



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

**INTERLANGUAGE PRAGMATICS OF REQUESTS SITUATED IN POWER  
AND SOLIDARITY BY IRAQI NON-NATIVE AND AMERICAN NATIVE  
SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH IN THE ACADEMIC SETTING**

**HUTHEIFA YOUSIF TURKI**

**FBMK 2018 80**



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**By**

**HUTHEIFA YOUSIF TURKI**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**November 2018**

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## DEDICATION

To:

*My late father*

*A strong and gentle soul who taught me to trust in Allah and believe in hard work*

*My mother,*

*Whose affection, love, encouragement, and prayers of day and night have enabled me to accomplish my goals*

*My beloved wife,*

*For her love, sacrifices, and my shining pearl*

*My kids, who are my source of inspiration and strength during stormy days*

*Brothers and sisters,*

*For their love, support and encouragement*

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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**HUTHEIFA YOUSIF TURKI**

**November 2018**

**Chairman : Associate Professor Sabariah Md Rashid, PhD**  
**Faculty : Modern Languages and Communication**

Interlanguage pragmatics seeks to investigate how the non-native speakers' strategies and patterns in expressing speech acts are different from or similar to those used by native speakers in academic setting. In this light, the current study contributes to the existing literature of interlanguage pragmatics by investigating the use of requests in academic setting by the Iraqi non-native speakers of English compared to that of American native speakers of English. The study comprises four objectives: 1. to compare the use of requests by the Iraqi non-native and American native speakers of English in academic setting, 2. to identify the Iraqi non-native and American native speakers of English's use of requests in relation to power in the academic setting, 3. to identify the Iraqi non-native and American native speakers of English's use of requests in relation to solidarity in the academic setting, and 4. to compare the Iraqi non-native and American native speakers of English's sociopragmatic assessment of social factors in relation to the requests used in the academic setting.

To address these objectives, a multimethod data collection approach was employed, namely (1) a written discourse completion task (WDCT), (2) a scaled-response questionnaire (SRQ), and (3) a retrospective interview to gather data related to the focus of the study. In total, 65 Iraqi non-native and 30 American native speakers of English identified via non-random convenience sampling, participated in the study. Two major theories were adopted in this study: Schuare's (2009) taxonomy of request speech act, and Leech's (2005) Grand strategy of politeness framework. Schuare's taxonomy, which is based on Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) taxonomy of request speech acts was employed as a focal theory to statistically analyse quantitative data. Moreover, Leech's (2005) Grand Strategy of Politeness was utilized for the analysis of the respondents' sociopragmatic assessment of the social variables in relation to requests. The data were also analysed quantitatively using Chi-square analyses and

qualitatively, using thematic analysis to examine data obtained from the conducted interviews.

The findings indicate that while the Iraqi non-native speakers of English tended to use more direct requests than the American native speakers of English, the latter used more conventionally indirect requests than the former in the academic setting. In addition, both the American native and Iraqi non-native speakers of English used frequently similar internal modifiers to make their requests sound more polite. Specifically, there were significant differences in the non-native and native speakers' use of sub-strategies of internal modifiers. Similar use of external modifiers was evident in both groups' data. Furthermore, the findings show that the use of polite requests by the Iraqi non-native and American native speakers of English was influenced by power and solidarity. Finally, the Iraqi non-native speakers of English seemed to show a developmental pattern different from the American native speakers in their assessment of the social variables, suggesting that their sociopragmatic knowledge is still under developed. Accordingly, Iraqi non-native speakers of English are required to improve their pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge so as to express their requests appropriately, acceptable to the target language norms.

The findings of this study would inform English language instructors on the teaching of appropriate requests and strategies that need to be used by non-native speakers, which in turn would enhance English learner's pragmatic knowledge and the effectiveness of their communication with their interlocutors.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PRAGMATIKA ANTARA BAHASA BAGI PERMINTAAN BERBAHASA  
INGGERIS DALAM SITUASI KEKUASAAN DAN PERPADUAN OLEH  
PENUTUR IRAQ BUKAN ASLI DAN PENUTUR AMERIKA ASLI DALAM  
PERSEKITARAN AKADEMIK**

Oleh

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**Fakulti : Bahasa dan Komunikasi Moden**

Pragmatika antara bahasa bertujuan untuk meneliti sama ada corak strategi dan pola yang digunakan oleh penutur bukan asli untuk menampilkan lakuan pertuturan berbeza ataupun serupa dengan lakuan pertuturan yang digunakan oleh penutur asli dalam persekitaran akademik. Sehubungan itu, kajian ini memberikan sumbangan kepada literatur pragmatika antara bahasa yang sedia ada dengan mengkaji penampilan permintaan dalam bahasa Inggeris dalam persekitaran akademik oleh penutur Iraq bukan asli berbanding dengan penutur Amerika asli. Kajian ini mengandungi empat objektif: 1. untuk membuat perbandingan penggunaan permintaan oleh penutur bukan asli bahasa Inggeris dari Iraq dan penutur asli bahasa Inggeris dari Amerika dalam persekitaran akademik, 2. untuk mengenal pasti penggunaan permintaan oleh penutur bukan asli bahasa Inggeris dari Iraq dan penutur asli bahasa Inggeris dari Amerika BERKAITAN KUASA dalam persekitaran akademik, 3. untuk mengenal pasti penggunaan permintaan oleh penutur bukan asli bahasa Inggeris dari Iraq dan penutur asli bahasa Inggeris dari Amerika berkaitan solidarity dalam persekitaran akademik, dan 4. untuk membuat perbandingan penilaian sosiopragmatik terhadap faktor sosial yang berkaitan penggunaan permintaan penutur bukan asli bahasa Inggeris dari Iraq dan penutur asli bahasa Inggeris dari Amerika dalam persekitaran akademik.

