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Gender-Related Differences in the Performance of Request in the Algerian Classroom Discourse

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Algerian classroom, Directness levels, Males and females, Request strategies, Sociocultural variables, Students and teachers

Abstract

Despite extensive research on requests, a notable gap exists in understanding gender differences in Algerian classrooms. This study investigates how male and female students and teachers formulate requests during classroom interactions, using responses from a discourse completion task (DCT). The aim is to explore how gender influences the choice of request strategies and variations in directness, considering social variables such as power dynamics, social distance, and the imposition level among participants. The study identifies similarities and differences in request behaviours between male and female interactions among Algerian students, teachers, and students. Data were collected through a Discourse Completion Task featuring three scenarios of classroom interactions, involving 115 male and female participants. The findings indicate that gender significantly influences the selection of request strategies and levels among Algerian students and teachers. Female students and teachers tended to employ more indirect request strategies compared to males, who typically preferred direct approaches across all scenarios. Furthermore, the study reveals that the degree of directness varied for both genders based on socio-cultural factors such as power dynamics, social distance, imposition levels, and religious norms prevalent in Algerian society. The research highlights that students generally opt for conventional indirect strategies when making requests to teachers. In contrast, direct requests are more commonly used when individuals of equal social status interact or when the requester holds a higher status than the respondent. This study contributes new insights into the impact of gender and socio-cultural factors on request strategies and politeness in Algerian classroom discourse, enriching cross-cultural pragmatics and classroom discourse studies.

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Mots clés

Алжирский класс, Мужчины и женщины, социокультурные переменные, стратегии запроса, уровни прямоты, учащиеся и преподаватели

Résumé

Несмотря на десятилетия исследований запросов, по-прежнему не хватает исследований гендерных различий в алжирских классах. В настоящем исследовании рассматривается характер запросов учащихся и преподавателей мужского и женского пола во время взаимодействия в классе, о чем свидетельствуют ответы участников на задание по завершению беседы (DCT). Цель исследования - исследовать, как гендер может влиять на выбор стратегий запроса и изменение уровня прямоты в зависимости от социальных переменных, таких как социальная власть, социальная дистанция и скорость навязывания запросов участниками. В нем основное внимание уделяется определению сходств и различий между взаимодействиями мужчин и женщин в отношении выполнения запросов в алжирских классах между учащимися и преподавателями, а также между самими учащимися. Данные для исследования были собраны с помощью задания на завершение беседы, включающего три случая взаимодействия в классе. Каждый случай включает в себя три ситуации запроса, в которых приняли участие 115 респондентов мужского и женского пола. Результаты показали, что гендерный фактор определяет выбор алжирскими учащимися и преподавателями стратегий и уровней запроса. Во всех трех случаях студентки и преподаватели женского пола чаще обращались к косвенным просьбам, чем мужчины, которые, как правило, прибегали к прямым просьбам. С другой стороны, результаты показывают, что уровень прямоты мужчин и женщин также варьируется в зависимости от социокультурных факторов, таких как власть, социальная дистанция и степень навязывания, в дополнение к религиозным нормам, характерным для алжирского общества. Таким образом, учащиеся склонны использовать обычные косвенные стратегии, когда запрос передается от ученика к преподавателю. Напротив, прямые просьбы являются наиболее предпочтительной стратегией, когда запрашивающими являются вышестоящие лица, а запрашиваемыми - нижестоящие, или когда социальная власть студентов-участников одинакова. Исследование предоставляет новые данные о влиянии гендерных и социокультурных факторов на прямоту и вежливость запросов, способствуя межкультурной прагматике и изучению дискурса в классе.

1. Introduction

The role of gender and its impact on communication and discursive practices has long been a topic of interest and debate (Lakoff, 1975; Holmes, 1995; Mills, 2014, among many others). Thus, examining gender differences in linguistic research is a well-established subject. Empirical investigations have provided ample evidence to establish the existence of gender-based language variances between male and female speakers. Therefore, gender differences are conveyed through language, and at the same time, it determines linguistic choices because language serves as a means of communication, a

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means of expressing one's personal identity and affiliation with specific social groups, and as an indicator of their cultural, ethnic, social, and gender identity (Eslami et al., 2023). A vital feature examined in this context is the correlation between gender and linguistic politeness. Several scholars have contended that women's speech exhibits greater politeness than men, particularly in situations involving face-related matters like apologies and requests (e.g., Holmes, 1995; Lakoff, 1975; Tannen, 1990, among others). This theory is predicated on the premise that women employ more indirect tactics than men and tend to utilise more softening devices (Furkatovna et al., 2021; Holmes, 1995).

University classroom discourse has become a space where lingua-cultural identities are commonly experienced, negotiated, and performed due to the interaction between academic culture and global academic discourse with the local communicative environment (Zbenovich et al., 2023). Hence, this study aims to explore the academic environment from a different perspective, explicitly examining gender roles and social norms that influence individuals in selecting the most suitable request strategies during classroom interactions, especially in Algerian classroom discourse that needs to be conducted as the existing studies have primarily focused on examining the influence of gender on shaping requests in Algerian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom interaction (Boutemedjet, 2019; Rebah, 2020) or the impact it has on Algerian secondary education English textbooks (Ouahmiche & Ziad, 2019). Lack of awareness regarding culture-specific disparities in teacher-student interaction leads to significant misconceptions and can even incite conflicts. These differences may be associated with the social and power distance levels and the acceptable level of informality within distinct cultures.

