**82**

# REALIZATION OF SPEECH ACT OF REQUEST IN ENGLISH AND MARATHI

*Dr. A. M. Sarawade, Department of English, Shivaji University, Kolhapur*

*Abstract:*

*The present paper is a modest attempt to assess the way the speech act of Request is performed in English and Marathi. For the purpose, data are collected from 50 post-graduate students using DCT. Three situations each in English and Marathi are used and the respondents are asked to respond to the situations. The analysis of the data shows that there are certain differences in the realization pattern of the speech act in English and Marathi.*

*Keywords: Speech act of Request, English, Marathi, Head Act, Organization Structure, Nature of Speech Act, etc.*

Speech act is defined as 'action performed via utterances' (Yule: 1996). That is, with the help of language, human beings are able to perform social actions. It was Austin (1962) who first realized that with the help of language actions are performed and he further classified different types of speech acts. Austin's theory is further sophisticated and put in more elaborate manner by Searle. Both Austin and Searle have classified speech act of request as one of the directive speech acts. In such directive speech acts language is used to direct the behavior of the addressee in a particular manner. Brown and Levinson (1987) treat the speech act of request as one of the Face-Threatening Speech Acts (FTA). In the performance of such speech acts, the addressee has to make use of appropriate amount of politeness in the light of the P, D and R factors in order not to break the social relations between the addresser and the addressee. The 'P' here stands for the power of the addressee in comparison to that of the addresser; 'D' stands for the social distance between them and 'R' is the potential imposition in the speech act.

The addresser has to use requisite degree of politeness by considering the above three factors. Though the three factors are claimed to be universal, there are cross-cultural differences in their perception and also in the required degree of politeness. Most of the time, a distinction is made between the negative and positive politeness. Negative politeness is individual centric, where a person wants that his/her identity is to be respected by the others and he/she should not be imposed by the others. On the contrary, in positive politeness, a feeling of solidarity, group membership predominates. These two types of politeness are dependent upon the type of the societies in which the language is used. It is generally believed that the individualist societies of Europe and America are negatively polite; whereas the countries in the Eastern side of the world are positively polite. When the FTA like request is performed in a negatively polite society and positively polite society, it is expected that there would be certain differences in the way they are realized. In the light of the this discussion, a modest attempt is made in the preset paper to assess the way the speech act of request is performed by Indian learners of English and Marathi speakers.

In order to assess the realization of speech act of request, the following aspects are taken into account:

**1. Implicit / Explicit Speech Act**

When the performative verb of the concerned speech act is used in the act, it is called explicit speech act. For example,

I request you to close the window.

In this example, the phrase 'I request you' is called a performative verb. On the contrary, when the

performative verb is not used, it is called Implicit speech act. For example,
        Please close the window.

## 2. The Nature of the Speech Act

        Generally three different natures of speech act are identified  direct, conventionally indirect and non-conventionally indirect. The direct nature of speech act is said to be less polite in comparison to indirect ones. The following are the examples of direct and indirect speech acts:
Direct - Please close the door.
When the request is realized with the help of an imperative sentence, as in the above example, it is treated as a direct request.
Conventionally Indirect - Will you please close the door?
Here, a request is realized with the help of an interrogative sentence. Therefore, it is a conventionally indirect request.
Non-Conventionally Indirect - Don't you think it's a bit clod in here?
In this utterance, the addresser has not said anything about the door. However, with the help of the situational clues, the addresser expects the addressee to understand his request and accordingly close the door.

## 3. Semantic Strategy used for the realization of the Head Act (HA)

        Often a speech act is not realized only with a single utterance. However, there is always a basic utterance in every response that carries out the intended speech act. This is called the head act of the speech act. Margaret Mills (1992) identifies the following four strategies that are used as the head act of request speech act.
        1. S's wish or want that H do A.
        2. H's ability to do A
        3. H's desire or willingness to do A
        4. H doing A
(Here, S = Speaker, H = Hearer and A = Action)

## 4. Organization Structure of Speech Act

        As has been pointed out above, generally a speech act is not realized with a single sentence. In addition to the head act, the addresser makes use of pre and / or post head act supportive moves. The use of supportive moves (SM) generally upgrades the politeness of the utterance. The general organization structure of a speech act is {SM} + HA + {SM}.

## 5. Supportive Moves (SM)

        The preference given to a particular supportive move and their number also need to be considered while studying the realization of a speech act.