Untuk menangani semua objektif tersebut, pendekatan pengumpulan data pelbagai kaedah digunakan, iaitu: (1) tugas penyelesaian wacana bertulis (WDCT); (2) soal selidik respons berskala (SRQ); dan (3) temu bual retrospektif untuk mengumpulkan data yang berkaitan fokus kajian. Secara keseluruhan, 65 orang penutur bahasa Inggeris Iraq bukan asli dan 30 orang penutur Amerika asli telah dikenal pasti melalui persampelan mudah tanpa rawak untuk menyertai kajian ini. Dua teori utama telah

diterima guna dalam kajian ini, iaitu: taksonomi lakuan penuturan permintaan Schuare (2009), dan kerangka strategi kesantutan penting Leech (2005). Taksonomi Schuare yang berdasarkan taksonomi tindakan Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), bertindak sebagai teori tumpuan untuk menganalisis data kuantitatif secara statistik. Selain itu, Strategi Kesantutan Penting Leech (2005) digunakan dalam penilaian sosiopragmatik persepsi responden tentang pemboleh ubah sosial ini berkaitan dengan merumuskan permintaan. Data ini dianalisis secara kuantitatif dengan menggunakan analisis Chi-square dan secara kualitatif dengan menggunakan analisis tematik untuk meneliti data yang diperoleh daripada temu bual yang dijalankan.

Penemuan ini membuktikan bahawa penutur bahasa Inggeris Iraq bukan asli cenderung menggunakan lebih banyak permintaan secara langsung berbanding dengan penutur bahasa Inggeris Amerika asli yang menggunakan lebih banyak permintaan secara tidak konvensional dalam persekitaran akademik. Di samping itu, kedua-dua penutur bahasa Inggeris Amerika asli dan penutur Iraq bukan asli kerap menggunakan pengubahsuaian dalaman yang serupa untuk menampilkan permintaan mereka dengan lebih santun. Secara khusus, terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan dalam penggunaan strategi kecil pengubahsuaian dalaman antara penutur bukan asli dengan penutur asli. Begitu juga, penggunaan pengubahsuaian luar jelas dibuktikan dalam data kedua-dua kumpulan. Malah, hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa penampilan permintaan dalam bahasa Inggeris yang santun oleh penutur Iraq bukan asli dan penutur Amerika asli dipengaruhi oleh kekuasaan dan perpaduan. Akhir sekali, penutur bahasa Inggeris Iraq bukan asli menunjukkan pola perkembangan yang berbeza daripada penutur Amerika asli dalam penilaian mereka terhadap pemboleh ubah kontekstual. Data menunjukkan bahawa pengetahuan sosiopragmatik mereka masih dalam perkembangan. Oleh itu, penutur bahasa Inggeris Iraq bukan asli perlu meningkatkan pengetahuan pragmatik dan sosiopragmatik mereka untuk menampilkan permintaan dengan wajar, dan yang boleh diterima sejajar dengan norma bahasa sasaran.

Penemuan kajian ini menyarankan tentang perlunya tenaga pengajar bahasa Inggeris mengajar penampilan permintaan dan strategi yang sesuai digunakan oleh penutur bukan asli yang boleh meningkatkan pengetahuan pragmatik bahasa Inggeris pelajar dan meningkatkan keberkesanan komunikasi mereka dengan rakan berbual atau berbincang.



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Finally, I would like to express my deep sense of gratitude to everyone who have encouraged me throughout my research journey.

This thesis was submitted to the Senate of the Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
INNSE	Iraqi Non-native Speakers of English
ANSE	American Native Speakers of English
SAT	Speech Act Theory
ILP	Interlanguage Pragmatics
SL	Second language
FL	First language
MDCT	Multiple-Choice Discourse Comprehension
CCSARP	Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project
DCTs	Discourse Completion Tasks
UK	United Kingdom
OPT	Oxford Placement Test
COPT	Cartoon Oral Production Task
USA	United States of America
FTA	Face-Threatening Act
WDCTs	Written Discourse Completion Tasks
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
C	Category
P	Power
Sol	Solidarity
D	Direct

CI	Conventionally Indirect
NCI	Non-conventionally Indirect
S	Situation
SI	Iraqi Student
SA	American Student
M	Mean
SRQ	Scaled-Response Questionnaire
SD	Standard Deviation



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

With the increased number of English as a Foreign Language (henceforth EFL) learners studying abroad and the advancement of technology and digital social media platforms, there is an increasing need for learning English as a means of communication. In order to satisfy such a need, much attention has been paid to learning English and the social factors which influence the appropriate use of language.

In line with this, learning English as a foreign or second language has had an essential role not only in enabling effective communication between people, but also getting high quality education, running business in the global marketplace, keeping abreast with research in line with the changes of the world, and making and keeping social relations between individuals of different cultures and languages. Achieving such functions of language, requires mastery of the English language and its appropriate usage for various purposes and contexts. This is mandatory since learning any language requires learners to be competent in its pragmatics being one of the important components of language competence that enables learners to use the language in its appropriate context and culture (Thomas, 1983). Being pragmatically competent, learners can perform their speech acts, notably requests, which are the focus of this study. In this regard, learners must use the most appropriate strategies to form their requests. These strategies are the head act and the peripheral constituents. While the head act of request can be realised in terms of three main strategies: direct strategies, conventionally indirect strategies, and non-conventionally indirect strategies, the peripheral constituents (internal and external modifications) are used to mitigate, intensify, or support the force of request (Blum-Kulka et al (1989).

In relation to the academic context, pragmatics plays a vital role in guiding learners to better choose the most appropriate linguistic forms. In this regard, several researchers (Eslami & Rasekh, 2008; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Mohammed, 2012) found it necessary and important for learners in the academic context to be pragmatically competent so as to use their linguistic forms appropriately. Requests, as the focus of this study, must be expressed pragmalinguistically appropriate to social relations between interlocutors communicating with each other in the academic context. Thus, the next section discusses how requests, as a fundamental speech act in pragmatics, are used in the academic setting in relation to power and solidarity.

### **1.1.1 The Pragmatics of Requests within Power and Solidarity in Academic Setting**

The relation between requests and their uses according to the social relations between interlocutors communicating with each other in an academic setting is best clarified in relation to pragmatics. In this sense, pragmatics according to Mey (2001), concerns the role of society in defining pragmatics. This means that pragmatics conjugates the linguistic aspects and social rules that govern the use of these linguistic aspects in the academic context. Pragmatics comprises two components: 1) pragmalinguistics, which refers to the linguistic forms used to convey the intention of certain speech acts and 2) sociopragmatics, which refers to the role of social factors such as class, power, solidarity, and gender in determining the linguistic forms used to express speech acts appropriately in the academic setting (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983). This is in tandem with the views of Austin (1962) and Searle (1965, 1975) who stressed that the focus of pragmatics is on linguistic acts, such as order, apologies, and requests, which can be performed by speakers' use of language. Hence, the linguistic acts which are commonly known as speech acts are considered the basic element in pragmatics (Krulatz, 2012).

