

INTERNAL MODIFICATION IN REQUESTING USED BY EFL LEARNERS

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Speech acts realization of request is distinct for it leaves benefit to the requester but loss to the requestee. Thus, politeness is a primary issue in requesting. Therefore, internal modification can be used to soften the impact of the request. This paper looks into the internal modification used by EFL learners compared to the native speakers. Discourse Completion Tasks (DCT) is used to obtain the data. Then, the internal modification strategy is analyzed based on Trosborg's strategy of request (Trosborg, 1994). The research reveals the variety of the internal modification used by EFL learners are still limited compared to the native speakers. In this case, some factors are proved to determine the performance of the strategy being used such as proficiency and direct contact with native speakers as well as immersion in the English exposure, e.g length of stay in English speaking country.

Key word : *Internal Modification, Requesting, EFL Learners*

Introduction

Speech Acts have been broadly studied since first time introduced by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). The idea is, in communication, people do not always mean what they say or in the other words, there can be some ways to express one meaning. Austin in Thomas (1995: 51) defines the term 'speech act' as an 'utterance and the total situation in which the utterance is issued'. Searle (1997: 16) hypothesizes that speaking a language is engaging in a rule-governed form of behavior. Thus, Searle (*ibid*: 16) argues that concentrating on speech act simply because all linguistic communication involves linguistic acts. Further, Searle (*ibid*: 16) comes to a conclusion that speech acts are the basic minimal unit of linguistic communication. Speech act theory by Austin, 1962 (in Thomas, *ibid*: 49)

acknowledges three acts of utterances, i.e. 'locution' as the actual words uttered, 'illocution', as the force or intention behind the words and 'perlocution' as the effect of illocution on the hearer.

Recent studies in speech acts have mainly focused on some acts, one of which is request. Request is considered interesting due to fact that the desired act leaves the benefit to the requester. Therefore, a requester should be very careful in applying the request strategies as politeness is also an indispensable issue. Therefore, in addition to the strategies, native speakers of English tend to use internal modification in order to reduce the force. For instance, instead of saying 'Can you help me?', one may say 'Could you help me, please?'. In this case, past tense of the modality and politeness marker *please* is preferred.

This paper is claimed as a sub-discussion of the writer's masters thesis entitled *Pragmatic Transfer of Sasak Language Request: The Case of Menak 'Nobles' and Non Menak 'Commoners' Sasak*. The focused discussion of this paper aims to reveal the internal modification used by EFL learners when performing speech acts of request.

Review of Related Literature

A. Request as Speech Acts

A request is an illocutionary act whereby a speaker (requester) conveys to a hearer (requestee) that the requester wants the requestee to perform an act which is for the benefit of the speaker. (Trosborg, 1994: 187). In this regard, Edmonson – House in Trosborg (*ibid*) claims that the desired act is to take place postutterance, either in the immediate future (“request now”) or at some later stage (“request then”). Therefore, Trosborg (*ibid*) infers that the speech act of a request can be categorized as *pre-event*, in the opposite of, for instance, complaints, which are *post-event*.

According to Trosborg (1994: 187 – 188) request may be seen as some particular acts. They are:

1. The request as an impositive act
When the requester intends somebody to do a favor for him/her, this is generally at the cost of the requestee. Impositive acts have been defined as follows by Haverkate:

Impositive speech acts are described as speech acts performed by the speaker to influence the intentional behavior of the hearer in order to get the latter to perform, primarily for the benefit of the speaker, the action directly specified or

indirectly suggested by the proposition'. (Haverkate in Trosborg, *ibid*: 188)

The degree with which the requester intrudes on the requestee, referred as degree of imposition, may vary from small favours to demanding acts. *Ibid*: 188

2. The request as face-threatening act, the request is per definition a face threatening act

“As an impositive act (FTA), the speaker who makes a request attempts to

exercise power or direct control over the intentional behavior of the hearer,

and in doing so threatens the requestee's negative face (his/her wants to be

unimpeded) by indicating that he/she does not intend to refrain from impeding the requestee's freedom action. The requester also runs the risk of

losing face him/herself, as the requestee may choose to refuse to comply with

his/her wishes”.

