

Contemporary Research in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning

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Edited by

Dana Di Pardo Léon-Henri
and Bhawana Jain

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—Dana Di Pardo Léon-Henri and Bhawana Jain

INTRODUCTION

DANA DI PARDO LÉON-HENRI¹
AND BHAWANA JAIN²

Worldwide societies have been profoundly changed both on a personal and professional level since the integration and extensive use of new technologies from computers to smartphones and artificial intelligence. The globalization of commerce and an increase in personal mobility have additionally had a vast impact on the evolution of the professional skills required in this 21st-century society. Internationally, these trends have all had widespread influence on our educational systems (Barack et al., 2014). For all of the aforementioned reasons, the requirements and demands of Higher Education (HE) institutions have also been transformed (UNESCO, 2009) and updated right across the globe (Fantini et al., 2001). This has led to a more competitive job market, placing new demands on job seekers at the onset of their professional careers. According to Klaus Schwab (2016), Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum, we are on the brink of a technological revolution that has already begun to fundamentally alter the way we live, work, and relate to one another. As universities struggle to adapt to these swift changes, some have chosen to internationalize their courses as they strive to provide programmes that enhance the skills of their students. The overall objective is to better prepare students for their careers and the arduous demands of the professional world.

It is in this context that many language departments are gaining significant attention within the universities due to their strategic and advantageous positioning between different disciplines. Structurally transdisciplinary, language departments traditionally attract mobile teachers or language instructors of differing and varied educational backgrounds, cultures and languages. Moreover, the contexts (disciplines, levels, specialities, etc.) in which its faculty work are extremely varied,

¹ danaleonhenri@gmail.com; <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6196-6173>.

² jain_bhawana@yahoo.com

creating both new opportunities as well as many new obstacles. As a result of this multiformity and diversification, there is an on-going need for language practitioners to adapt to absolute and variable characteristics whilst redefining course objectives and didactic approaches (Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998: 4–5, 13). By exploring modern pedagogical issues and opportunities pertaining to language teaching in the HE context, decision makers and language educators alike stand to gain through the sharing of knowledge, experience and practice in the classroom. This exchange of information and data based on research activities, for instance, will ultimately benefit the students to better equip them for their professional futures.

In terms of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and, more generally, Language for Specific Purposes (LSP), this volume seeks to respond to the need for additional research and the sharing of pedagogical practices in the areas of both ESP and LSP, since many language educators in these contexts are insufficiently prepared for the reality and challenges they may face in the classroom. The idea for this book originated during the one-day symposium held at the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne on December 13, 2018, entitled “Teaching / Learning of specialized, professional or general language: What needs, objectives and approaches?” The main objective of this conference was to promote an exchange of rich and constructive teaching experiences among experienced and novice language teachers while engaging in exchanges and reflections based on language pedagogy and didactics. A large majority of the articles in this collection are adapted from the presentations given during that event.

A collaborative endeavour, this edited volume presents a collection of academic papers and discussions on specific issues centred around three broad areas of scholarly interest: the needs and challenges associated with foreign language pedagogy, the acquisition and teaching of language for special, professional or general purposes and the implementation of technology, as well as innovative approaches to language teaching that simultaneously span and integrate several disciplines. It provides an international panorama of the array of vantage points from which language and pedagogy can be studied and perceived. The unifying principle behind the variety of issues and approaches illustrated here is the notion of language acquisition as an object of intellectual inquiry (with a focus on language for specialized, professional or general purposes) acting as a repository of transversal methods that are pertinent in the exploration of other languages. Simply stated, the aim of this edited collection is to advance and further explore ESP and LSP research through the sharing of

relevant theoretical foundations, pedagogical practices, teaching methodologies, and classroom experience.

As a comprehensive methodology resource, this collection provides both prospective and experienced foreign language teachers with the theoretical background and practical applications they need to make informed decisions regarding which approaches, materials and resources can or should be considered for implementation in their classrooms. The authors of the scholarship included in this volume are academics and researchers who convened to share their ideas and pave the way for further work in intersecting research areas subsumed under language, plurilingual pedagogies and intercultural studies. While focusing on learner needs, *Contemporary Research in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning* presents innovative methodologies with regard to language and teaching skills, as well as integrated approaches that can benefit and promote teacher reflection and development in terms of language pedagogy.

