the study is also confined to a particular region in Morocco, raising questions about the generalizability of the findings. Lastly, the reliance on self-reported data and simulated scenarios may not fully capture the complexities of real-world interactions, suggesting the need for more ecologically valid research methods like naturalistic observations or longitudinal studies in future work.

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