(Trosborg, *ibid* : 188)

3. The request as distinguished from other impositive speech act

What makes request different from other impositive acts, according to Trosborg (*ibid*: 188 – 189) is the idea that the act to be performed is solely in the interest of the speaker and the cost of the hearer. Meanwhile, a suggestion is defined as being beneficial to both speaker and hearer. If the act is for the sake of the hearer, it is an example of giving advice or instruction, or a warning. Further, Trosborg (*ibid*) suggests that in a threat, the speaker indicates that

he/she (or someone else) will instigate sanctions against the hearer unless he/she complies with the speaker's wishes.

Below are the examples of some impositive acts:

(1) Would you mind cutting the grass. (request)

(2) Wouldn't it be an idea to cut the grass. (suggestion)

(3) I think you'd better cut the grass (before it gets too long). (advice)

(4) If you don't cut the grass it'll get too long. (warning)

(5) If you don't cut the grass you won't get your pocket money. (threat).

(*ibid*: 189)

However, the speaker may pretend that the proposed act is for the 'common good' (or in the interest of the hearer) the speaker may try to reduce the degree of imposition. In this case, the speaker can use strategic devices of presenting his/her own interest as being in the interest of both parties (or for the benefit of the hearer). In the opposite, a speaker may deliver his/her advice, warning, etc., as a request. Thus, Trosborg (*ibid*: 189) comes to a conclusion that in the present study, the speech act request which constitutes acts with the illocutionary point of "getting somebody to do something" which is "primarily to the benefit of the speaker" may range in illocutionary force from ordering to begging. (*ibid*: 189).

B. Request Strategies

Politeness has been an issue in performing requests. In relation with this, request strategies accommodate politeness as its primary parameter. In this case, Blum Kulka, House and Kasper in Kasper (2006), propose

three dimensions of request strategies, they are as follows:

1. Directness strategy which refer to 'the degree to which requestive meaning is in the form of the utterance'. This strategy applies grammatical mood or performative verb to syntactically format the requests. Some formulatic frames are usually applied in order to conventionalize the requestive meaning. For instance, the use of modal verbs that refer to the requestee ability or willingness (can/could you, will/ would you), or expression of requester's desire (I want/I'd like you to) and thereby index felicity conditions for requests (Searle in *Kasper*, *ibid*). 'Finally, non conventionally indirect requests do not incorporate formal illocutionary force indicating materials. Instead, requestive force is recoverable through contextual cues and inferencing heuristics.

2. Internal modification, a strategy referring to 'lexical and syntactical material by which the force of a request can be intensifies or mitigated, for instance through modal adverbs and particles or specialized politeness markers such as *please*'.

3. External modification refers to 'actions leading up to or following a request. They may announce an upcoming request, establish preconditions, justify the request, minimize the cost to the requestee, or maximize the benefits to the requester'.

C. Internal Modification

As politeness is an indispensable issue in requests, the above strategies can be modified in order to soften or increase the impact a strategy is likely to have on the requestee (Trosborg,

ibid: 209). In this case, the term ‘modality markers’ is the devices which may be used (House – Kasper in Trosborg, *ibid*: 209). According to Trosborg (*ibid*: 209), there are two types of modality markers which against each other. The first one is *downgraders*, markers that tone down the impact an utterance is likely to have on the hearer. The other one is known as *upgraders*, markers which increase the impact. The detail types of internal modification are revealed below.

a. Syntactic downgraders

Syntactic devices can be used to increase politeness in requests. Trosborg (*ibid*: 210) asserts that ‘a shift away from the deictic center of the speaker increases the politeness of the request by downtoning the expectations as to the fulfillment of the request’. Thus, the requester may not lose face easily if receiving a rejection and at the same time, this will ease the requestee to refuse the request. Trosborg (*ibid*: 2010).