Classified into four units, the chapters in this volume address relevant issues and challenges that have been observed by active researchers and language practitioners in the extensive field of LSP. Each of the chapters addresses current issues and future implications for additional research into foreign language teaching. The international nature of the scholars and practitioners included in this volume offers a variety of perspectives on foreign language teaching and learning in global contexts. Consisting of a main introduction and introductions for each of the four sections into which the eleven chapters are grouped, as well as short biographies for each of the authors in this collection, this volume provides classroom activities and research methods that can be adapted to and adopted in various contexts and proposes future directions for research into the growing concerns of global scholars. Finally, we hope that this volume makes a modest but valuable contribution to the field of language didactics since it sheds light on the global diversity of innovative learning and teaching practices that combine differing theoretical and empirical approaches whilst analyzing the current needs and challenges associated with contemporary language learning.

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PART I

LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY: LEARNER NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

In an era of rapidly changing and competitive job markets that have been transformed by swift advances in technology, recent graduate students or recruits are required to possess the latest professional skills whilst keeping pace with evolving job market demands. It is thus essential for HE language instructors to identify these needs in order to develop or enhance these skills, as well as encourage those students who may lack certain competences. Assessing student needs and hence assuming a more personalized approach to language instruction can serve as an essential tool in the teaching and learning of LSP. In this way, curriculum design and pedagogy may be better suited to those professional requirements.

Hutchinson and Waters define the notion of needs in terms of “necessities, lacks and wants” (1987: 55). Brown (1995) states that these needs must be considered when practitioners are considering the goals and objectives of their language courses. The same concept applies when reflecting on developing teaching activities, tasks, projects, tests, evaluations and exams. From differing perspectives, the three chapters in this first section will focus on language pedagogy in terms of learner needs and challenges.

In Chapter One, entitled “Formulating requests in academic emails: Needs and challenges”, **Imen Aribi** addresses the significance and importance of “target situation analysis” in order to identify the communicative needs of students in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) context. In her study, she gives her perspectives on students’ writing in emails to their teachers. She explains the importance of teaching the various nuances and differences associated with polite and formal email requests that have become an increasingly important and necessary part of students’ academic life. The notion of hierarchical relationships and power asymmetry are also addressed in this chapter, which aims to present a study that analyzed a corpus composed of email requests that were made by forty-two postgraduate level Tunisian students of English

from different universities in Tunisia. Data collected using a discourse completion test (DCT) suggest that the participants are, to some extent, aware that ranking of imposition and social distance have an impact on communication strategies, yet they fail to consider social status when formulating their requests in the email format. The chapter suggests various pedagogical implications and suggestions for the English as a foreign language (EFL) instructor, such as considering the pragmalinguistic nuances associated with the ways in which email requests are written.

Identifying and acknowledging learners' needs can be beneficial and assist practitioners in improving the overall process associated with course content development, which in turn can also enhance student learning (Cohen and Macaro, 2007; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990). In Chapter Two, entitled "Analysis of professional interactions in the context of an artisanal apprenticeship", **Lihua Jin** presents a study that focuses on the learning needs of foreign apprentices in a professional artisanal setting. In this chapter, she proposes a prototype of interactional sequences that could be used as teaching material for the language classroom, both in a professional and traditional context. This prototype is based on a selection of corpora of speaking data between the native master craftsman and the apprentice. This selection of corpora is derived from the professional training interactions encountered during a series of task-based pedagogical methods of instructors and their foreign students for whom French is their second language. In addition, the author suggests some fundamental communicative strategies that are required in this type of workplace environment.

In Chapter Three, entitled "Learning Italian through theatre: Students and migrants on stage", **Antonella Agostino** posits that the production of morphologically correct sentences is not the sole guarantee of language acquisition. In this chapter, she proposes a theatrical project involving innovative didactic techniques in contrast to traditional teaching methods targeting the development of learners' skills, knowledge and confidence. This chapter first imparts the theories that underlie this approach to language teaching, and then the author presents the theatrical project in detail. Finally, she shares the preliminary data results from this study. The results and the feedback obtained, the level of involvement of each learner and the increase in their self-confidence levels appear to confirm the success of this alternative method to foreign language teaching.