Amongst these speech acts are requests, which are characterized by the variation in their performance according to the power given to persons in terms of their social status in their society (Stubbs, 1983). This means that the social variables play an important role in determining the linguistic forms chosen to express speech acts appropriately in the academic setting. In this light, Stubbs (1983) stated that "there is a relationship between the speech act performed and the social role of the speaker" (p. 161). On this basis, speech acts can be produced directly and indirectly according to the social role enacted by interlocutors. Thus, the notions of directness and indirectness of speech acts are highly related to these social variables, namely power and solidarity, to the extent that they govern the choice between indirectness and directness when addressing others politely or impolitely (Leech, 2005, p. 8). Accordingly, the choice between directness and indirectness in relation to politeness is controlled by the relationship between the interlocutors in a given situation. For instance, non-native speakers of English such as English as a Second Language (hereafter ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (hereafter, EFL) learners are required to use strategies of speech acts that are appropriate to the social factors that relate speakers and hearers with each other.

Amongst these social factors which govern the choice of linguistic forms according to the context of situation are power and solidarity which are the social norms that the user of any language can find present in any act of communication (Fairclough, 1989). Accordingly, in preserving power and solidarity relations, certain strategies pertaining to the choice of linguistic forms, especially in an academic setting must be used appropriately. For example, in English university settings, it is inappropriate for the students to request from their professors having higher power using direct or imperative forms. Since the present study concerns how requests are made in the Iraqi academic setting, the following section discusses this setting.



### **1.1.2 Iraqi Academic Setting**

Iraqi universities in the 1960s and 1970s were among the top developed universities in the Middle East. They were characterized by their free system of education, which was considered a good model in the Arab countries (Abbood, 2016; Harb, 2008; Ihsanoglu, 2007; Jawad, 2007). This is evident in the great number of universities, colleges, institutions, and research centers established in Iraq during the decade (Ihsanoglu, 2007). However, this was not the case after the Iraq-Kuwait war in 1990 as the education system entirely deteriorated and declined (Harb, 2008). This was due to the internal instability which led to the immigration of many academics and professionals (Al Samaraie, 2007; Harb, 2008; Watenpaugh, 2003).

However, these constraints make it challenging to apply more prosperous and developed education system in the Iraqi academic setting (Watenpaugh, 2003). This may be because of the difficulty in keeping abreast with the research in line with the changes of the world (Al Samaraie, 2007; Harb, 2008). For example, in this system, English is taught in the Iraqi universities as a foreign language. Most of these universities use the same syllabus and the same textbooks assigned and distributed freely by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

To keep pace with the changing world, the need to learn English in Iraq increased in 2010 when the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific required taking English tests such as Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), International English Language Testing System (ILETS), or English Placement Test (EPT) as a condition for admission to postgraduate programmes. The required score for TOEFL ranged between 350 and 525 or higher. In addition, the ministry has specified that one of the necessary concerns of teaching English in Iraqi universities is to enable the Iraqi EFL learners to communicate successfully with native speakers of English (Issac & Jamil, 2010 cited in Abbood, 2016).

However, despite the emphasis on learning English, many Iraqi EFL learners are still unable to achieve a high proficiency level in English (Issac & Jamil, 2010 cited in Abbood, 2016). This is because of the limited exposure to and use of English in the classroom and its rare use outside the classroom, which seem to affect the learners' speech in English, particularly, in terms of their vocabulary and performing certain speech acts (Darweesh & Mehdi, 2016; Harb, 2008). The latter, which is the concern related to the area of interlanguage pragmatics, which focuses on how non-native speakers of a target language use and acquire that language properly (Eslami & Rasekh, 2008; Kasper & Rose, 1999).

### **1.1.3 Interlanguage pragmatics and second language acquisition**

The main concern of interlanguage pragmatics is the investigation of how second language (SL) or foreign language (FL) learners function in acquiring or learning a second or foreign language. One of the aspects focused on is how speech acts as the

basic elements of pragmatics are produced and understood by second language (SL) or foreign language (FL) learners in any act of communication (Ellis, 1994) or, specifically, features and factors that contribute to effective communication. Accordingly, interlanguage pragmatics encompasses how SL learners behave and express themselves linguistically and how they develop their abilities to communicate with others in terms of being familiar with the social and cultural norms of the language they employ (Wang, 2011; Widdowson, 1990). Within this area, power and solidarity, two social variables included in this study must be taken into consideration when communicating with others, for they have significant bearing on what and/or how one would say something. In this regard, the influence of power and solidarity on any speech act can be measured in terms of the linguistic forms chosen by a speaker to express requests appropriately according to the social relations between different interlocutors.

Another view point regarding the relation between interlanguage pragmatics and second language acquisition was presented by Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993) who considered interlanguage pragmatics as a subfield of second language acquisition. In the sense that it has certain and particular features that distinguish it from other fields of linguistics. On the other hand, it is a subfield of pragmatics on the basis that it concerns the sociopragmatic, psychopragmatic, and the pragmalinguistic aspects that govern how language is used (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993, p. 1). Similarly, Kasper and Rose (2002) claimed that interlanguage pragmatics found its foundation in two interrelated and different disciplines, namely, second language acquisition and pragmatics.

Interlanguage pragmatics has stemmed from cross-cultural studies (Kasper and Dahl, 1991; Kasper and Rose, 1999). Its main focus is to investigate how non-native speakers of a given language produce and understand the speech acts of their language and, in addition, how they acquire and develop their knowledge about the use of these speech acts and other aspects of pragmatics (Barron, 2003; Faerch & Kasper, 1989; Kasper & Dahl, 1991; Kasper & Rose, 1999). Kasper and Schmidt (1996) also stressed that the main concern of interlanguage pragmatics is to investigate how the non-native speakers' strategies and patterns are different from or similar to those used by native speakers in expressing speech acts.