Below are some syntactic *downgraders*.

1. Question: A question is often more polite than a statement. Compare
(97) Can/will you do the cooking tonight?
(98) You can/will hand me the paper

As Brown and Levinson (1990: 146) suggest that asking someone to do something leads to the assumption that he/she can and is willing to do it or has not already done it. Thus, Trosborg (*ibid*: 210) argues that to question the assumptions may be done through avoiding commitment to them in which in this regard, questioning is a fundamental disarming device. In the opposite, statements of willingness and ability present the request as not to be compromised.

2. Past tense/negation: The inclusion of past tense and/or negation further downtones the expectations to the fulfillment of the request:

(99) Could you hand me the paper, please

(100) Can't you hand me the paper?

(101) Couldn't you hand me the paper, please?

(*ibid*: 210)

3. Conditional clause: The requester can distance his/her request further from reality by adding a conditional clause, e.g.

(102). I would like to borrow some of your records if you don't mind lending me them.

4. Tag question : The requester can appeal to the hearer's consent by adding a tag question to a (fairly) direct request, thereby softening the impact considerably, e.g.

(103) Hand me the paper, will you?

(104) Answer the phone, won't you?

(*ibid*: 210 - 211)

5. Embedding: The requester can preface his/her request with a clause in which the request is embedded (hence “embedding clause”) conveying his/her attitude to the request, e.g. by expressing tentativeness, expressing hope, delight, thanks, etc., thereby adding an element of enthusiasm to the request. The embedding often occurs in connection with a conditional clause, e.g.

a. Tentative:

(107) I wonder if you would be able to give me a hand.

b. Appreciative

(108) I hope you'll be able to give me a hand.

c. Subjective: A request can be presented as the requester's personal opinion, belief, etc. Characteristics phrases are I think/believe/imagine, I'm afraid, in my opinion, as far as I know, etc.

(111) I thought that maybe you wouldn't mind to give me a hand.

(*ibid*: 211)

6. Ing-form: By selecting the continuous aspect, instead of the simple present/past tense, the requester emphasizes the meaning expressed by the embedding clause, e.g.

(113) I *was wondering* if you would give me a hand.

(*ibid*: 2011)

7. Modals: A modal verb can be used to convey tentativeness, e.g.

(115) I thought that you might let me have one of your lovely decorations.

(*ibid*: 212).

b. Lexical/phrasal *downgraders*

1. Politeness marker: A signal of politeness can be created by adding, for instance, the marker *please*.

(117) Hand me the paper, please.

2. Consultative device: Consulting the hearer is another way of asking for the hearer's consent. Ritualized formulae of the kind *Would you mind*, as well as other expression can be used, e.g.

(121) Do you think you could have the manuscript ready by tomorrow?

(*ibid*: 212)

3. Downtoner: A number of modal sentence adverbials and modal particle can be used to downtone the impositive force of the request. Typical modifiers are *just*, *simply*, *perhaps*, *possibly*, *rather*, etc. e.g.

(123) *Just* give me a ring, will you?

(*ibid*: 212).

4. Understatement: A way of decreasing the imposition forced on the hearer is to understate or in some way minimize some aspects of the desired act. If the requester asks for very little or for something that is unlikely to be of great cost to the interlocutor, the degree of imposition

is decreased and the impact of the requestee has been played down, e.g.

(130) Would you wait just a second?

(*ibid*: 213)

5. Hedge: By hedging the prepositional content the requester can be intentionally vague about certain aspects of the act to be carried out, thereby giving the requestee the opinion of specifying him/herself. Adverbials like *kind of*, *sort of*, *somehow*, and *so on*, *more or less*, etc. are typical:

(133) Could you kind of put it off for a while?