## 6. Mitigating Devices

        In order to bring down the possible threat to the face of the addressee, certain mitigating devices are commonly used in the performance of FTAs. The most common mitigating devices are - the indirectness (it refers to the indirect speech act), the form of the utterance, address form, negative statement and the use of the down-grader 'please'.
        These six criteria are used to analyze the request response of the selected 50 post-graduate students as respondents to a discourse completion test (DCT). The DCT consists of three situations in English and three situations in Marathi and each of these situations demands the speech act of request as a response.

## Analysis

        The 50 respondents are expected to respond to three situations in English and three situations in Marathi. So, the expected number of responses in English is 150 and that of Marathi is also 150. When 150 responses in English are seen, six responses are not received and 16 received responses are inappropriate. Thus, only 128 responses in English are analyzed. In case of responses in Marathi, 20 received responses

are inappropriate. Therefore, the remaining 130 responses are analyzed.

Out of 128 responses in English, two are realized in Explicit manner and the remaining 126 are in Implicit manner. The following are the examples,

Explicit: Sir, I'm preparing for exam & I solved some papers. I need your guidance. If it is possible, then it is my request to examine my answer sheets.* (Eng 3/21)

(The symbol '*' here and hereafter indicates that the response is ungrammatical.)

**Implicit:**
1. Firstly, I make the call for him, & Just ask to him, will you free for right now, so please droped me. Otherwise, I take his bike.* (Eng 1/13)
2. give me your cell phone, please..* (Eng 2/40)
3. I say that, sir, I solved some previous question paper to check my progress, Please check answer sheet .* (Eng 3/5)

Out of the 130 responses received in Marathi, two are realized in Explicit manner and the remaining 128 in Implicit manner.

**Explicit:**
1. हॅलो सर, शुभ प्रभात! मी काही प्रश्नपत्रिका सोडविल्या आहेत, तरी तुम्ही कृपया माझ्या प्रश्नपत्रीका तपासून द्यावेत, ही विनंती आहे, तरी तुम्ही तपासून द्याल का ?* (मराठी ३/१६)

**Implicit:**
1. मी तीला विनंती करेन की, तुला वेळ असेल तर तु मला घरी सोडशील का? * (मराठी १/१)
2. मी माझ्या मित्राला माझे तात्काळ समस्या सांगुन त्यावर mob वरून घरी फोन करीन. मित्रा, plz मला जरा urgent call करायचा आहे. तुझा mob मिळेल का? * (मराठी २/४३)

The following two tables show the respondents' performance for the nature of the speech act:

**Table 1: Nature of Speech Act of Request (English)**

| Nature of Speech Act | Situations | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Situation 1 | Situation 2 | Situation 3 | |
| Direct | 16 | 32 | 30 | 78 |
| Conventionally Indirect | 20 | 16 | 14 | 50 |
| Inappropriate Response | 13 | 2 | 1 | 16 |
| No response | 1 | 0 | 5 | 6 |
| Total | 50 | 50 | 50 | 150 |

**Table 2: Nature of Speech Act of Request (Marathi)**

| Nature | Situations | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Situation 1 | Situation 2 | Situation 3 | |
| Direct | 4 | 5 | 8 | 17 |
| Conventionally Indirect | 35 | 41 | 37 | 113 |
| Inappropriate Response | 11 | 4 | 5 | 20 |
| Total | 50 | 50 | 50 | 150 |

As the table shows, out of 128 responses 78 are realized in direct form, whereas 50 responses are conventionally indirect speech acts. In contrast to this, out of 130 responses in Marathi, only 17 speech acts are direct in nature and the remaining 113 are conventionally indirect. Thus, 61 % responses in English are direct speech act and only 13% responses in Marathi are direct. It means, in Marathi conventionally indirect form of speech act is preferred.

Direct:
1. Yes. I will ask for lift on the bike. I convince him that, I am getting late and I have no other option to go to home. So please give me lift.*(English 1/26)
2. सर मला ह्या प्रश्नपत्रिका तपासून घ्यायच्या आहेत* (मराठी ३/१५)

Conventionally Indirect:
1. Friend, I want to speak my parents and I have no mobile. Can you give me your mobile for that. *(English 2/38)
2. मित्रा, मला घरी अर्जंट फोन करायचा आहे, थोडं जास्त वेळ बोलायचं आहे, तुझा मोबाईल मिळेल काय ? आता फोन करण्यासाठी बाहेर पण नाही जाऊ शकत मी. * (मराठी २/५)

The semantic strategies used for the speech acts both in English and Marathi is given in Table 3 and 4.

