Saudi Female's Arabic Requests: A Comparative Study of Face-to-Face and Text-Based Communications

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Abstract—This mix-method study aimed to investigate the influence of communication media on the realization of the speech act of request in Arabic. Thus, it examined the number of words and the type of modification devices in the request of 40 Saudi female postgraduate students in equal power situations across two communication channels: face-to-face and WhatsApp text-based interactions. The data is collected using a discourse completion task with four situations that varied in the degree of imposition and social distance. The collected data was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. Two samples t-test was used to analyze the collected data along with a modified version of Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) coding scheme for categorizing the modification devices. The study found that participants produced more words in WhatsApp text-based communication than face-to-face communication, but no significant difference was found except in the context of (+I, +D). External modifiers were produced more than internal ones, especially grounders. Social distance influenced modifier frequency, while imposition only affected disarmers. The study implies modification devices are obligatory rather than optional in Saudi culture.

Index Terms—speech act, Arabic request, modification devices, face-to- face, WhatsApp

I. INTRODUCTION

People live in communities and interact with each other through languages. It is through language that people can communicate and convey their messages in different forms of utterances. According to Luhmann (1992) communication is the result of the combination of three different selections, which are the selection of information, its utterance, and the understanding or misunderstanding of this information and its utterance. However, communication is no longer as it used to be. Today, with the continuous development of technology, people no longer need to see each other face-to-face (FTF) to talk and interact. Without a doubt, our communication practices are impacted in some way by the amazing technological advancement, particularly in computer-mediated communication (CMC).

According to Sadock (2006) pragmatics was initiated as a field of linguistic inquiry by Morris, Carnap, and Peirce in the 1930s. The field of pragmatics, the study of language use in communication has gained a lot of attention in the last few years (Leech, 1983). Yule (2010) defines pragmatics as the study of what is meant when it is not said or written explicitly. According to Al-Ageel (2016), the field of pragmatics has significantly contributed to uncovering the relationship between language and culture. Some of the influential frameworks in pragmatics are the speech act theory by Austin (1962) and the politeness theory by Brown and Levinson (1987). Many studies investigated different speech acts in different languages in FTF communication (Kwon, 2004; Alrefai, 2012; Alqahtani, 2015). In CMC interactions, a few studies examined the speech acts of native and non-native speakers of a single language (Duthler, 2006; Flores-Salgado & Castineira-Benitez, 2018).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Background on the Arabic Language

Arabic is part of the Semitic languages' family along with Amharic and Hebrew. It is considered one of the most widely used languages in the world. According to Fabri et al. (2014), it is the official language of the Arab World and several other countries such as Chad, Eritrea, and Israel. There are two main varieties of Arabic; Classical Arabic, the language found in the Holy Qur'an, and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). By the seventh century, the Classical Arabic started to change gradually in many linguistic aspects such as style, vocabulary, and even mood of inflection resulting in the Modern Standardized Arabic (MSA) (Ryding, 2005). According to Fabri et al. (2014), the term Arabic language is usually used to refer to both MSA and its dialects. The MSA is the variety that is used in formal writing and education, while dialects are the informal spoken varieties of the MSA and used in daily life communication. However,

they are not taught in schools nor standardized. The Arabic language is an example of a diglossic situation where the MSA is the H variety, while its dialects are the L variety. The present study focuses on informal variety of Saudi Arabic without focusing on a specific dialect.

B. Speech Act and Politeness Theory

John Austin introduced speech act theory in his book entitled How to Do Things with Words (1962), dividing sentences into two categories: constatives and performatives. Austin also categorized speech acts into locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. The locutionary act involves producing a recognizable and grammatical utterance, while the illocutionary act focuses on the message transmitted. The perlocutionary act refers to the effect of the utterance on a specific context. Austin (1962) highlights constatives focus on locutionary aspect, while performatives focus on illocutionary aspect. Searle (1976) categorizes illocutionary acts into verdictives, expositives, exercitives, behabitives, and commissives. Criticizing Austin's speech act theory, Searle (1976) reclassified speech acts into five acts: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. The study focused on directives, which are used by speakers to encourage action, such as the speech act of request. The study adopted Searle's taxonomy for its clarity and coherence.