Thus, the present study investigates the numerous avenues in which gender impacts the performance of requests in this setting by addressing the following research questions:

- What role do gender-related differences play in request performance?
- How do male and female students and teachers differ in performing requests within the Algerian classroom setting?
- How do societal expectations impact students' and teachers' interaction in the Algerian classroom?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Gender differences in cross-cultural communication

Hofstede (1980) characterised masculine culture as a state where societal values revolve around achievement, wealth, and material possessions. Conversely, feminine culture can be described as a state where the dominant societal values prioritise compassion towards others and the overall well-being of individuals.

In everyday life, femininity is commonly associated with the behaviours and characteristics typically exhibited by women and girls. In contrast, masculinity is attributed to the behaviours and characteristics typically displayed by men and boys. This

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association can be understood in terms of the unconscious and occasionally conscious connection between the concepts of biological sex and gender. According to Connell (1995), 'Masculinity' can be understood as a position within gender dynamics, the actions by which both men and women occupy this position, and the consequences of these actions on physical experiences, personality, and culture. He associates masculinity with gender interactions and the typical expectations placed on men. Paechter (2006) argues against this viewpoint, asserting that associating masculinity solely with men's actions is unproductive and adds to the concept's uncertainty. This is because men and boys engage in various activities, and pinpointing a definitive set of behaviours is difficult. Therefore, it is reasonable to anticipate multiple forms of masculinity rather than just one. Among these forms, 'hegemonic masculinity' is considered the most dominant, both to other subordinate forms of masculinity and, in comparison, to the concept of femininity as a whole. The term 'hegemonic masculinity' is linked to power and control, as it typically represents the traits of the dominating upper-class males (Paechter, 1995, p. 254).

Femininity is recognised as a complementary aspect of masculinity and encompasses various manifestations. However, when compared to the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity', the concept of 'emphasised femininity' (Connell, 1987) does not hold the same esteemed position since it primarily reflects 'hyper-masculinity', which is equivalent to being excessively feminine. According to Peachter (2006), femininity is not hegemonic because hegemony is associated with power. Regarding power dynamics, 'emphasised femininity' does not involve any authority or control but rather represents an exaggerated manifestation of the societal norms and expectations placed upon women and girls. The concept of gender is fluid and varies across different cultures.

Similarly, the understanding of femininity and masculinity varies across different contexts. However, there are specific common interpretations of what femininity and masculinity represent in various communities. The concept of 'emphasised femininity' can also be observed in the Algerian vernacular known as ‘المرأة الفحلة’ ‘Al- maraa Al- fahla’, which is the extreme of what society believes a good and a desired woman should be. In the Algerian context, 'emphasised femininity' refers to specific characteristics associated primarily with domestic tasks. These include being skilled in cooking traditional and modern dishes and having expertise in cleaning. Additionally, it involves obeying male family members such as the father, brother, or husband and conducting oneself quietly and restrainedly (Boutemedjet, 2019).

2.2 Gender role in cross-cultural pragmatics

Pragmatics examines the determinants of linguistic form selection in social interactions and the resulting impact on others. One of the elements that influence the appropriate use of linguistic forms to express distinct speech acts in the academic setting is sociocultural considerations. Speech acts can be expressed directly or indirectly based on the social factors of the interlocutors (Leech, 2005). Speech acts are well-established components of pragmatics. Within the realm of speech actions, the primary focus of this

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study is on requests, which are considered a direct form of speech that may potentially jeopardise one's social standing (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The prevalence of its usage in daily communication and its various manifestations influenced by specific sociocultural elements contribute to this phenomenon (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Ellis, 1992). One of the societal strategies that can affect the usage of request methods is gender. The utilisation of requests varies among cultures, influenced by individuals' gender disparities and the social norms of the target language. Much research has been carried out to examine the variations in the usage of request speech acts based on diverse factors, particularly speech acts themselves (Márquez Reiter, 2000; Shams & Afghari, 2011; Xia, 2013).

Márquez Reiter (2000) conducted a comparative analysis of requests in British English and Uruguayan Spanish. The study revealed that speakers of British English and Uruguayan Spanish exhibit variations in their selection of request strategies. The study's findings contradicted the assertion that females tend to be more indirect than males when making requests. According to the results of Márquez-Reiter's (2000) research, it was observed that male speakers of British English have a greater inclination towards employing indirect request tactics compared to their female counterparts. In addition, it was observed that female speakers of Uruguayan Spanish exhibit a greater degree of directness in making requests compared to female speakers of British English in scenarios involving individuals of the same gender.

Shams and Afghari (2011) conducted a significant study in Iran to investigate how gender affects understanding request techniques in ordinary communication. The results indicated that gender did not significantly impact the understanding of requests, particularly the indirect ones. This suggests that females often employ a more indirect communication style than males.

In 2013, Xia conducted a study to examine how gender disparities impact the language characteristics employed in various contexts. The results revealed significant disparities in word usage between males and females. Females used the most euphemistic terms more frequently than males. These findings might be ascribed to the societal effect on the individuals involved. Xia believed that societal progress could potentially lead to a reduction in gender disparities.

2.3 Gender role in the Arab world

In Arab countries, women have typically been assigned roles that are either helpful or submissive (Nydell, 2002). While men are encouraged to use public spaces actively, women face restrictions; they should refrain from participating in public spheres. As per the 2002 Human Development report, women in the Arab world still face numerous challenges in their participation in political, economic, and social spheres and in accessing employment due to their subordinate positions. They are expected to speak softly when conversing with male relatives as a sign of respect. When interacting with foreign men outside their homes, they are advised to keep conversations severe and brief to prioritise their safety.