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FORMULATING REQUESTS IN ACADEMIC EMAILS: NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

IMEN ARIBI

Abstract

Writing polite and formal email requests has become a necessary part of academic life for students. However, in hierarchical relationships, where the power asymmetry needs to be maintained or respected (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: 2), most students are often unfamiliar with the expectations associated with academic email requests. This is particularly the case with student-teacher email interaction in the context of higher education. This chapter aims to analyze a corpus composed of email requests that were made by forty-two postgraduate level Tunisian students of English from different universities in Tunisia. The data were collected using a discourse completion test (DCT), and the results suggest that the participants are, to some extent, aware that ranking of imposition and social distance have an impact on communication strategies, yet they fail to consider social status when formulating their requests in the email format. Finally, this chapter suggests some pedagogical implications and suggestions for the English as a foreign language (EFL) instructor, such as considering the pragmalinguistic nuances associated with the ways in which email requests are written.

Keywords: directness, discourse completion test, email requests, hierarchy, pragmatics, social distance, social power

1. Introduction

Email language is important to study because it is a relatively recent and unique form of communication, which possesses its own proper forms of etiquette. According to Waldvogel (2007: 2), the email has become the most prominent medium for written communication. Emails facilitate interaction between people wherever they may be. This form of communication has been widely adopted for both personal and institutional communication because of its two-way transmission and high speed (Crystal, 2001). It has received much attention from researchers, who have conducted many studies to closely examine it.

The use of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) is the response to the changing needs and objectives of today's university students. Email is often the medium of choice when communicating with lecturers, professors and colleagues. Klassen and Vogel (2003) report that emails are efficient "to some extent" as a means to facilitate and increase the amount of communication between students and their professors. In fact, many researchers (such as Martin et al., 1999; Collins, 1998; Marbach-Ad and Sokolove, 2001; Payne, 1997; Poling, 1994, cited in Chen, 2006) have investigated the communication purposes for which students use emails with their professors. These researchers have found that many of the reasons involve request speech acts. Some of these request speech acts include: building a relationship; getting information or advice about course materials; negotiating the late work policy; challenging grades; showing an interest in and understanding of course material, and "getting on the instructor's good side" (Chen, 2006). However, as email messages lack paralinguistic cues, which are often present in face to face or synchronous communication, an email sender needs to exercise more caution in constructing appropriate messages, especially in situations involving student-faculty communication, which Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) refers to as a status of high power difference.

As part of a study, Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) investigated how native speakers (NSs) and non-native speakers (NNSs) of English formulate e-requests directed at faculty in order to examine the degrees of directness and indirectness. The focus was placed on three types of email requests, such as a request for an appointment, feedback or a deadline extension. For Biesenbach-Lucas (2007), at least half of both NSs' and NNSs' requests were expressed by adding syntactic politeness features. The students tend to rely more heavily on the use of syntactic rather than lexical modifications to soften the force of their e-requests.

Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) also examined email requests that were sent by Greek Cypriot university students to faculty members over a period of several semesters. The author analyzed the degree of directness, mitigation and forms of address found in the corpus. She reports that students' emails presented a high frequency of direct strategies, an absence of lexical mitigators and inappropriate forms of address. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) also observed that openings and closings were missing in the NNSs' emails. She also reported that such emails were perceived as impolite and thus were capable of causing pragmatic failure, which according to Thomas (1983: 93) signifies "the inability to understand what is meant by what is said".

Though email has become a common interpersonal communication medium, it does not mean that this medium is used without difficulty (Aribi, 2018). While there is a growing feeling that many people indeed live in a web world (Haythornthwaite and Hagar, 2005) and are perhaps becoming digital natives, these technological abilities do not seem to translate to academic emails (Prensky, 2001, 2009). Both NSs and NNSs are often faced with uncertainties regarding the style and politeness strategies to use in email interactions (Crystal, 2001; Barron, 2003; Biesenbach Lucas, 2006), especially in the context of hierarchical relationships, where the power asymmetry needs to be maintained. When NNSs make requests in the target culture, despite their grammatical knowledge of that language, they may transfer their native request strategies into the target language and this may result in the production of inappropriate request forms (Koike, 1989).