(*ibid*: 213)

6. Hesitator: By hesitating before uttering a request the requestor can convey to the requestee that he/she has certain qualms about asking him/her about the matter.

(136) I er, erm, er – I wonder if you'd er ...

(*ibid*: 213).

7. Interpersonal marker: Some expressions have as their sole function the role of establishing and maintaining a good and amiable interpersonal relationship. Phrases such as *you know*, *you see*, *I mean*, etc referred to as *cajolers*, help to attract the hearer's attention; *interest*, *understanding*, etc. and by using *appealers*, such as *right?*, *okay?* etc., the requester can appeal directly to the hearer's consent, e.g.

(137) You wouldn't mind helping me, *I mean*, would you?

(*ibid*: 214).

c. *Upgraders*

Upgraders have the opposite function compared with the downgraders. If downgraders are used to tone down the impact an utterance has on the hearer, the upgraders increase such impact on the hearer. Typical are adverbial intensifiers modifying part

of an utterance, do constructions, sentence modifiers, and lexical intensification.

1. Adverbial intensifier: Some typical intensifier are: such, so, very, quite, really, etc., terribly, awfully, frightfully, absolutely, etc.

(140) You really must come and see me.

(*ibid*: 214)

2. Commitment upgraders: The requester can add a sentence modifier that increases his/her commitment towards the proposition. e.g. I'm sure, I'm certain, I'm positive, it's obvious, surely, certainly, positively, obviously, unfortunately, etc.

(145) You surely wouldn't mind helping me.

(*ibid*: 215)

3. Lexical intensification: The requester's choice of lexical items reveals his/her attitude. He/she can be positive/negative, and in extreme cases swear words may be used. e.g.

(147) You'd be such darling if you helped me just this once.

(*ibid*: 215).

Upgraders can make the request realization more/less polite according to which elements are upgraded. In (141) and (146) the upgraders add the politeness of the request because the requester expresses positive attitude. Conversely, in (142), (145), (148), and (149), the imposition forced on the requestee increases: thus politeness decreases (*ibid*: 215).

Method

Subjects

There were fifteen subjects involved in this study. They were purposively selected based on certain criteria in accordance with the research questions of the original thesis. Thus,

the subjects. The subject of the study is EFL learners who all Sasaknese along with native speakers. As the data is taken through purposive samplings, the subjects are as follow:

1. Menak 'noble' Sasak with high English proficiency.

2. Menak 'noble' Saak with medium English proficiency.

3. Menak 'noble' who are studying abroad.

4. Non – menak 'non – noble' who are studying abroad.

5. Non – menak 'non – noble' with high English proficiency.

6. Non – menak 'non – noble' with medium proficiency.

7. Native speakers.

In this regards, proficiency was measured from TOEFL score and GPA.

Investigative Instruments

Two instruments were used namely background survey and Discourse Completion Tasks (DCT). Background survey was aimed to investigate the first language and proficiency level of the subjects. Meanwhile DCT as an instrument commonly used for speech acts realizations was defined by Kasper and Dahl (1991) as written questionnaires which include a number of brief situational descriptions followed by a short dialogue with an empty slot for the speech act under study. Subjects were asked to fill in a response that they think fits into the given context in order to identify the internal modification preferred to use.

Finding and Discussion

The kinds of internal modifications found in the data are as follows:

A. Menak

1. Lexical/Phrasal downgraders (Politeness marker)
2. Lexical/Phrasal downgraders (consultative device)

B. Non menak

1. Lexical/Phrasal downgraders (Politeness marker)
2. Downgraders (Past tense)

C. Abroad

1. Downgraders (Past tense)
2. Lexical/Phrase downgraders (consultative device)
3. Syntactic downgraders (ing form)

D. Native

1. Lexical/Phrasal (Consultative device)
2. Lexical/Phrasal downgraders (Politeness marker)
3. Embedding (Appreciative)
4. Downgraders (conditional clause)
5. Understatement

According to Trosborg (1994), politeness is an indispensable issue in requesting. So, politeness also strongly determines whether the request may be won or not. In conjunction with this, internal modification can be used in order to soften or increase the impact of the request strategy being used. Even though there are two types of internal modification which can be used, the data reveal that all of the subjects prefer to use downgraders to upgraders. Thus, we can assume that all of them try to make their requests strategy sounds softer and politer. Nevertheless, the types of downgraders used are very limited, particularly for the EFL

learners who are the local students. The tables below show downgraders found in everygroup.