Arguably, it can be said that interlanguage pragmatics may be a subfield, which is interdisciplinary and has emerged from both cross-cultural pragmatics and second language acquisition research (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 2005; Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). Its concern is the comparison of the use of linguistic strategies as influenced by social factors across different cultures and languages and how these linguistic strategies are perceived by the learners of a second language. Bu (2011, p. 28), for instance, emphasized that non-native speakers of a given language are different from the native speakers of a language in their performance of speech acts in communication as they have "limited knowledge of L2's pragmatic rules" (Bu, 2011, p. 28). In other words, understanding others' culture and social relations is a crucial factor in making communication successful.

To this end, interlanguage pragmatics is considered the most comprehensive area that subsumes all the aforementioned aspects and brings different languages, cultures, social relations, and areas on one ground. It has been the focus of many studies in applied linguistics (Banerjee & Carrell, 1988; Takahashi & DuFon, 1989; Al-Gahtani, & Al-Shatter, 2012).

Thus, in the light of the above discussion, it is, a necessary and warranted to conduct a study, particularly, in the EFL academic context which focuses on the role of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects of English in the use of speech acts. With this in mind, the present study focuses on the production of request speech acts by native and non-native speakers of English in relation to power and solidarity within an EFL academic setting. As far as the current study is concerned, unlike the American native speakers of English, the Iraqi postgraduate EFL learners may express their requests in a different manner from that by American native speakers of English.

#### **1.1.4 The native speakers and non-native speakers of English**

As far as the native and non-native speakers of English are concerned, Medgyes (2001) argued that native speakers of a language differ from those non-native in terms of language proficiency and behavior. In this regard, non-native speakers of English are those for whom English is a foreign or second language and living in the EFL environment and speak the same native language, i.e. Arabic. Put differently, A “non-native Speaker” of English (NNS) "is someone who learned a language other than" his native language "as a first language, and is learning/learned English as an additional language (L2)" (Brown, 2013, pp. 8-9). A native speaker of English, on the other hand, as argued by Brown (2013, p.8) "is someone whose main or first language (L1) is English and who has learned it first as a child".

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

In learning any second or foreign language, the relation between the linguistic forms of that language and their functions in any act of communication is crucial to explore how speech acts can convey different messages depending on the context of situation. To convey and understand such messages well, it is necessary for second or foreign language learners to be pragmatically competent (Canale & Swain, 1980). In other words, they should be aware of the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects of the language they are producing their speech acts in, as they have a substantial role in producing the speech acts, such as requests.

Thus, any misuse of the pragmatic aspects mentioned above may lead to a miscommunication between native and non-native speakers of a language and this, in turn, may lead to a pragmatic failure (Al-Momani, 2009; Barron, 2003; Jorda, 2005). Such a pragmatic failure, is either a pragmalinguistic failure, which refers to the outcome of either the incorrect use of the linguistic forms of a target language, or a sociopragmatic failure, which results from the inconsideration of any social factors of

the target language (Barron, 2003; Thomas, 1983). This pragmatic failure could be common among Iraqi EFL learners, such as the misuse of linguistic aspects or the inconsideration of social factors related to the interlocutors when requesting from others in English. A possible reason for this could be the speakers' reliance on their native language's conventions and social norms when communicating in English. In this light, Iraqi postgraduate EFL learners' in an academic setting also have the tendency to transfer their native language's social norms to their target language (in this case, English), which is known as negative pragmatic transfer (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993). For example, the Iraqi EFL learners may use request strategies based on power and solidarity used in their native language when communicating with their English speaking interlocutors in the academic setting (university), which may be incorrect sociopragmatically.

Accordingly, in order to communicate with American native speakers of English (ANSE) successfully and politely, the Iraqi EFL learners must be sociopragmatically competent in the target language's social norms and language use. In other words, these learners must learn to make requests in English appropriately; they must take into consideration the use of polite language and the social factors that influence the use of requests. Thus, not only must the EFL learners be aware of the claim that the use of speech act does vary across cultures and languages, they must also be pragmatically competent (Blum-Kulka, 1980; Eslami-Rasekh, 2005)

However, the Iraqi EFL learners lack the opportunity to learn pragmatics as their exposure to English is limited to the classroom. This may result in the learners' limited pragmlinguistic repertoire which leads to the inappropriate use of different pragmatic strategies such as "directness and indirectness, routines, and a large range of linguistic forms" (Kasper & Rose, 2001, p. 2) in the academic setting. In this sense, directness is related to pragmlinguistics which is considered the source which enables learners to express speech acts either directly or indirectly (Kasper & Rose, 2001). Therefore, for learners to be pragmatically competent, they must learn how to use their speech acts appropriately. Put differently, they must learn how, where, and when to use their levels of directness so as to be polite.

Politeness, according to Brown and Levinson (1987), is a vital phenomenon considered when formulating requests. Closely related to the use of speech acts such as requests is the concept of politeness which plays an important role in minimizing the force of request formulated towards others. Leech (2005) states that all societies share the same scales of politeness, but they are different in the values assigned by interlocutors to the social factors of the culture under study. This means that social factors such as power, solidarity, the values of what is transacted, rights and obligations, and group-membership (Leech, 2005) are common to all societies and cultures but how they are perceived is different from one culture to another (see section 2.6). For example, age and role are of a higher value in Eastern societies than in Western ones (Brookins, 2010). Thus, Iraqi EFL learners who are part of the Eastern societies, might face a problem when interacting with native speakers of that language, which may cause them to lose their face.

Several second and foreign language studies have shown that learners of a second or foreign language often rely on their native cultural and social factors when communicating with native speakers in a target language in a given social situation (Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Cohen & Olshtain, 1981; Fordyce & Fukazawa, 2004; Garcia, 1989; House, 1988; Olshtain, 1983). A much earlier study by Bastos (1996) investigated the influence of power and solidarity on the performance of requests in the situational context of health between the staff of health office of a Brazilian public company. The findings revealed that request strategies vary according to the professional and social identities of the staff. In a recent study, Nemani and Rasekh (2016) investigated the influence of power, solidarity, and social class on the variation of speech acts performed in movies. The findings revealed that variations in the strategies of speech acts resulted from the effect of native language's social class, power, and solidarity crafted by the script writer.

To date, however, only a small number of studies on requests have focused on the association of power and solidarity and the production of requests (Bastos, 1996; Nemani & Rasekh, 2016).