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In Algeria, women enjoy greater autonomy and nearly equal opportunities as males, like those in Syria and Lebanon. French culture has significantly influenced Algeria, mainly women's clothing, education, and employment. However, the majority of Arab women, mainly Algerians, are required to employ a more courteous and refined vocabulary compared to men. Men have the privilege of exerting their dominance over women, dictating their actions without causing any form of loss of face, particularly within the family setting, regardless of whether the woman is educated or not.

In academic contexts, Boutemedjet (2019) discovered that examining teachers' language revealed that the female instructor established an authoritative character, whereas the male teacher assumed a permissive role using jokes. Nevertheless, the thorough examination demonstrated that both teachers exerted authority over the children, albeit in distinct ways. For example, the female instructor displayed power openly, while the male teacher employed it discreetly. Regarding gender, the careful examination of classroom interaction uncovered that the conversations and language used in the classroom reinforce traditional gender norms by promoting underlying beliefs and ideas about gender.

Rabah (2020) found that female and male students in Algerian EFL exhibit distinct conversational styles. The findings indicate that both genders employ diverse linguistic politeness strategies, with females demonstrating significantly higher politeness than males. Moreover, the research shows that women use distinctive features, including indirect request and emergence, to express sensitivity and respect, unlike males, who are indirect in their speech and seem dominant.

2.4 Gender-Related Differences in Request Speech Act Performance

2.4.1 Speech act of request

The study of speech acts emerged from the research conducted by Austin in his book "How to Do Things with Words" in 1962 and was further expanded upon by Searle in 1969 and 1975. Austin (1962) observed that certain declarative utterances serve a purpose beyond conveying accurate or inaccurate information or describing situations; they are intended to perform actions. He asserts that an utterance consists of three levels of linguistic actions: the locutionary act, which refers to what is said or the literal meaning of the utterance; the illocutionary act, which refers to what is intended or meant and is related to the force of the utterance; and the perlocutionary act, which refers to the effect the utterance has on the hearer.

The speech act of request, extensively studied in pragmatics, is a crucial element of interpersonal communication and is regulated by many language and pragmatic standards (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). As per Searle's (1969) definition, a request is a speech act that aims to persuade the listener to do action in situations where it is unclear if they would do so naturally. The speaker (S) has confidence in the hearer's (H) competence to perform the task, as they have specifically requested them to do so.

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In 1976, Searle acknowledged the importance of expressing requests indirectly, deeming direct utterances less suitable. This emphasis on indirectness is closely tied to politeness since a direct request can significantly burden the hearer. This assertion is corroborated by Leech (1983, p.108), who argues that indirect illocution will result in a greater degree of politeness. Leech contends that indirect illocutions are generally more polite for two reasons. To begin with, indirect illocutions increase the level of optionality. Secondly, in comparison to direct illocutions, indirect illocutions tend to possess a more diminished and tentative force.

However, Blum-Kulka (1987) contends that Leech's assertion regarding directness and politeness in requests is not universally valid. She suggests that indirectness should be refined by categorising it into two distinct types, conventional and non-conventional, by claiming that politeness is often linked to conventional indirectness but not always to non-conventional indirectness. Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) classified request strategies into direct requests (impositives), conventionally indirect requests, and non-conventionally indirect requests. Direct requests are clear and explicit, just like imperatives, while indirect requests use politeness strategies to lessen the potential imposition on the listener.

In contrast, non-conventionally indirect requests utilise hint strategies (strong and mild hints). For example, a direct request would be: “Could you pass me the book, please?” This type of request explicitly states the speaker’s desire for the listener to perform a specific action. However, an indirect request would be: “It is a bit warm here.” This statement implies a request for the listener to open a window without making an explicit demand.

Considering this aspect, Brown and Levinson (1987) state that when individuals make requests, they engage in Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) as they are putting the hearer in a position where their autonomy could be affected by the speaker's imposition of their desires. As a result, individuals often use specific strategies when making requests, as requesting poses a potential threat to one's social image. They propose that when individuals intend to perform a Face Threatening Act (FTA), they may endeavour to reduce its impact on the hearer’s face.

In reaction to Brown and Levinson’s claim, many researchers, such as Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989), Ogiermann (2009) and Larina (2008), conducted comparative studies of request realisation in different languages, such as British English, Australian English, German, Polish, Danish, Hebrew, Spanish, Canadian French and Russian, respectively. According to them, requestive strategies can be classified into three main groups, from the most direct to the least. Wierzbicka (2003) stated that while Searle's assertion and Brown and Levinson's theory suggest that the more indirect a request is, the more polite it will be, different cultures have shown this is not always the case.

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2.4.2 Social variables affecting speech act of request

As far as making a request is a face-threatening act, which may threaten the hearer's face, a speaker must consider this aspect when asking for something. Hence, the level of politeness in a request is closely linked to how the request is formulated indirectly.

Various social variables or factors influence how requests are performed and, more specifically, the selection of request strategies. The concept of power (P) has been constructed by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) and pertains to the societal standing of both the speaker and the listener. Social distance (D) is the factor that measures the level of familiarity or closeness between conversational participants; that is, how well people know each other, with one end being relatives and the other strangers. Lastly, the degree of imposition (R) refers to the speaker's authority and capacity to assert their thoughts and preferences upon others (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Martínez-Flor, 2007). Therefore, based on the previous theoretical underpinnings, it becomes essential to consider these social factors while appropriately expressing any speech act within a given social context, as they determine the favoured linguistic expressions used.