Several websites like for example <https://www.managementstudyguide.com/internet-and-email-etiquettes.htm> attempt to provide rules of netiquette (proper internet etiquette) not only for communication strategies, but also for the proper presentation of internet websites or blog posts. With regard to the specific netiquette of emails, the University of South Florida addresses the issue on their website at <https://etc.usf.edu/techease/mac/e-mail/what-is-good-email-netiquette/>. Therefore, recommendations on polite online social behaviour do exist. However, Shim (2013) posits that not all email users observe or respect these guidelines. While people can write informal emails to peers or family members in any manner they like, writing emails to figures of authority in academia requires high pragmatic competence and critical language awareness of how discourse can shape and reflect power asymmetry in an institutional context (Chen, 2006). Email writers' ambivalence and uncertainty about how to encode communicative intent in this text-only medium tend to surface especially in hierarchical relationships

and in situations involving impositions on the addressee, as Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) points out.

According to Byon (2004), the speech act of requesting is composed of two parts: the request head act and the modifiers. Requests include a main utterance (the request head act), which carries the actual meaning of what is said or written. This request head act is the main utterance that functions as a request and can stand alone without any supportive move to convey the request. In many cases, the request head act is either preceded or followed by peripheral elements (the modifiers), such as hedges, boosters, address forms, downgraders, and upgraders (Byon, 2004: 1675).

According to Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), the variations of three variables in communication refer to social power, social distance and ranking of imposition. Social power is associated with the relative power (P) of the hearer over the speaker. For instance, asking a favour from a friend is generally an easier task compared to asking the same favour of a superior. The social distance (D) between the speaker and the addressee, for example, suggests that it is easier to perform a face-threatening act with an acquaintance than with a stranger. And finally, the ranking or degree of imposition (R) of a specific face-threatening act also has an important impact or role to play. For example, giving someone directions to the hospital is not as demanding or time-consuming as giving someone a lift to the hospital. Each specific culture interprets these variables differently, and thus the language may be shaped differently (Holtgraves and Yang, 1990). These three factors also help to determine the type and level of politeness strategies which need to be used. For Brown and Levinson (1987) and Scollon and Scollon (1995), this may include an assessment of the level of “threat of face”, if appropriate. Therefore, as Economidou-Kogetsidis shows (2011), writing status-congruent emails is a skill that requires high pragmatic competence on the part of students.

2. Objectives and method

In this study, a discourse completion test (DCT) was used to elicit data on the use of email request strategies from a group of forty-two postgraduate Tunisian students of English on a Master of Arts (MA) programme, PhD students, or students from differing universities in Tunisia. The participants are proficient in English since they all studied English for at least three years during their Bachelor of Art (BA) programme before enrolling in the postgraduate programme. The study aims to evaluate the participants’ requests according to several different

sociopragmatic factors. The focus of this study and the subsequent data analysis will be centred on the head acts of requests. The modifiers will not be taken into consideration in this chapter.

The DCT presents eight different situations that the respondents may encounter in terms of email communication. Each situation is based on the variation of three variables (social power, social distance and ranking of imposition) proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987). Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) propose a classification for coding the collected email requests, and this method was later modified by Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) and Félix-Brasdefer (2012).

The coding scheme is composed of nine strategy types (based on a scale of directness), which are as follows:

- Mood derivables: utterances in which the grammatical mood of the verb signals illocutionary force (e.g. the imperative);
- Performatives: utterances in which the illocutionary force is explicitly named (e.g. I am asking you to...);
- Want statements: utterances that state the speaker's desire that the hearer carries out the act (e.g. I really want you to..., I'd like to...);
- Need statements: the speaker conveys the illocutionary intent by asserting a particular need (e.g. I need..., I need to know...);
- Direct questions: utterances in which the illocutionary force is expressed through using direct questions;
- Like/appreciate statements: the speaker conveys the illocutionary intent by using like/appreciate statements (e.g. I would appreciate..., I would like...);
- Expectation statements: utterances containing an expectation statement (e.g. I expect..., I hope...);
- Query preparatory: utterances containing reference to preparatory conditions (e.g. ability, willingness) as conventionalized in any specific language (e.g. could you please..., would you...); and
- Hints: utterances whose illocutionary intent is not overtly expressed. Greater inferences are required on the part of the hearer.