In the same vein, another challenge may be associated with the claim that a few studies collected data from different Arab participants but "did not specify the Arab participants' countries of origin" (Al-Momani, 2009, p. 7). This is in line with the assumption that since the people of all the Arab countries communicate the same Arabic language, they are alike in their behavior when expressing their speech acts (Bodman & Eisenstein, 1988; Cohen & Olshtain, 1993; Scarcella, 1979; Umar, 2004; Al-Momani, 2009). Against this assumption, Al-Momani (2009) and Al-Issa (1998) argued that it is a mistake to consider the behavior of all Arabs in expressing speech acts in the same way. In this regard, the Iraqi people are not an exception from Arabs as they might also express their speech acts differently.

However, despite a great deal of studies that have been conducted to investigate how requests are used by non-native speakers of English (Al-Dulaimi, 2014; Al-Fetlawi & Al-Jubouri, 2009; Bastos, 1996; Deveci & Hmida 2017; Nemani & Rasekh, 2016; Stavans & Shafran, 2017), little studies were made to compare nonnative speakers' of English use of requests with those of native speakers, particularly, in relation to power and solidarity. Based on the earlier discussion on related studies, this study addressed the gap in the literature in the following manner. First, the use of requests in the Iraqi academic setting and culture is under researched. In fact, "the entire area of ILP research in Arabic is still in its infancy. Thus, much can and should be done to bridge this important research gap" (Al-Momani, 2009, p. 147). Second, request is a face-threatening and open ended speech act that warrants further investigation as there are issues related to making requests which are unanswered (Al-Gahtani & Alkahtani, 2012) because of its varied use in everyday life as per relation between the interlocutors. Third, little information might be available on the influence of power and solidarity on the use of request in the Iraqi academic setting (Abdul Sattar, 2013) using triangulated data, that is, the use of three instruments: the Written Discourse Completion Task (WDCT) questionnaire, Scaled-response questionnaire, and

Retrospective interview (see chapter 3.5), and Schauer's (2009) coding scheme of request. In this light, the present study was conducted to investigate the influence of power and solidarity on the use of request strategies in English by the Iraqi non-native speakers of English (hereafter, INNSE) and American native speakers of English (ANSE). The reason for the use of the ANSE is to compare their use of requests with those used by the INNSE.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

1. To compare the use of requests by INNSE and ANSE in academic setting.
2. To identify the INNSE and ANSE's use of requests in relation to power in academic setting.
3. To identify the INNSE and ANSE's use of requests in relation to solidarity in academic setting.
4. To compare the INNSE and ANSE's sociopragmatic assessment of the social factors in relation to requests used in academic setting.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

Based on the objectives of the study, five major research questions are formulated.

1. To what extent is the INNSE's use of requests in academic setting different from that of the ANSE in terms of the following:
  - i. the main strategies and sub-strategies of request head act
  - ii. the internal modifiers
  - iii. the external modifiers
2. To what extent is the use of requests by the INNSE and ANSE in academic setting related to social power?
3. To what extent is the use of requests by the INNSE and ANSE in academic setting related to social solidarity?
4. How does the INNSE's sociopragmatic assessment of the social variables in relation to requests compare to that of the ANSE in the academic setting?

### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

This study was conducted to cover the use of requests within the area of interlanguage pragmatics. In this regard, all the types of acts except the directives, are beyond the scope of this study. Request speech acts from amongst directives acts are dealt with in this study. It also covers how requests are produced in two academic settings: the Iraqi and American universities. For the purpose of comparison, two types of data were collected: data collected from Iraqi EFL learners whose major is English and American native speakers of English. In addition, the focus is on pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects, main and sub-strategies of request speech act, and the sociopragmatic assessment of the social relations between interlocutors. Based on this,

requests produced by the INNSE and the ANSE were examined in terms of social power and solidarity relations between interlocutors. Moreover, the study concerns the use of requests in English across two cultures: Iraqi and American. Furthermore, age and gender were beyond the scope of this study as they may influence the results of the study.

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

Misunderstanding other cultures may result from the misuse of the suitable linguistic forms in a given act of communication (Barron, 2003). This 'intercultural misunderstanding' (Barron, 2003, p. 1) is almost understood as being impolite. Since an emphasis in this study is on the use of requests situated in power and solidarity of the INNSE and ANSE, the findings of the present study would provide insights into how understanding a target language, culture, social factors, and pragmatic competence may reduce the risk of being impolite.

The study also hopes to add new knowledge in the area of interlanguage pragmatics by examining INNSE's use of requests, on which little we know. Moreover, it may add a new perspective to the relation situated between language and society by investigating how requests as speech act are associated with social variables such as power and solidarity. Furthermore, it may contribute in improving the non-native speakers' pragmatic competence in a target language by providing them with the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects appropriate to academic setting. In this sense, non-native speakers of a target language may be able to communicate successfully with native speakers of that language. Finally, the study may be significant in the sense that it may provide a general source to those who are interested in applied linguistics and second language acquisition.

## **1.7 Theoretical Framework**

Since the nature of the current study focused on comparing requests used by INNSE and ANSE across two distinct cultures: Iraqi and American, Hostede's (2010) model and dimensions of culture were adopted in this study. This is because govern the pragmatic issues which comprise politeness and request strategies. In this regard, two major theories have been adopted in this study: Schauer's (2009) taxonomy of request speech act, and Leech's (2005) Grand strategy of politeness framework. Schauer's taxonomy, which is based on Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) taxonomy of request speech act, was employed as a focal theory in the present study. Since the use of requests in a target language is conditioned by its social variables, this study also integrated a secondary theory, the employment of which indicates how requests are influenced by these social variables. The social variables (power, intimacy, benefit, obligation, and group membership) are discussed under Leech's (2005) Grand Strategy of Politeness to assess these social variables sociopragmatically in relation to requests used by interlocutors in situations under investigation.