2.4.3 Gender-related impact on the performance of request

Previous studies have examined gender differences in requests and how they are made and responded to. In 2023, Cai conducted a study that explored how Taiwanese male and female college students utilise request techniques in Mandarin Chinese. The study employed the categorisation of request strategies introduced by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). The results revealed that the extent of social distance between the individuals often plays a significant part in shaping the requester's approach to making requests.

Handayani et al. (2022) examined request strategies and shed light on the reasons for using them among Indonesian males and females in five TV videos from YouTube. The findings showed different request strategies used by males and females because of several reasons.

Sikder (2021) conducted a study that examined potential variations in request patterns among male and female students from Bangladesh participating in online classroom settings. The research was guided by the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) framework developed by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984). The findings indicated that the female students exhibited a notably higher level and demonstrated greater politeness than their male counterparts.

Hussain et al. (2020) conducted a separate study that examined variations in request strategies among male and female native speakers of Urdu/Punjabi who were also learning English as their second language. The research findings uncovered that male individuals who were native speakers of Urdu/Punjabi tended to utilise direct request strategies to a greater extent. Conversely, female speakers of Urdu/Punjabi favoured indirect request strategies, which were influenced by cultural stereotypes, social status, and the distribution of power within society.

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In contrast, previous research studies that highlighted Algerian and Arab gender differences in the performance of requests are limited. The existing research primarily adopts a cross-cultural or socio-pragmatic viewpoint. For instance, Alzahrani (2022) investigated the influence of gender on the selection of request methods employed by female speakers of Saudi Colloquial Arabic. Findings from a DCT, which were analysed using Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) coding scheme of request head act strategies, indicated that Saudi women employed direct request techniques more frequently while interacting with females. In contrast, they displayed a preference for using indirect request strategies when engaging with males. This study has also uncovered a high prevalence of imposition. In other words, regardless of the authority and social distance between interlocutors, most females refused to request men and kept a distance from males who are not first-degree relatives due to aspects unique to Saudi culture and norms.

In Algeria, in a study conducted by Belarbi and Toumi (2021), the objective was to identify the different ways male and female EFL master students realised the speech act of request regarding politeness strategies and the factors that led them to do so using Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1978,1987), and Blum-Kulka' Request Indirectness Level (1989). The findings indicated that when the requester (male or female) holds greater power over the requestee and there is a considerable social distance between them, they tend to employ more indirect requests and negative politeness strategies, mainly when the level of imposition is high or medium. On the other hand, when the requester has less power over the requestee and there is less social distance between them, they are more inclined to use direct request and bald-on-record strategies, especially when the level of imposition is low.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

3.1.1 Sample

Because the main objective of this research is to determine politeness and request strategies in Algerian Classrooms, 115 Algerian male and female university teachers and students have been chosen as participants. Male students' participation was low; only 20 males answered the questionnaire. In comparison, 70 female students participated in this research because, in Algerian society, The female population exceeds the male population. Also, females are more interested in higher education than males, who prefer to go to the labour market or get professional education to get jobs quickly. Algerian teachers' number was not high because of the summer holidays; thus, not many teachers answered the questionnaires online (10 males, 15 females). The informants of this study were chosen randomly and got equal chances to participate. Their ages ranged from seventeen to fifty-seven years old.

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3.2 Research Instrument

The research participants were requested to answer a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) adopted in this work since it is the best method to collect speech act data, as proposed by Blum-Kulka (1980).

The survey comprised two primary sections; the initial section inquired about the personal information of the participants; the subsequent section was structured into three distinct sections, each of which included three situations of requests as encountered by male and female university students and teachers with different considerations of social power (P), social distance (D) and the rate of imposition (R). The objective behind choosing these social variables is to provide a detailed explanation of classroom interaction.

The distributed questionnaires were written in Arabic, and the situations were described in Algerian Arabic and then translated into English.

Table1 presents the social variables' considerations in the nine situations of classroom requests as performed by male and female students and teachers.

Table 1.

Different Considerations of Social Variables Across Nine Situations of Request

Cases	Social Power	Social Distance	Rate Of Imposition
Case One: Student-Teacher Interaction	S < H (-P)	Equal (=D)	Moderate (R^o)
Case Two: Teacher-Student Interaction	S > H (+P)	Equal (=D)	Moderate (R^o)
Case Three: Student-Student Interaction	S= H (=P)	Equal (=D)	(-R)

Note. The author made the table based on Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1978,1987) where P= social power, D= social distance, R= rank of imposition S= speaker, H= hearer

Since this study aims to examine the influence of teachers' and students' gender on the choice of request strategies in the classroom context, two questionnaire versions were directed to teachers and the second to students.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

In this study, the coding scheme of Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) is used to analyse the requesting strategies research participants perform. Blum-Kulka et al. suggested that requests are usually performed with various levels of directness that differentiate between

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impositives (direct), conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect.
Given that the current research seeks to compare the influence of teachers' and students' gender on the choice of request strategies and the degree of directness, the data are analysed using both quantitative and qualitative methods, using the percentage of each request strategy adopted by male and female teachers and students. Then, the results are compared to reveal similarities and differences between the males' and females' request strategies. The data are categorised using a coding scheme (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Request strategies used by male and female Algerian teachers and students

The request head act strategies are analysed in terms of the level of request directness as performed by male-female teachers and students in classroom discourse: Direct (D), conventionally indirect (CI), and non-conventionally indirect requests (N-CI). Table 2 presents percentages of the request strategies used by male-female Algerian teachers and students.