3. Data analysis and results

For the purposes of this study, the DCTs are analyzed to evaluate the students' email requests and investigate the impact of social distance, social power and ranking of imposition in their choice of request

strategies. All responses are classified into three categories depicting the relative social power between the interlocutors. They are grouped as follows: higher-ranking to lower-ranking, equal to equal ranking, and lower-ranking to higher-ranking request subjects.

3.1. Email request strategies: lower-ranking to higher-ranking subjects

The email request strategies chosen by lower-ranking to higher-ranking subjects can be tested using the data generated by situations one, two, three and four.

3.1.1. Situations one and two

The two following email situations were presented to the students:

Situation One states: *You are in the process of conducting your research and you need to make clear some methodological issues. You write an email to your supervisor in which you request him/her to meet him/her to discuss such points. What would you say in this email?*

Situation Two states: *You have finished writing your PhD thesis and you want your professor to proofread it. You write an email to request your professor to proofread your work. What would you say in this email?*

With regard to the first two situations, the power dimension does not change; the email recipient is in a position of relative authority over the student (the email sender) by virtue of their institutional relationship. The social distance dimension is low, since students and their professors or supervisors typically have frequent and regular interactions in the institutional context. What varies here is the imposition of students' email requests. In situation one, the request is for a face-to-face (FtF) appointment with the supervisor, while in the second situation the request is for the receiver to proofread the sender's dissertation. The request of proofreading is more threatening than the request for an FtF appointment.

3.1.1.1 Situation one

In situation one, the student is asking his or her supervisor for a meeting. The receiver is in a position of social dominance over the requester. This social distance and the ranking of imposition are low. For this particular situation, seventy-six head requests were elicited. The data results are presented in Figure 1-1.

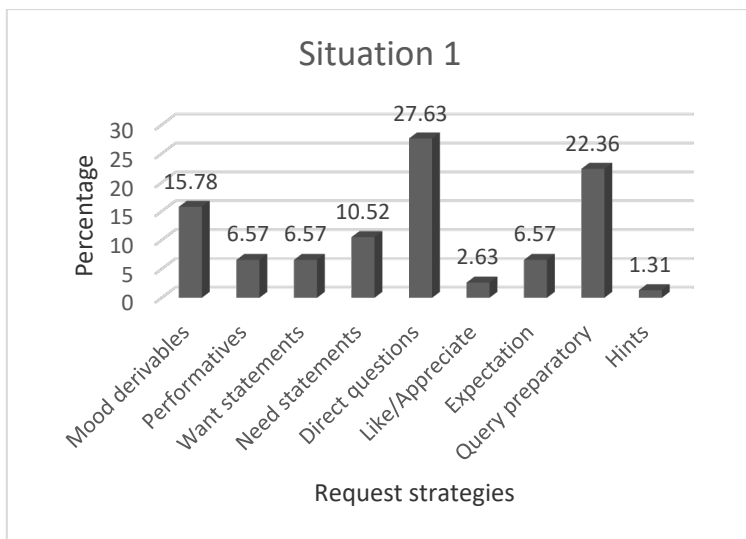


Figure 1-1: Email request strategies used by the participants in situation one

In Figure 1-1, the students in this test group tend to use more direct strategies in addressing their supervisor by means of direct questions (28% or $n = 21$ requests), mood derivables (16% or $n = 12$ requests) and need statements (11% or $n = 8$ requests). Performatives, i.e. want statements and expectation statements, account for 7% (or $n = 5$ requests) for each direct sub-strategy. The next most frequently chosen strategy is conventionally indirect strategies by means of query preparatory (22% or $n = 17$ requests). It is worth noting that only one instance of non-conventionally indirect strategies exists (1.31% or $n = 1$ request) in the form of ‘I am in the process of conducting my research and I found some difficulties when dealing with some methodological issues’.