**Table 3: HA Strategy of Speech Act of Request (English)**

| HA Semantic Strategy | Request Situation | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Situation 1 | Situation 2 | Situation 3 | |
| S's wish or want that H do A | 12 | 1 | 3 | 16 (13%) |
| H's ability to do A | 9 | 10 | 7 | 26 (21%) |
| H's desire or willingness to do A | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| H doing A | 14 | 37 | 34 | 85 (67%) |
| Inappropriate Response | 13 | 2 | 1 | 16 |
| No response | 1 | 0 | 5 | 6 |
| Total | 50 | 50 | 50 | 150 |

**Table 4: HA Strategy of Speech Act of Request (Marathi)**

| HA Semantic Strategy | Situation | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Situation 1 | Situation 2 | Situation 3 | |
| S's wish or want that H do A | 24 | 32 | 30 | 86 (67%) |
| H's ability to do A | 7 | 6 | 4 | 17 (13%) |
| H doing A | 8 | 8 | 11 | 27 (21%) |
| Inappropriate Response | 11 | 4 | 5 | 20 |
| Total | 50 | 50 | 50 | 150 |

As the table shows, for English responses all the four strategies are used, whereas in Marathi responses only three are used. Considering the percentage of the semantic strategies used for responses in English, 67% responses use the fourth strategy 'H doing A', whereas 'H's ability to do A' is used as HA strategy in 21% responses and only 13% responses use the first strategy 'S's wish or want that H do A' for HA. In contrast, in Marathi responses, the preference is changed. 67% of responses in Marathi use the first strategy for their HA and the last strategy 'H doing A' is used in 21% of responses. The examples of each strategy both in English and Marathi are given below:

Strategy 1: I want to ask my friend, will you please lift on the bike.* (English, 1/23)
मी त्याला म्हणेल, "आज एक दिवस तू मला घरी सोडशील का ?" * (मराठी १/३४)
Strategy 2: I want to talk with my parents, but I have no any source to talk them. Can you give me your mobile, please?* (English, 2/16)
मला माझ्या घरी फोन करण्यासाठी तूझा मोबाईल मिळू शकेल का. *(मराठी २/२९)
Strategy 4: Sir, I solved one question paper and I want to check from you. This will be better for me. * (English, 3/38)
सर, मी काही आगोदर झालेल्या प्रश्नपत्रिका सोडवून आणलेल्या आहेत त्या तुम्ही तपासून, त्या मधील तुटी सांगुन मार्गदर्शन करावे. * (मराठी ३/३२)

Tables 5 and 6 show the organization structures of the responses both in English and Marathi:

**Table 5: Organization Structure of Speech Act of Request (English)**

| Organization Structure | Situation | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Situation 1 | Situation 2 | Situation 3 | |
| Only HA | 18 | 16 | 18 | 52 |
| SM + HA | 6 | 10 | 11 | 27 |
| HA + SM | 5 | 10 | 4 | 19 |
| SM + HA + SM | 1 | 2 | 6 | 9 |
| (SM) + HA | 3 | 3 | 5 | 11 |
| HA + (SM) | 3 | 7 | 0 | 10 |
| No Appropriate Response | 13 | 2 | 1 | 16 |
| No response | 1 | 0 | 5 | 6 |
| Total | 50 | 50 | 50 | 150 |

**Table 6: Organization Structure of Speech Act of Request (Marathi)**

| Structure | Situation | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Situation 1 | Situation 2 | Situation 3 | |
| Only HA | 8 | 2 | 7 | 17 |
| SM + HA | 11 | 17 | 25 | 53 |
| HA + SM | 4 | 6 | 3 | 13 |
| SM + HA + SM | 5 | 3 | 3 | 11 |
| (SM) + HA | 10 | 12 | 7 | 29 |
| HA + (SM) | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| (SM) + HA + SM | 0 | 5 | 0 | 5 |
| No Appropriate Response | 11 | 4 | 5 | 20 |
| Total | 50 | 50 | 50 | 150 |

Whereas 41% of responses in English have the structure 'Only HA' and the other structures that contain at least one supportive move are used by the remaining respondents. In case of Marathi responses, however, 41% of responses use the structure 'SM + HA' and the other structures are used for the other responses. Moreover, the English responses are realized in six organization patterns, the Marathi responses, on the other hand, make use of seven different organization structures.

In addition to the head act of the speech act, supportive moves are used for decreasing the potential threat to the face of the addressee and to increase the politeness. Table 7 shows the situation-wise supportive moves used for English and Marathi responses.