Studies employing interlanguage pragmatic framework of requests have shown how the strategies of requests were realized across different cultures and languages (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Faerch & Kasper, 1989; Trosborg, 1995; Schauer, 2009). Schauer's (2009) taxonomy of request was employed in this study as the basic framework for the coding scheme of the data analysis. The taxonomy is based on Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) taxonomy of requests and its modification by Faerch and Kasper (1989) and Trosborg (1995) (see chapter 2.4). However, nine strategies and sub-strategies of requests were used in Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) study. They were graded according to the level of directness from the most direct to the most indirect. Thus, when analyzing requests, the strategies can be classified into two parts: the head act and the peripheral constituents. While the head act of request can be realised in terms of three main strategies: direct strategies, conventionally indirect strategies, and non-conventionally indirect strategies, the peripheral constituents (internal and external modifications) are used to mitigate, intensify, or support the force of request (See chapter 2.4).

Similar to this taxonomy is Faerch and Kasper's (1989) classification of requests into head act, internal modifiers, and external modifiers. Based on Blum-Kulka et al.'s taxonomy (1989), Trosborg classified the internal modification into downgraders identified in terms of syntactic and lexical features to mitigate the force of request, and upgraders used to intensify the force of request. External modifiers, on the other hand, are defined as statements used by the speakers before or after the head act to support the force of the head act. Trosborg (1995) and Schauer (2009) later replicated Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) classification of external modification with further modification (see chapter 3.8.1). As a result, Schauer (2009) modified his taxonomy of requests in a way that would cover as many as possible number of strategies appropriate to different cultures. Following Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), Schauer stated that different strategies such as head act and internal and external are involved in the formulation of request speech acts. Accordingly, the head act of request is realized in three main strategies: 1) direct which includes imperatives, hedged performative, unhedged performative, locution derivable, and want statement; 2) conventionally indirect which comprises suggestory formulas, availability, prediction, permission, willingness, and ability; and 3) non-conventionally indirect which covers strong and mild hints (See chapter 3.8.1).

As for the internal modifiers, Schauer (2009) classified them into two types: downgraders and upgraders. Downgraders, in turn, consists of two types: 1) lexical downgraders which include downtoner, politeness marker, understate, past tense modals, consultative device, hedge, aspect, and marked modality; and syntactic downgraders which include conditional clause, appreciative embedding, tentative embedding, tag question, and negation. The upgraders, on the other hand, involve sub-strategies such as intensifier, time intensifier, time intensifier plus intensifier, expletive, and overstater (see chapter 3). The external modifiers, on the other hand, encompass modifiers such as alerter, preparator, head, grounder, disarmer, imposition of minimizer, sweetener, promise of reward, smalltalk, appreciator, and considerator (See chapter 3). Consequently, the variety of strategies proposed by Schauer (2009) for formulating requests make Schauer's (2009) framework more comprehensive and

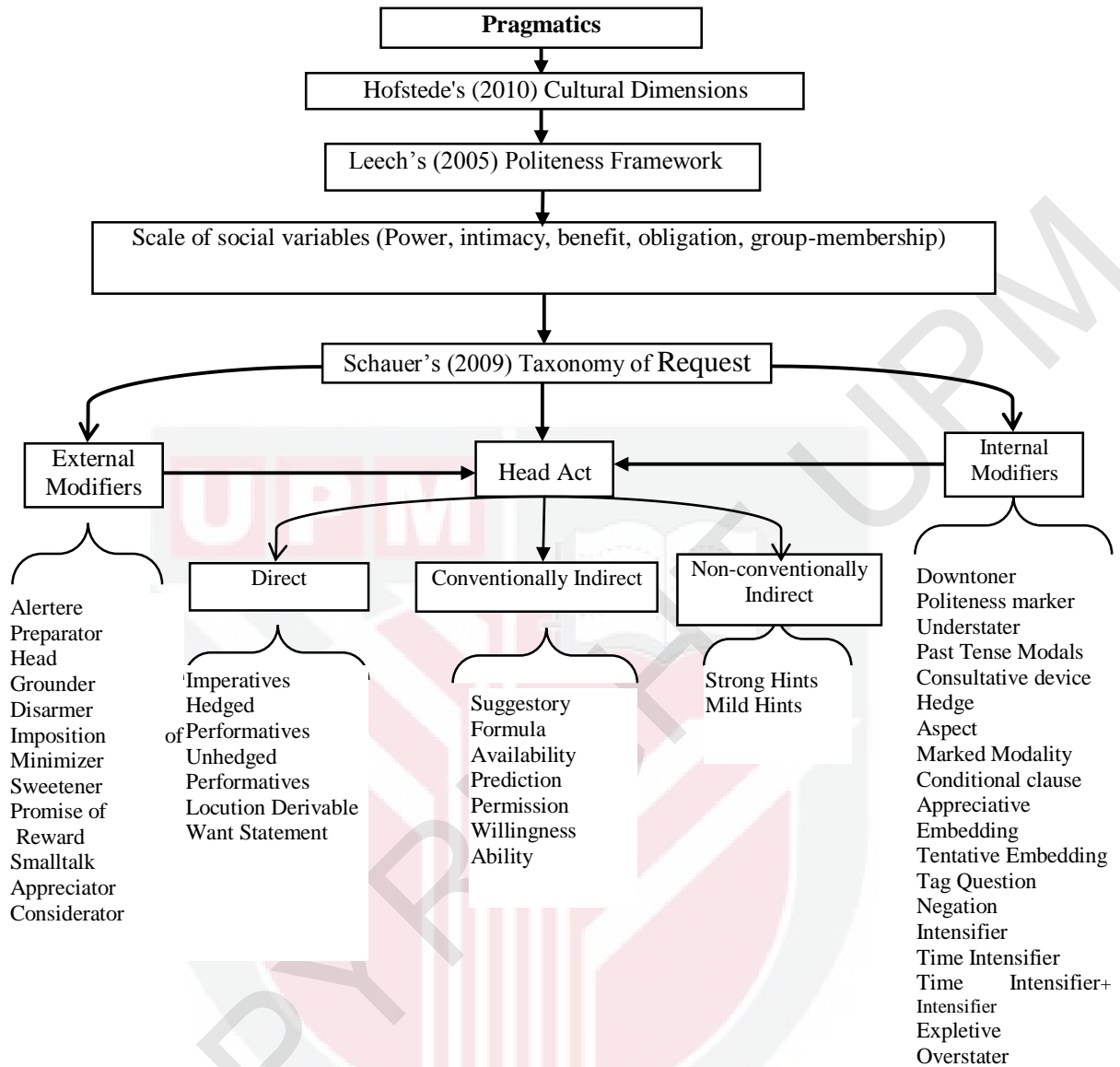


thus, more applicable in different cultures. The present study employed Schauer's (2009) taxonomy of requests for its data analysis of the first part of the study (pragmalinguistics), which will be further discussed in chapter three.