Downgraders used in all groups

Downgraders	Menak 'Nobles'	Non Menak 'Commoners'	Abroad	Native Speakers	Total
Lexical/Phrasal downgraders (Politeness marker)	3	4	4	1	12
Lexical/Phrasal downgraders (consultative device)	2	0	3	8	13
Downgraders (Past tense)	X	7	8	X	15
Syntactic downgraders (ing form)	X	X	2	X	2
Embedding (Appreciative)	X	X	X	1	1

Down graders (conditional clause)	X	X	X	1	1
Under statement	X	X	X	1	1

Table 1. Downgraders used in all groups

The table above gives a description of the use of the internal modification strategy performed by all groups of subjects. From this table, we could see that lexical phrasal downgraders namely politeness marker is used by all groups of subjects.

According to Trosborg (1994), politeness marker function to increase the sense of politeness within the request. However, Trosborg (1994) does not talk a lot about the placement of the politeness marker 'please' and the impact to the request. Based on the data, however, it can be identified that there are three placement of politeness marker 'please' in the request. They are in the beginning, middle, and the end of the request.

Below is the explanation for each.

a. In the beginning

The data reveals that politeness marker 'please' is used by EFL learners who are local student and one native speaker. Below are some situations providing the use of 'please' in the beginning of the request.

Situation 3

Bq. H : hi mate, *please* turn off the music, you may on it again after I finish my assignment

This subject does starts her utterances with greeting 'hi mate', but the strategy she uses is considered as placing 'please' in the beginning of the request because she places right before the imperative 'turn'. Another similar case happens with the following subject under the same condition.

A A: *Please*, could you turn low the music. I'm concentrating on my assignment

This subject directly places 'please' in the beginning of his request. Another direct first placement of 'please' is also performed by one of the native speaker under the following situation.

Situation 4

KC: *Please!* If you share your sweets with me, I'll give you one of my chocolates

Comparing the placement of 'please' which is in the beginning of the request from the two situations above, we can actually analyze the similarity between the two. In situation 3, the subjects are asked to performed a request when dealing with annoying condition caused by a stranger. So here, the challenge is clear namely how to keep sounding polite even when the situation is very inconvenient for the requester. As it has been discussed previously that using 'please' as a lexical/phrasal downgraders is also a politeness strategy in requesting. However, in the case of situation 3, it can be

noticed that the request is still low in politeness. The placement of ‘please’ in the beginning by both subjects does not significantly soften the request. Subject Bq. H uses ‘please’ to accompany her direct request to the requestee by even adding a condition in which the requestee may turn on the music again. This request is still considered as too direct and inappropriate because it sounds as if the requester had an authority control towards the requestee. In fact, the requester and requestee have equal positions and the communication taking place also conveys the issue of social distance in which in this case, the relationship between the two is as strangers. So, the use of politeness marker ‘please’ in this request does not impact the politeness quality of the request itself.