Table 2.

Percentages of Request Strategies in Male-Female Groups

Situation	Request Strategy	Male %	Female %
The student's request to the teacher to repeat	**D**	**25**	**14**
	CI	**50**	**70**
	N-CI	**25**	**16**
The student's request to the teacher to get homework	**D**	**38**	**7**
	CI	**63**	**86**
	N-CI	**0**	**7**
Student's request to the teacher to give a consultation	**D**	**43**	**15**
	CI	**43**	**80**
	N-CI	**14**	**5**
Teacher's request to students to repeat their answers	**D**	**88**	**78**
	CI	**13**	**22**
	N-CI	**0**	**0**
Teacher's request to students to send their homework by e-mail	**D**	**88**	**89**
	CI	**13**	**11**
	N-CI	**0**	**0**
Teacher's request to students to take his/her books to the library	**D**	**57**	**44**
	CI	**43**	**44**
	N-CI	**0**	**11**

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Student-to-student request to borrow a pen	**D**	**63**	**58**
	CI	**25**	**26**
	N-CI	**13**	**16**
Student-to-student request to send the homework	**D**	**89**	**72**
	CI	**11**	**28**
	N-CI	**0**	**0**
Student-to-student request to help with missed lessons	**D**	**75**	**47**
	CI	**25**	**52**
	N-CI	**0**	**1**

Note. The author analysed data in the table according to Blum-Kulka et al.'s CCSARP (1989) coding scheme classification of requests into D= direct, CI= conventional indirectness, N-CI= non-conventional indirectness.

Table 2 shows that male and female teachers and students considered social variables when performing requests, but the choice of request strategies varied according to gender. Based on the above table, it is evident that males tend to use direct strategies in most situations of requests; however, the percentage of these strategies varies from one case to another due to the impact of social factors that determine the relationship between the participants. Females score a high percentage with conventionally indirect strategies of request in the Algerian classroom context and across the three cases of request.

4.2 The use of the direct strategy of request

Figure 1 shows the percentages of direct strategy/ impositives used by Algerian male and female teachers and students across nine request situations

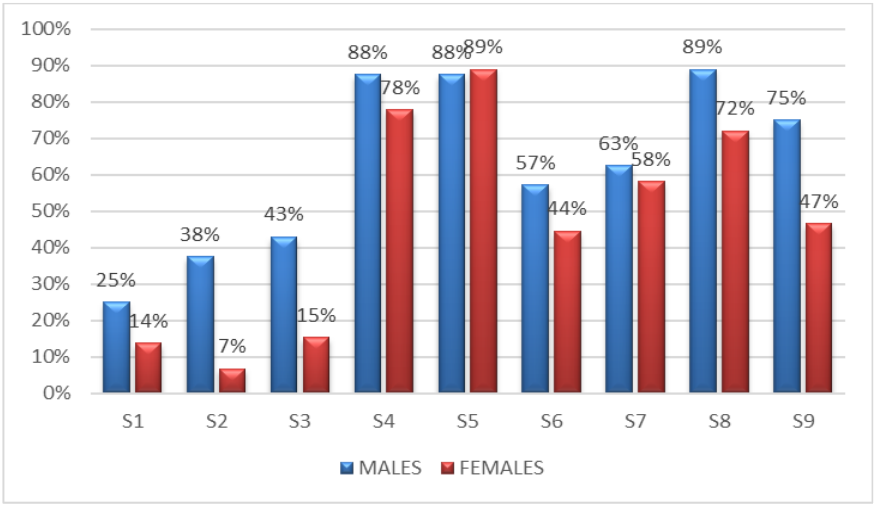


Figure 1. The Use of Direct Requests by Algerian Males and Females

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Figure 1 shows that male and female Algerian university teachers and students use direct strategy differently across the three request cases. While males use this strategy with high percentages in most situations, females tend to use it the least, only in the second case of requests performed by teachers to students. Both male and female teachers mostly used the direct strategy in the second case because the request is performed from high to low, where the speaker has power over the hearer. However, in this request case, males used the direct strategy more than females, as in the first situation when the teacher asked the student to repeat; 88% of male teachers performed the requests directly, and only 78% of females adopted the strategy. Similarly, in the second situation, 88% of males asked their students to send the homework directly, approximately the same percentage achieved by female teachers (89%). In the third situation, neither males nor females scored high percentages, only 57% for males and 44% for females, which are not high percentages of direct strategy in comparison to previous situations since teachers in this situation requested students to take their books to the library which needs efforts from students to do for the sake of their teachers.

The first case of the request was performed from low to high (Student-Teacher); thus, the direct strategy was used the least compared to the two other cases. This case also included three situations where male teachers used direct requests more than their female counterparts. In the first situation, 25% of males asked their teachers to repeat what they had said directly, and only 14% of females adopted this strategy. 38% of male students requested teachers to send them the homework, which is a high percentage compared to females' percentage (7%). In the third situation, males were more direct than females to ask for a consultation from their teachers.

In the third case, the request took place between classmates (low to low). Thus, the findings revealed that the direct strategy percentages were also high in this case. 63% of male students asked their classmates to borrow them a pen directly; similarly, a high percentage of females, 58%, adopted the same strategy. Males in the second situation scored 89% in asking other students to send them the homework, and for the same aim, 72% of females used requests directly. To obtain help with lessons, 75% of males and 47% of females requested help from their fellow students directly.