In the context of situation one, the students who make their requests tend to use direct strategy or involvement politeness strategy (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Scollon and Scollon, 1995; Spencer-Oatey, 2000), such as: ‘Please sir, let me know when we could discuss some methodological issues concerning my research’. The preference for direct requests in this situation (75% or $n = 58$ requests) seems to be an instance of solidarity politeness strategy (involvement politeness strategy) and shows that being direct in this situation expresses familiarity, even if the receiver has social power over the sender. Postgraduate students use high levels of directness without the fear of losing ‘face’, as Brown and Levinson (1987) point out,

because the ranking of imposition is low. Furthermore, the speakers consider that there is minimal social distance between them and their interlocutor.

3.1.1.2. Situation two

In situation two, the student is asking the professor to proofread his or her dissertation, and therefore the receiver has a certain degree of social power over the sender. In this situation, the social distance is relatively low; however, the ranking of imposition is high (the act of proofreading a PhD thesis). Figure 1-2 illustrates the results for situation two.

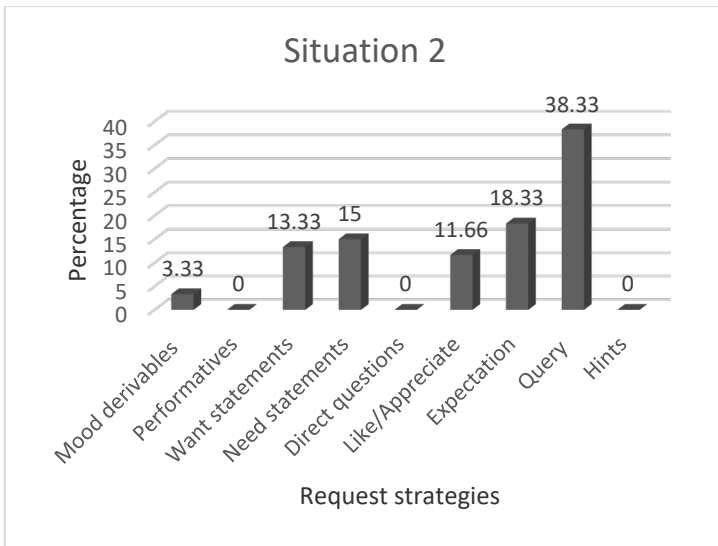


Figure 1-2: Email request strategies used by the participants in situation two

As Figure 1-2 shows, the most frequently used request strategies are direct strategies (62% or $n = 37$ requests), although the most frequently used sub-strategy is query preparatory (38% or $n = 23$ requests) in the form of 'Could you proofread my dissertation, please?'. The most commonly used direct strategies are expectation statements (18% or $n = 11$ requests), need statements (15% or $n = 9$ requests) and want statements (13.33% or $n = 8$ requests), for instance: 'I wish you proofread my work'. Even if the last statement is grammatically incorrect, the intention is clear.

The use of indirect strategies and direct strategies with softeners in situation two appears to be the marker of respect for the receiver. This is done in order to mitigate and minimize the impact of the face-threatening act of the request that comes in the form of 'I was wondering if you could proofread my PhD thesis'. However, it should be noted that although the recipient has social power over the addresser and the ranking of imposition is higher, direct strategies are used by the students much more often than indirect ones. This may be perceived as rather impolite because the request formulation tends to impede the professor's autonomy and freedom of action, according to Brown and Levinson (1978).

3.1.2. Situations three and four

In the case of the first two situations, the power factor is stable; the receiver is in a higher social position compared to the sender. However, in situations three and four, the social distance is higher, since the email recipient is unknown to the sender. With regard to the ranking of imposition, it is considered that the ranking of imposition of the extension (situation three) is higher than that of the FtF appointment (situation four).

Situation three states: *You heard that Professor 'X', whom you do not know personally, is an expert in the field of your research. You send him an email to request an appointment to speak with him about many important issues concerning your research study. What would you say in this email?*

Situation four states: *You have been accepted to participate in a conference and you were required to send your full paper on a specific date. However, you suddenly became sick and could not follow through with this. You write an email to the organizer of the conference, Professor 'Y', whom you do not know personally, to ask him for a one- or two-day extension. What would you say in this email?*