Meanwhile, subject AA combines politeness marker ‘please’ with Hearer oriented conditionability ‘could’ in order to sound more polite. Nevertheless, the use of ‘please’ in the very beginning and followed by comma may be interpreted in the opposite way. Comma indicated a temporary pause with long and low intonation. In this sample, comma is used to separate the hearer oriented condition strategy from the politeness marker. As the consequence, ‘please’ sounds like complaining which is wrapped in the form of begging. In this case, the requester clearly sounds annoyed then she decides to start with ‘please’ then followed by requesting to turn low the music. On the other hand, the native speaker subject K C, uses politeness marker ‘please’ in the beginning of the request followed by exclamation mark. As it is understood, this mark indicates high tone. Because this is a part of situation 4 which is the reply

after the request has been rejected, the use of ‘please’ in this request may be interpreted as begging to win the rejected request. From the three samples available for the placement of politeness marker ‘please’, it can be inferred that the three subjects used ‘please’ in the beginning of the request when are faced with an inconvenient situation. The first two subjects are confronted with an annoying stranger and the native speaker in situation 4 should deal with a rejection from her very young little sister.

b. In the middle

The use of politeness marker ‘please’ in the middle of the request strategy is performed by a noble sasak EFL learners who is now studying in Turkey. Below is the data.

Situation 1.b (to a father)

L. F Y N: Dad, I run out of money. Could you *please* give me some more?

Situation 3

L. F Y N: Excuse me. I am so sorry for bothering you this late of night but I am now studying for tomorrow’s exam, could you *please* lower down your music volume?

From these samples, it can be identified that ‘please’ is inserted as a part of the ‘ability’ hearer oriented condition. Placing politeness marker ‘please’ in such away results in smoothening the request and also has successfully function to add the element of politeness in the request. This placement of ‘please’ is considerably different from placing it

in the beginning. Here, such as situation 3, the requester does not pause when uttering 'please' so the message of complaining is faded.

c. In the end

Most subjects use politeness marker 'please' in the end of the request. To some extent, this placement may be considered as conveying positive impression or politeness. Below are some descriptions.

Situation 3 (to a stranger)

A F : Excuse me brother, could you turn low it *please*.

Despite its imperfectness in using pronoun 'it' without any clear literal referent, this request is still may be claimed as polite. The placement of 'please' in the end of the request usually has long and down tone. So, there is no pause when uttering the request strategy and this results in smoothening the sense of complaining within the request. Another better request under the same situation is performed by a subject who is studying in US.

I M : I am sorry, but the music is a bit too loud and am trying to study. Would you mind turning it down *please*? Thank you.

Meanwhile, this order of placement is also used by some subjects under situation 4. Below are the samples.

Situation 4 (to a sister)

L. A R S: Sis.. Give me a little candies *please* ..!!

This subject does use double exclamation marks but the impact to the request is not rude. In this context, it can be interpreted as excessively begging for the request to be granted. So, in this situation, 'please' still function as politeness marker to reduce the imperative impression performed by the elder brother because he sounds like begging so the right to comply or reject the request is totally belongs to the little sister.

The other appearing data from the table which we can notice is the use of 'consultative device' as the lexical/phrasal downgraders request strategy. It is only the non menak 'commoners' EFL learners group who does not use this internal modification.

Conversely, consultative device seems to be the most used strategy performed by native speaker subjects. Yet, the other two groups; menak and all subjects who are now studying abroad apply this strategy into their requests.

There are indeed some differences of how each group apply consultative device into their requests. In menak, two subjects use this strategy as follows:

Situation 1.a (to a Professor)

L. A R S : *Do you mind* if I borrow that book sir?

In this sample, the requester does use consultative device in his request. However, instead of using 'would', he prefers to use 'Do'. As it is understood, 'would' is considered politer than auxiliary 'Do' in this context. Thus, the use of 'Do' in this request has very strong impression to the requestee, it is whether the requestee feels mind or not. In addition, this request also ignores the

concept of ‘who talk to whom’, in which in this case, the request is a senior Professor.

Meanwhile, the other menak subject uses consultative device as follows:

L. I K: Excuse me brother/
sister, *would you mind*
to lower the music??
I’m concentrating on
making my assignment

In this sample, we could see the opposite thing from the previous case occurs. The subject prefers to use ‘would’ instead of ‘Do’. So, this request sounds politer and softer to the requestee. Nevertheless, this subject fails in the level of structure. He uses ‘lower’ as the verb where it is actually a comparative degree form for the adjective ‘low. Consultative device is also used by all three subjects from the group of those who are studying abroad. Each uses this internal modification under different situation.