Algerian students and teachers, in this case of impositives or direct strategy, preferred to use mood derivable constructions in approximately 99% of their requests:

- من فضلك عاود واش قلت

'Please, repeat what you have said.' (female)

- ابعثلي الواجب تاعك في ايمايل

'Send me your homework by e-mail.' (male)

- اعطيني ستيلو 'Give me a pen.' (male)

The findings indicate that the direct strategy is the most preferred request strategy by Algerian males than females in classroom discourse. However, the use of this strategy differs based on the influence of social factors related to power, distance, and rate of

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imposition. Thus, direct requests are performed in situations where the speaker has power over the hearer (+P) or in situations when there is a close relationship between interlocutors as classmates; equal power (=P), in the Algerian culture, for example, small favours (borrowing a pen) do not require high levels of indirectness.

4.3 The use of the indirect strategy of request

4.3.1 The use of the conventionally indirect strategy of request

Figure 2 shows male and female Algerian students and teachers' use of conventional indirect strategy throughout nine situations of classroom request.

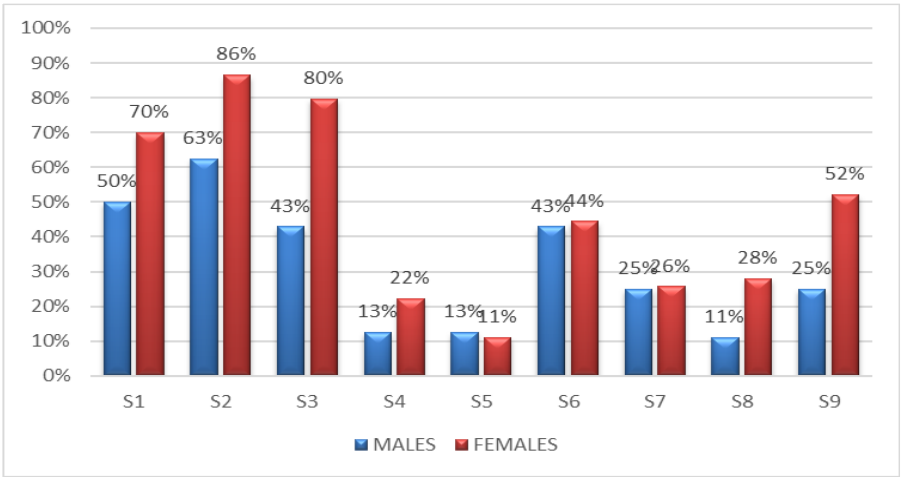


Figure 2. The Use of Conventional Indirect Requests by Algerian Males and Females

It is evident from Figure 2 that conventional indirectness is used differently by males and females across the three cases of classroom requests as a result of the social variables that govern the relationships between classroom participants. The first case of the request was directed from students to teachers; thus, the percentages of conventional indirect strategy were higher than in other cases. In the first situation, 70% of female students preferred to be conventionally indirect in requesting their teachers to repeat; also, males, with a percentage of 50%, were indirect in this situation. To request teachers to send the homework by e-mail, 86% of females and 63% of males were conventionally indirect, the highest percentage in this case. In the third situation, a high percentage of females (80%) adopted conventional indirectness, and only 43% of males indirectly asked their teachers for consultation.

The second case was directed from teachers to students (+P); thus, Figure 2 shows the low percentages of conventional indirect strategy scored by male and female teachers and students. In the first situation of the second case, only 22% of female teachers and 13% of their male counterparts adopted the indirect strategy for asking their students to

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repeat their answers. Similarly, in the second situation, teachers also did not show a tendency to conventional indirectness; 13% of males and 11% of females adopted this strategy to request students to send homework by e-mail. However, male and female teachers asked for their students' help with books indirectly with high percentages (44% for females and 43% for males) because this request requires student effort.

When the request occurred between students in the third case, the percentages of conventional indirect strategy were low since the request was performed equally (=P). Males and females requested to borrow a pen from their classmates approximately in equal percentages (26% of females, 25% of males). To ask their classmates to send the homework, 28% of female students made the request indirectly, and only 11% of males adopted this strategy. In the third situation, the percentages of both males and females were high compared to the previous situations (52% females, 25% males) because the request to other students to help with homework and lessons needs effort; thus, both males and females used to do it conventionally indirectly.

The Query Preparatory formulas were used by Algerian students and teachers the most to be conventionally indirect in their classroom requests. These formulas took the form of ability and willingness sub-strategies:

- تقدر تعاودلي واش قلت من فضلك؟

'Can you repeat what you have said, please?' (female)

- تسلفلي الستيلو دقيقة؟

'Would you lend me a pen for a while?' (male)

- شكون يقدر فيكم يهز معايا الكتب للمكتبة؟

'Who can take with me the books to the library?' (female)

From the above results, it is clear that the conventional indirect strategy is preferred by females more than males in Algerian classroom requests. This strategy was the most used in the second case when the student is the requester and the teacher is the requestee (from low to high); in this case, the social power is high (-P); thus, both male and female students adopted the indirect strategy to mitigate their teachers face. Moreover, teachers in Algeria have a high situation and power not only for the social convention of the society but also for the religious norms that give elders and teachers power and glory. In the second case, when the requester is a teacher, and the requestee is a student, the convention indirect requests are not used highly by teachers; however, in this case, female teachers scored a high percentage of indirectness compared to males. Similarly, the third case showed a significant use of conventional indirectness since the request was performed between classmates with equal power (=P). However, in the third situation, both male and female students used this strategy the most to lessen the threat on the hearer's face because he had to try to help the speaker.