3.1.2.1. Situation three

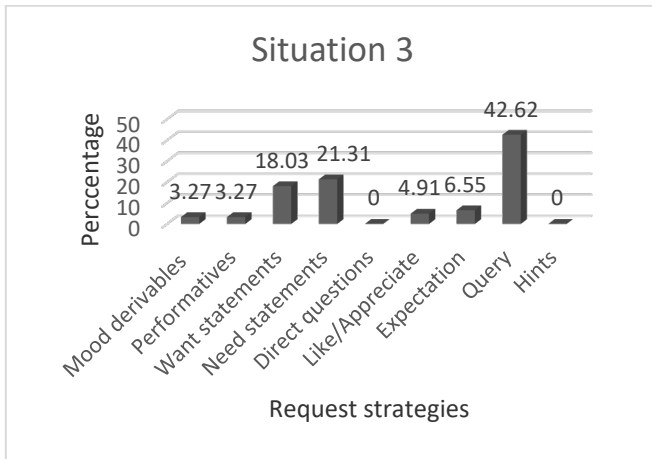


Figure 1-3: Email request strategies used by the participants in situation three

As shown in Figure 1-3, with regard to situation three, the participants tend to prefer conventionally indirect request strategies by means of query preparatory (52% or $n = 32$ requests). It is also evident that they prefer to use direct request strategies by means of need statements (18% or $n = 11$ requests) and want statements (11% or $n = 7$ requests); however, when using conventionally indirect request strategies, for example ‘Sorry if I’m bothering you but may I meet you to talk with you about my research study’, the email sender appears to attempt to minimize the face-threatening act and the impact of the request. This clearly shows that the email sender consciously acknowledges the fact that the request divulges the existence of social distance. The use of a conventional indirect strategy is the appropriate behaviour in this situation, which may widen the scope of choices for the recipient. Finally, it is important to note here that there is no occurrence of indirect strategies.

3.1.2.2. Situation four

In situation four, the student is asking the organizer of the conference for an extension to the deadline for a paper that is already due. The receiver is once again in a position of social power over the sender. The social distance and the ranking of imposition are higher as compared to situation three. The results for situation four are illustrated in Figure 1-4.

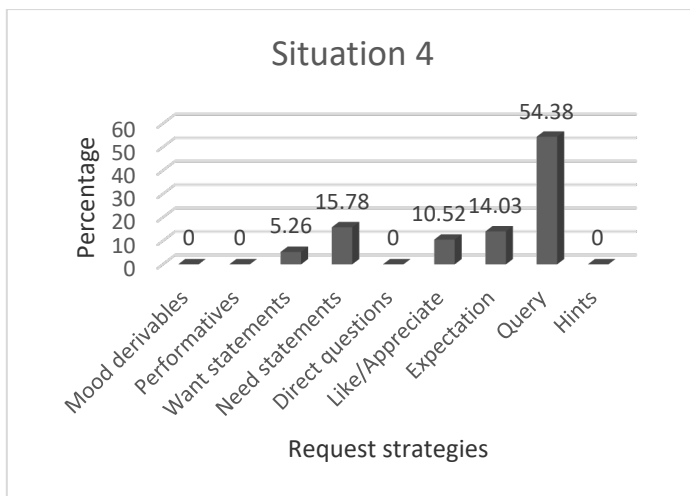


Figure 1-4: Email request strategies used by the participants in situation four

The data for Figure 1-4 reveal that more than half of the participants (54% or $n = 42$ requests) choose a conventionally indirect strategy by means of query preparatory. However, 46% (or $n = 26$ requests) of the elicited requests are direct. The most frequently used direct request strategy is need statements, which account for 16% or $n = 9$ requests, for example ‘I need an extension of the deadline for my paper which is already due’, followed by expectation statements (14% or $n = 8$ requests) and like or appreciate statements (11% or $n = 6$ requests).

In fact, the preference for conventional indirect strategies, for instance ‘Could you afford me two days to complete the paper because I was sick?’, appears to be the marker of respect for the receiver in order to lessen the threat of the request since the ranking of imposition is higher in this situation. It seems that the participants are aware of the impact of the social factors intervening because all of the factors concerned here are higher.