Situation 1.a (to a Professor)

L. F Y N: Prof, I tried my
best to find the book
which I want to use
as reference for
paper you handed us.
The librarian told me
that the only person
in Lombok who own
the book is only you.
Would you be mind if
I borrow the book
from you?

This subject has preceded her use of consultative device with long hints, similar to what native speakers do. Hence, the request is considered as smooth and indirect. However, she

slips in applying the consultative device itself. By inserting ‘be’ before ‘mind’ has proven this structural error. As it is known that ‘mind’ in this context is a verb, not a noun, so ‘be’ is not needed. Unfortunately, this small error may cause significant impact to the quality of politeness to the requestee. It is due to, when ‘be’ is combined with ‘mind’, the phrase ‘be mind’ will be very strong. Thus, the message interpreted by the requestee is similar with the case of using ‘Do’ in the previous discussion. It leaves the question to the requestee of whether the requestee who is a senior Professor feels mind or not to lend the book.

Situation 2 (to a friend)

M J H: *Is it okay* for you to
lend me your lecture note?

This subject does not accompany his use of consultative device with hints or reasoning. However, the form of consultative device he uses still convey the issue of the impact of complying the request to the requestee. As it has been described that in situation 2, the requestee has a strong reason to reject the request because he also needs the book for the quiz. By asking ‘Is it okay..’ as the consultative device, it is understood that the requester has alarmed himself that this request is to some extent, hard to comply.

Situation 3 (to a stranger)

I M : I am sorry, but the music
is a bit too loud and am
trying to study. *Would
you mind* turning it
down please? Thank
you.

This subject has used highly appropriate request strategy. She begins her request with ‘disarmer’ before using the consultative device. The use of consultative device itself is structurally accurate. In addition, she ends her request by saying ‘Thank you’ in order to appreciate is her request is complied. Meanwhile, the native speakers do not seem to use consultative device so plainly. This means, they use consultative device accompanying with other strategies such as hints, disarmer, and reasoning. So here, it can be inferred that literary mentioning the situation is crucial in order to win the request.

The next internal modification found in the data is downgraders ‘past tense’. There are only two modality markers being applied this modification. They are the changing from ‘can’ to ‘could’ and ‘will’ to ‘would’. From the two, ‘could’ is dominantly used. Syntactic downgraders of ing-form seems to be used only by one subject who is studying in USA. She uses it under situation 1.a and 2. The interesting thing about this is, she uses exactly the same strategy in requesting to a Professor and her classmate. Other subjects from the other groups do not use this strategy. Meanwhile, native speakers obviously use more elaborated internal modification strategy.

Conclusion

From the discussion, it can be inferred that in speech act realization of request, politeness is an inseparable issue. In this regards,

internal modification functions to accommodate politeness in order to win the request, as basically, request give loss to the requestee but benefit to the requester. This research also reveals that internal modification which is preferred most is downgraders. In other words, the subjects avoid to use ungraders. This is due to, downgraders are considered more appropriate in terms of politeness because the idea is to reduce the impact of the request to the requestee.

However, the variety of the downgraders used by EFL learners is still considered limited compared to native speakers. Among the types of the downgraders, the mostly used by the EFL learners are politeness marker ‘please’. This is due to its simplicity when applied in sentences or utterances. In the opposite, consultative device is preferred by native speakers. Meanwhile, it seems that EFL learners still find difficulty in applying this internal modification due to consultative device requires more complex construction and convey cultural issue which also appears as the barrier. Therefore, in addition to the proficiency level, it is clear that sociopragmatic competence plays crucial role in the appropriateness of the strategy used. For instance, only EFL learners who are international students can use this strategy appropriately. This indicates the direct contact with native speakers and culture contributes a lot to their performance.

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