Regarding the second part (sociopragmatics) of the current study, Leech's (2005) politeness theory is employed as a secondary theory to assess the use of requests sociopragmatically. Since politeness is considered an interdisciplinary phenomenon, its employment in the use of requests is conditioned by the social variables (power, intimacy, benefit, obligation, and group membership) proposed in Leech's (2005) scale. The scale comprises important social variables affecting the use of speech acts in different situations (see chapter 3). In this respect, Leech (2005) proposed this scale to assess the degree to which interlocutors are polite when making requests from others. Therefore, the sociopragmatic assessment of these social variables is essential and important as they control the speaker to choose the most appropriate linguistic forms when interacting with others.

Thus, since Leech (2005) offers such sociopragmatic assessment mentioned above, the most related theory of politeness to be adopted here is the construct of Leech's (2005:12) Grand Strategy of Politeness. It is a modified theory of the previous Leech's (1983) politeness theory. It was supposed to be universal for all cultures. In his new theory, Leech (2005) states that the speaker, to be more polite, should place a high value on "what pertains to other speakers or a low value on what pertains to the speaker himself". The notion of "face" produced by Brown and Levinson (1987) was restated by Leech (2005) to mean that a person maintains his positive 'self-image' or 'self-esteem' to reflect his appreciation and respect by others, and express his politeness towards others. Accordingly, politeness is classified into "negative politeness" which is proposed to catch up with the wants of the "negative face" and the "positive politeness" which concerns the goal of the person to enhance face (Leech, 2005, pp. 4-19). Leech (2005) proposed his modified theory to reduce the risk of the "misunderstanding of pragmatic constraints". In addition, in contrast to Brown and Levinson (1987), his theory aims to shed light on the eastern culture.

On the whole, the theory of request as the focal one aimed to provide the INNSE with the patterns and ways that enable them to perform requests with others just like native speakers of English. On the other hand, Leech's (2005) Grand Strategy of Politeness was used as a secondary theory to investigate the sociopragmatic assessment of the aforementioned social variables proposed by Leech (2005) when requests are performed by the INNSE as compared to their counterparts of the ANSE. The proposed study adopts these theories to investigate how requests were formulated and used among the INNSE and ANSE. Figure 1.1 illustrates the relation between the theories adopted in this study.



**Figure 1.1 : Theoretical Framework**

### 1.8 Conceptual Framework

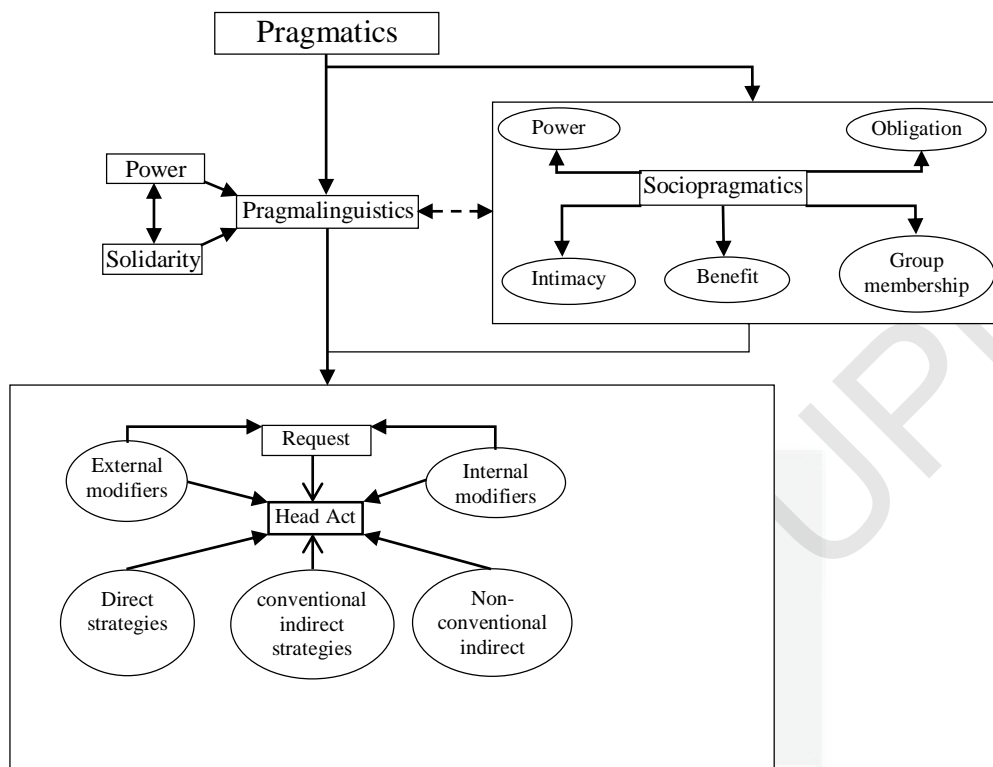
The conceptual framework in the current study shows the role of pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics in formulating requests appropriately according to the social norms of a language, as illustrated in Figure 1.2.

Based on the major concepts displayed in Figure 1.2, the present study explored how the INNSE's pragmatic competence might be improved via producing request strategies appropriate to the social factors of that language in American native-like way. This indicates that two types of variables (dependent and independent) should be taken into consideration when requesting from others. To be much clearer, speakers

depend on the social factors of their interlocutors when choosing from their pragmatic competence the preferred linguistic forms that make their request more or less polite. Therefore, before formulating any speech act, the speaker should examine his relation to the hearer in order to decide which linguistic forms are appropriate to a given context (Leech, 1983). Hence, because of his relation with the hearer, the speaker can determine what is appropriate and what is not. It is necessary for the speaker to be aware of the social variables that relate him to the hearer.