3.2. Email request strategies: equal to equal-ranking subjects

The equal to equal relation is denoted by situations five and six. In situations five and six, the power status is equivalent or stable, and therefore it does not change. There is a balance in the power status between the interlocutors since they are colleagues. The social distance is

lower in comparison to the previous situations, since the students and their colleagues have frequent interactions. What varies in this context is the degree of imposition of the requests. When comparing the two situations here, we believe that the ranking of imposition of the request for a password (situation five) is comparatively lower to that of a statistical analysis (situation six).

Situation five states: *You need the password of a reputed journal to access it and benefit from the online articles. You know that your colleague has the password. You write an email to request that they provide you with the password. What would you say in this email?*

Situation six states: *You are writing your PhD thesis and you know that your colleague is skilful in statistical analysis. You would like to request your colleague's assistance in preparing the statistical part of your thesis. You write an email to request him/her to do so. What would you say in this email?*

3.2.1. Situation five

In situation five, the email writer and the receiver are colleagues. Therefore, there is neither social power nor social distance between them, and the ranking of imposition of the request is relatively low. In Figure 1-5, the data are presented for situation five.

Figure 1-5 reveals that in this situation, the subjects prefer to use direct request strategies (77% or $n = 58$ requests). The most preferable direct sub-strategy is mood derivables (28% or $n = 21$ requests), such as in the following form: 'Please, send me the password of the journal', followed by performatives (15% or $n = 11$ requests), like 'I am asking you to send me the password of the journal', and need statements (13.33% or $n = 10$ requests), such as 'I need the password of the journal'.

In this situation, the senders use direct strategies or involvement politeness strategies because there is neither social power nor social distance between the interlocutors. In Tunisian cultural codes, a more direct level of interaction between close people such as family members, friends and colleagues is permitted because the speaker assumes only a small social distance between himself or herself and the interlocutor. The preference for direct requests in this situation seems to be an instance of solidarity and shows that being direct with colleagues expresses camaraderie, which is consistent with the cultural norms of Tunisian society.

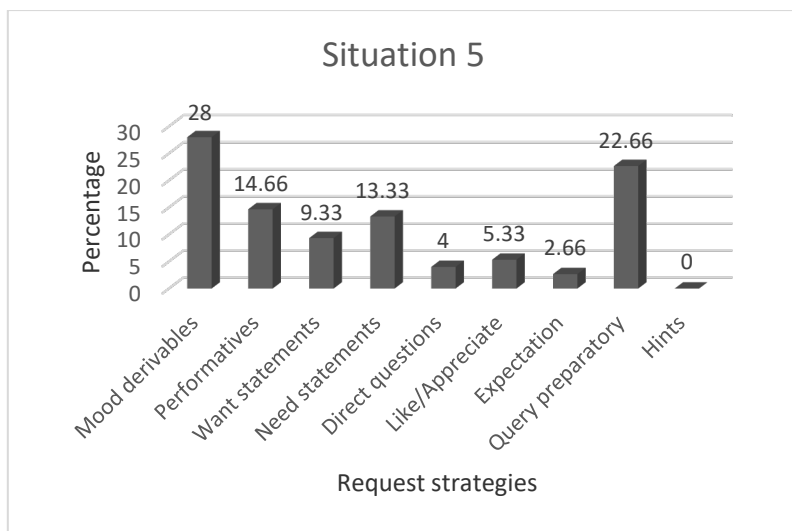


Figure 1-5: Email request strategies used by the participants in situation five

3.2.2 Situation six

In situation six, there is neither social power nor social distance between the interlocutors; however, the ranking of imposition is higher when compared to situation five. In Figure 1-6, the data results for situation six are illustrated.

As shown in Figure 1-6, the students prefer to use direct request strategies (59% or $n = 39$ requests) and conventionally indirect requests, like ‘Could you please help me in doing the statistical part of my work?’ by means of query preparatory (41% or $n = 27$ requests). The most frequently used direct strategy is want statements that resemble ‘I want that you help me in doing the statistical part’, which account for 17% or $n = 11$ requests, need statements (16% or $n = 10$ requests) and like or appreciate statements (12% or $n = 8$ requests).

It is interesting to observe that even though the ranking of imposition is higher as compared to situation five, the participants prefer to use direct request strategies. Therefore, it should be noted that the level of the ranking of imposition does not deeply affect the choice of the subjects of the appropriate request strategy. The participants appear to be influenced