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4.3.2 The utilisation of non-conventional indirect strategies

Figure 3 demonstrates the Algerian male and female students and teachers' tendency towards the non-conventional indirect strategy across the nine situations of classroom requests between teachers and students. The results revealed that non-conventional requests are used the least in all situations of classroom interaction. The strategy is used mainly in four situations.

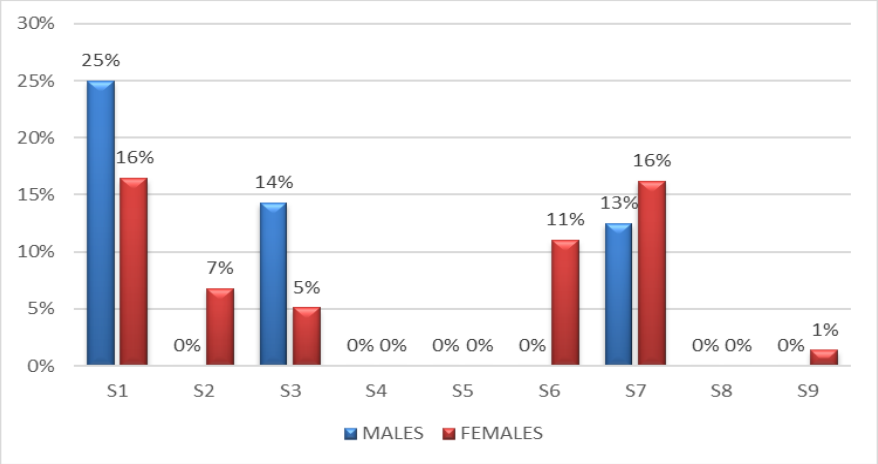


Figure 3. Algerian Males and Females' Use of Non-conventional Indirect Strategy

Figure 3 shows that the non-conventional indirect requests are used in the first case when students are the requesters (low) and teachers are the requestees (high). In the first situation, 25% of male students preferred this strategy to request their teachers to repeat, whereas 16% of females adopted it. To ask teachers to send the homework by e-mail, no one of the males used the non-conventional requests, and only 7% employed it in their requests. 14% of male students asked for teachers' consultation using non-conventional indirectness, and 5% of females employed the same strategy.

In the second case, when the request was made from teacher (high) to student (low), the non-conventional indirect strategy was not used by either male teachers or females across two situations of request; only in the third situation, when teachers requested students take their books to the library, 11% of female teachers preferred to use non-conventional indirect requests.

Regarding a request from one student to another, 16% of females and 13% of males used the non-conventional strategy to ask their fellow students to borrow a pen in the first situation. Non-conventional indirectness was absent in the second situation, where students requested that their fellow students send them the homework. It was used only by 1% of female students in the third situation, and none of the males adopted it to request their classmates to help with lessons.

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Male and female teachers and students employed the non-conventional requests the least in the form of hints:

- عندك ستيلو زايد؟

'Do you have an extra pen?' (male/ female)

- الدرس جاني شوي صعيب مافهمت والو

'The lesson is difficult; I did not understand anything.' (female)

- والله لوكان جاو التمارين يتبعتولنا في الايميل خير

'I swear, if the homework were e-mail, it would be better.' (male)

- عندي بزاف كتابات والمكتبة بعيدة واش يوصلني

'I have many books, and the library is far. I do not know how I can reach it.' (female)

The analysis of the Algerian male and female teachers' and students' choice of request strategies in the classroom context showed some similarities and differences. The social variables of power, social distance and rate of imposition seem to impact the participants' choices. The results indicated that male and female teachers and students have the slightest preference for the non-conventional indirect strategy. This strategy varies from one situation to another; in some situations, it is used more by males and in others by females, whereas sometimes it is not used by both. Accordingly, one can deduce that the gender of the requester does not impact the choice of this strategy.

The other similarity is related to male and female students' choice of conventional indirect requests when interacting with their teachers; male and female students scored high percentages when the requester was lower in status than the requestee (-P). These findings confirm Al-Ali and Alawaneh's theory (2010), which relates the teachers' position at the top in the Arab world because of their academic knowledge and the student's obligation to respect this asymmetrical teacher-student relationship. Although males and females used the conventionally indirect strategy in the first situation, the distribution of the percentages using this strategy differed since female students scored higher than males (50 % to 70%).

In the second case, when the requester (teacher) is more powerful than the requestee (student), male and female teachers tended to use the direct strategy without the fear of threatening the hearer's face, significantly if the request does not weigh. However, the direct strategy was not used in similar percentages, revealing some gender differences (88% male teachers, 87% females). An explanation for this strategy preference is related to the Algerian cultural values and religious norms, which give teachers high positions and must be treated as prophets in Islam. Moreover, Algerian society is a masculine society, in which men have more power and authority than females; thus, they can be more direct in their requests than females, who must always stay respectful and talk in a low voice and in a polite manner, which in turn supported in Islam that considered the women's high voice as a sin 'sawt al-mara awra' and men are designated as defenders and maintainers of women due to their responsibility bestowed upon them by Allah in the context of the family.