**Table 7: Situation-wise Supportive Moves for English and Marathi Responses**

| Responses in | Situation 1 | Situation 2 | Situation 3 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| English | 27 | 49 | 39 | 115 |
| Marathi | 49 | 74 | 49 | 172 |

The total number of supportive moves used in English responses is 115 and in Marathi responses is 172. Whereas the force of the majority of supportive moves in English responses is 'the reason for request', 'the enquiry for request' and 'need statement', in Marathi responses, the preferred supportive moves are 'reason for request', 'pre-request' and 'need statement'. As the discussion shows there is no difference in the basic force of supportive moves both in English and Marathi responses, but there is a considerable difference between the numbers of supportive moves used.

In order to bring down the potential threat of the speech act to the face of the addressee, certain mitigating devices are commonly used. In the responses received for the situations, it is found that out of 128 responses in English, some kind of mitigation is used in 126 responses, but in two responses, there is no mitigating device. Similarly, in Marathi responses also, out of the 130 responses, in 128 some kind of mitigating devices are used but in the remaining two, there not a single mitigating device. The commonly

used mitigating devices in the responses both in English and Marathi are 'indirectness', 'interrogative form', use of the word 'please' and address form.

**Findings:**

1. The analysis of the realization of English and Marathi requests shows that there is no difference between the use of Implicit and Explicit manner of the speech act.

2. However, the English requests are mostly realized through the direct form; the Marathi requests, on the other hand, are realized through the conventionally indirect form.

3. In requests in English, all the semantic strategies are employed, but for requests in Marathi only three semantic strategies are preferred.

4. Majority of requests in English prefer the fourth strategy 'H doing A' for their HA, the requests in Marathi, on the other hand, make use of the first strategy 'S's wish or want that H do A' mostly.

5. Whereas for requests in English the 'Only HA' organization structure is commonly used, the requests in Marathi, on the contrary, prefer 'SM + HA' or '(SM) + HA' structures. Thus, the Marathi speakers tend to give reason first and request later.

6. The Marathi speakers have used more number of supportive moves as compared to the requests in English. This possibly is the move of the Marathi speakers to increase positive politeness between the participants.

In spite of the similarities in the situations deployed in both English and Marathi DCT, the analysis of the responses supports the assumption that there are differences in the way request is realized in English and Marathi.

**References:**

1. Austin, J. L. (1962) How to Do Things with Words. Oxford: OUP.

2. Blum-Kulka, S., & Olshtain, E. (1986). Too many words: Length of utterance and pragmatic failure. Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 8, 165-180.

3. Blum-Kulka, S. & House, J. (1989). Cross-cultural and situational variation in requesting behaviour. In S. Blum-Kulka, J. & G. Kapser, (Eds.), Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies (pp.123-154). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

4. Blum-Kulka, S., House, J., & Kasper, G. (1989). Investigating cross-cultural pragmatics. In S. Blum-Kulka, J. & G. Kapser, (Eds.), Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies (pp.1-34). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

5. Brown, P. & Levinson, S. (1978) Universals in language usage: politeness phenomena. In Goody, E. N. (ed.) Questions and Politeness: Strategies in Social Interaction. Cambridge: CUP.

6. Cohen, Andrew (1996) Investigating the production of speech act sets. In Gass, S. M. and J. Neu (Eds.) Speech Acts Across Cultures: Challenges to Communication in a Second Language. (pp. 21-43) Berlin: Mouton de Gruyer.

7. Ellis, R. (1992). Learning to communicate in classroom: A study of two language learners' requests. Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 14, 1-23.

8. Faerch and Kasper (1989) Internal and external modification in interlanguage request realization. In S. Blum-Kulka, J. & G. Kapser, (Eds.), Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies (pp.221-347). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

9. Gass, S. M. and J. Neu (Eds.) (1996). Speech Acts Across Cultures: Challenges to Communication in a Second Language. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyer. Hudson, Thom (2001) Indicators for pragmatic instruction: Some quantitative tools. In Rose, K. R. & Gabriele Kasper (Eds.) Pragmatics in Language Teaching. (pp. 283-300) Cambridge: CUP.

10. Kachru, Yamuna and Smith, Larry (2008) Cultures, Contexts, and World Englishes. New York and London: Routledge.

11.  Kasper, G., & Schmidt, R. (1996). Developmental issues in interlanguage pragmatics. Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 18, 149-169.
12.  Mills, Margaret H. (1992).  Conventionalized Politeness in Russian Requests: A Pragmatic View of Indirectness.  Russian Linguistics, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 65-78
13.  Mills, S (2003) Gender and politeness. Cambridge: CUP.
14.  Searle, J. R. (1969) Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language. Cambridge: CUP.
15.  Yule, George. (1996) Pragmatics. Oxford: OUP.