The conceptual framework of this study (Figure 1.2) shows the influence of power and solidarity as independent social variables proposed by Brown and Gilman (1960) on the performance of requests. On the other hand, it was also framed to indicate the importance of the INNSE and ANSE's sociopragmatic assessment of the social variables (power, intimacy, benefit, obligation, and group membership) presented by Leech (2005) in guiding the choice of linguistic forms used in formulating requests in the situations under study. Leech indicated that these social variables are independent and fairly general to all societies, but their perception is different from one culture to another; their awareness enables interlocutors to communicate with others successfully. This is on the basis that they control the choice of the preferred strategies of politeness and request in any act of communication.

Consequently, any inconsideration of these social variables in formulating any speech act results in pragmatic failure; pragmatic failure may be caused in terms of pragmatic transfer from native language to the target language. Figure 1.2 illustrates the influence of the aforementioned social variables on the use of less or more polite requests by the INNSE as compared to the ANSE.



**Figure 1.2 : Conceptual framework**

The use of this conceptual framework might be useful to explore the relation between requests in English and the social variables that influence their uses in that language.

## 1.9 Definition of Key Terms

### 1.9.1 Interlanguage Pragmatics

Interlanguage pragmatics refers to “the study of nonnative speaker’s comprehension, use, and acquisition of linguistic action in L2” (Kasper, 1998, p.184). This means that it focuses on the linguistic strategies of a target language used by non-native speakers when communicating with native speakers of that target language. Therefore, it can be said that interlanguage pragmatics is considered the source which enables non-native speakers of a target language to choose the linguistic forms that may be appropriate to the social variables of that target language. Thus, interlanguage pragmatics can be measured in terms of relating the linguistic forms and their functions according to the social variables.

### 1.9.2 Pragmalinguistics

This term refers to “the more linguistic end of pragmatics” (Leech, 1983, p.11); that is, the resources for conveying communicative acts and interpersonal meanings, such as directness and indirectness, and the linguistic means that intensify or soften communicative acts (e.g., “sorry” vs. “I’m really devastated”). This means that it concerns the knowledge competence of a particular language or a particular resource which enables users of language to convey their messages and intentions accurately in a successful communication (Kasper & Rose, 2001, p. 2). Related to the current study, pragmalinguistics is considered a substantial source which can be operationalised by enabling the INNSE and ANSE to choose the most appropriate linguistic forms and expressions of requests.

### 1.9.3 Sociopragmatics

Sociopragmatics refers to “the sociological interface of pragmatics” (Leech, 1983, p. 10) and what is related to the appropriate social behavior (Thomas, 1983). Put differently, it is a branch of pragmatic competence that conjugates sociology and pragmatics together. It provides users of language with the social knowledge that enables them to convey their speech acts appropriately (Bardovi-Harlig, 2009; Kasper & Rover, 2005). Therefore, sociopragmatics can be measured in terms of taking the social relations and variables into consideration when producing request under investigation.

### 1.9.4 Use of Requests

Request speech act refers to “an illocutionary act whereby a speaker (requester) conveys to the hearer (requestee) that he/she wants the requestee to perform an act which is for the benefit of the speaker” (Trosborg, 1995, p. 187). Different main strategies are involved in the use of requests. They are classified into obligatory strategies such as ‘head act’ and optional such as internal and external modifiers (Trosborg, 1995). Requests can be performed "directly" or "indirectly" using different strategies according to the social factors (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p. 42). In this sense, request can be measured in terms of the preferred linguistic strategies that make requests appropriate to the social variables. Request in this study contains three units (*core request, internal and external modifiers and alerters*), and the researcher will define these units and mention some of these unit's strategies (See chapter 2).

### 1.9.5 Power

Power is a variable that has been identified to be included in this study. Brown and Gilman (1960) stated that power is associated with the non-reciprocal relationship "between at least two persons" (p. 255). This means that one of them has the power that enables him to control the "behavior of the other" (Brown & Gilman, 1960, p. 255). In other words, power refers to the asymmetrical relationships between persons

of different status. It requires formality on the behalf of both persons communicating each other (Tannen, 1993, p. 167). Consequently, the identity and the social rank of the speaker can be identified in terms of his use of linguistic forms. In this light, the degree of interlocutors' power can be measured in terms of the linguistic forms, expressions, and the strategies used to produce requests appropriately according to the interlocutors' high or low power under investigation.

### **1.9.6 Solidarity**

Solidarity refers to the sameness, closeness, and the social equality of the persons communicating to one another. It governs the symmetrical and reciprocal relationship between persons having similar social ranks, age, and position (Brown & Gilman, 1960, p. 257). This indicates that both persons can use informality when communicating with each other. Brown and Gilman (1960) stated that "Now we are concerned with a new set of relations which are symmetrical; for example, *attend the same school or have the same parents or practice the same profession*. If A has the same parents as B, B has the same parents as A" (p. 258).

### **1.10 Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter one introduces the background, the problem statement, the objectives, research questions, scope, the significance, and the theoretical and the conceptual frameworks of the study. Chapter two covers the concepts subsumed under interlanguage pragmatics, previous studies, and the theories adopted for this study. It sheds light on the most important concepts that indicate how linguistic forms along with social variables function in the performance of request speech act, such as: interlanguage pragmatics, pragmatic competence, speech act theory, politeness, pragmatics, which subsumes pragmalinguistics, sociopragmatics, the nature of request speech acts, and the role of the social factors in using speech acts. It also reviews some related studies on interlanguage pragmatics to investigate how pragmatics functions across cultures and languages, how requests have been dealt with in different cultures and languages, and how different methods and instruments have been used to collect authentic and reliable data on requests.

Chapter three describes the methodology used in this study. It includes sampling procedures and design of the study, the instruments utilized in the study, data collection, pilot study on the instruments, coding scheme, and data analysis.

Chapter four presents the results and discussion of the study. The thesis ends with chapter five, which concludes with major findings of the study, contribution of the study, pedagogical implications, and the limitations of the study and recommendation.

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## PUBLICATION

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### Research in Progress

1. Request Strategies used by Non-native and Native Speakers of English in Relation to Power and Solidarity.
2. The Internal and External Modifications of Requests used by Non-native and Native Speakers of English in relation to Power and Solidarity.
3. The Influence of Power and Solidarity on the Use of Requests among Non-native and Native Speakers of English.
4. Sociopragmatic Assessment of Social Variables Governing the Use of Requests by Non-native and Native Speakers of English.



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(Signature of Student)  
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(Signature of Chairman of Supervisory Committee)  
Name:

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