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Therefore, in surah An-Nisa's verse 34, women are devoutly obedient to Allah and their husbands. Male and female students adopted the same strategy to request their classmates because, in this case, the request is performed from low to low (=P), and also to the nature of the Algerian society in which small favours do not require any effort from the speaker to mitigate the hearer's face. Conversely, the percentages of the direct request strategy use were not similar between males and females because, in this case, males use the strategy more conventionally than females due to the Algerian masculine nature.

5. Conclusion

The present study is a comparative study of male and female levels of directness when performing requests in Algerian classroom interaction. In other words, it aims to investigate the impact of gender differences in the level of directness according to the social variables of power, social distance and rate of imposition of request participants in academic settings. For this aim, a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) was adopted to elicit data from female students and teachers at Algerian University. The data analysis revealed significant differences and similarities between Algerian males and females' use of requests determined by the interlocutors' gender and the society's social and religious norms. In this sense, the Algerian males in all situations (students or teachers) were more direct than their female counterparts, who chose to be conventionally indirect in their requests and at the same time to be clear and transparent (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989).

This study considers the widely held belief that women are politer than men because they are more indirect in performing speech acts, which confirms the previous findings that women's speech is more polite than men's speech in cases of face-threatening matters like requests and apologies (e.g., Holmes, 1995; Lakoff, 1975; Tannen, 1990, among others) as women employ more indirect strategies and softening devices than men do (Furkatovna et al., 2021; Holmes, 1995; Scollon & Scollon, 2001). Furthermore, the study proves that politeness and (in)directness are related to the societies' norms and values, meaning that men are direct not because they are impolite but because of the cultural standards of the Algerian society, which is determined as a masculine society.

Although the present paper is different from previous studies that shed light on gender's impact on requests in other cultures than the Arabic context (Khouja, 2015; Xia, 2013, among others), it contributes to the existing literature by new findings on the influence of gender on the Algerian students and teachers' choice of requests strategies in academic context. Besides the pedagogical implications, it allows teachers and students to avoid communication failure in classroom interactions. Despite the fruitful results offered by the present research, some limitations of the study still exist, such as its emphasis on one speech act of 'request' in the academic setting. Thus, what is recommended is to investigate the impact of gender on other speech acts such as apology, thanking, offering, etc.

Second, restricting the scope of this investigation to socio-cultural and gender influence on the speech act of request as it is performed in students' and teachers'

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discourse, the subsequent objective is to investigate the performance of this speech act in different cultures by holding a cross-cultural comparative study to explore how the performance of request differs if the interaction occurs between male and female students and teachers from different cultures. Furthermore, although the DCT offers a substantial amount of data, using other data collection tools is advisable to get refined results.

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Appendix (I):

استبيان

سأكون شاكرة لكم إن قبلتم أن تمنحوا لي بضع دقائق من وقتكم للإجابة عن هذا الاستبيان الذي يهدف إلى جمع معلومات عن أنماط الطلب في الخطاب في القسم الجزائري

ملاحظة: ليس هذا الاستبيان اختبارا من أي نوع فسلوككم اللغوي هو كل ما يهم وإجابتكم ستساعد كثيرا في إتمام بحثي.

يرجي ملء الفراغات أو وضع X في المكان المناسب في ما يلي:

*العمر: _____ الجنس: مذكر: ___مؤنث : ___

*الجنسية: جزائرية:_____ أخرى_____

*الجامعة: _____

*المهنة: _____

من فضلك أجب الآن على الأسئلة بالطريقة التي تبدو لك طبيعية أكثر في هذه المواقف؟

أسئلة الاستبيان:

*الحالة الأولى: التفاعل بين الطالب والاستاذ

الموقف الأول:

ما سمعتش واش قال الاستاذ وحاب تطلب منه يعاودلك.

واش تقول/ي؟

.....

الموقف الثاني:

حاب تطلب من الاستاذ يبعثلك الواجب بالايميل.

واش تقول/ي؟

.....

الموقف الثالث:

غبت على الدروس كيعاد كنت مريض وحاب تطلب من الاستاذ يعطيك حصة او شوية وقت يعاود يشرحلك بعض النقاط.

واش تقول/ي؟

.....

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الحالة الثانية: التفاعل بين الأستاذ و الطالب

الموقف الرابع

حاب تطلب/ي من الطاب يعيد اجابته. واش تقول/ي؟

.....

الموقف الخامس

حاب/ة تطلب/ي من الطالب يبعث الواجب بالايميل.

واش تقول/ي؟

.....

الموقف السادس

حاب/ة تطلب/ي من الطاب يدي كتب للمكتبة.

واش تقول/ي؟

.....

الحالة الثالثة: التفاعل بين الطالب والطالب

الموقف السابع

تكسر قلمك وحاب/ة تطلب/ي من زميل يسلفلك قلم دقيقة.

واش تقول/ي؟

.....

الموقف الثامن

حاب/ة تخرج/ي قبل ما تكمل الحصة وحاب/ة تطلب/ي من زميل يبعثلك الواجب بالايميل.

واش تقول/ي؟

.....

الموقف التاسع

كنت غايب/ة بسبب المرض وحاب/ة تطلب/ي من زميل يساعدك تدير/ي الواجب.

واش تقول/ي؟

.....

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Authors' contributions
Sarra Saadna contributed to the study conception and design, data collection, analysis and interpretation of results, as well as writing the theoretical part and manuscript preparation. *Samia Mouas* reviewed and revised the manuscript, ensuring the theoretical part written by the first author was appropriately paraphrased to avoid plagiarism. Both authors critically reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

Declaration of conflicting interest
The authors declared no conflicts of interest concerning the article's research, authorship, and publication.

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