The speech act theory and the politeness theory are intertwined. Most, if not all, linguistic theories of politeness revolve around Goffman's (1955) notion of face. Goffman (1955) defines the notion of face as "an image of self, delineated in terms of approved social attributes - albeit an image that others may share, as when a person makes a good showing for his profession or religion by making a good showing for himself" (p. 222). According to Goffman (1967) and Mead (1962) (as cited in Alrefai, 2012) in social interactions, people do not only communicate, but also present a desirable self-image. Brown and Levinson (1987) argued that the notion face is universal but subjected to cultural elaboration in any society. It is classified into positive face i.e., having a positive image in the eyes of others by giving compliments, showing interest, and using in-group identity markers; and negative face i.e., one's freedom of action expressed by strategies such as hedging and indirectness. They introduced the notion of face-threatening acts (FTAs), the acts that threaten the positive or negative face of the addressee and\or the speaker. According to Brown and Levinson (1987) the speaker evaluates the seriousness of an FTA on three crucial sociological factors that determine the level of politeness. These factors are social power (P), social distance (D), and degree of imposition (I).

The prominent speech act of request consists of two parts: the head act, the main part of the utterance that can stand by itself, and the peripheral elements, following and/or preceding the head act. The peripheral elements can either mitigate or aggravate the force of the head act, such as hedges and address forms (Reiter, 2000). According to Brown & Levinson (1978) (as cited in Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984) request is regarded as an FTA since it pressures and affects the addresser's freedom of action. Therefore, the interlocutors need to mitigate their requests by using modification devices, i.e., internal modifiers and external ones. Faerch and Kasper (1989) (as cited in Halupka-Rešetar, 2014) explained that internal modifiers are the modification devices that are realized within the head act, while external modifiers are the ones localized in the immediate context of the head act. These modifiers do not affect the degree of the directness of the act, nor alter its propositional content.

C. CMC and WhatsApp

According to Herring (1996), CMC is the communication between people using computers as a channel for this communication. The interaction can be either synchronous interaction or asynchronous interaction. Bodomo (2009) defines CMC as the process of coding and decoding linguistic and other symbolic messages in multiple formats through the computer and allied technologies, including laptops, smartphones, and palmtops. Moreover, Flores-Salgado and Castineira-Benitez (2018) affirmed that CMC allows the users to plan and edit their messages before sending them. Herring (1996) and Yus (2011) argue that text-based CMCs are typed, similar to writing, but fast, informal, and more like spoken conversations, with creative typography and punctuation replacing paralinguistic cues for emotional expressions, i.e., volume, proxemics, and facial expression.

One of the most used CMC applications is WhatsApp, launched almost a decade ago. It has become popular in more than 180 countries due to different features it provides to its users that facilitate their communications. The interactions can be synchronous or asynchronous. Users can interact by sending text messages, voice notes or even call each other by audio or video calls. In addition, users can send pictures, stickers, audios, videos, and even documents. Moreover, it allows the users to create chat groups with family members, friends, co-workers, classmates and so on. These features made the interaction natural and spontaneous. Nevertheless, WhatsApp allows its user to plan and check the message before sending it.

D. The Realization of Requests in CMC by Arabic Native Speakers

The realization of the speech act of request by natives of different languages was the focus of different studies, such as Peruvian (Garc á, 1993), English (Beltran & Martinez-Flor, 2008), Americans (Duthler, 2006), Persian (Nodoushan & Allami, 2011), and Mexicans (Flores-Salgado & Castineira-Benitez, 2018). As for requests in Arabic, there has been little up to date investigation of it, especially on the cultures and dialects of the Gulf region in CMC. Aldhulaee (2011) compared the use of internal and external modifiers in requests by Australian English native speakers and Iraqi Arabic native speakers. He concluded that Australians used more internal modifiers, such as questions and politeness markers,

while Iraqis used subjunctive and consultative devices. Iraqis also used more modifications with a higher social distance and equal power interlocutors, indicating a significant influence of social distance on request mitigation. Al-Ageel's study (2016) examined the impact of age, social power, distance, and imposition on politeness strategies in Arabic requests among Saudi women. The study involved 50 participants from two generations, 20-39 and 40-60 years old. He stated that both age groups preferred direct strategies, with grounders, imposition minimizers, preparators, and politeness markers being the most common modifiers. Social variables also influenced women's requesting behavior. Alqahtani (2015) studied favor asking among 60 Saudi women. He found that they used both direct and indirect strategies, with a preference for direct ones. He also concluded that social variables influence modification devices. Alrefai's (2012) study on Kuwaitis Arabic favor asking revealed indirect strategies preferred over direct ones, with modifiers like grounders, appreciation, and alerters more common in equal power scenarios. Finally, Sattar et al. (2014) found Iraqis and Malaysians share similar external modifications in requests, with grounders being the most common, while Iraqis use greeting, addressee, detail, and thanking forms.

As this review of literature shows, most of the research have focused their investigation on the head act strategies i.e., level of directness and have given scarce attention to the modifiers used to mitigate or aggravate requests. In addition, only few studies have explored requests strategies and modifications of native speakers in CMC, especially in the Arabic dialects of the Gulf region. Additionally, no research has investigated native Arabic speakers' requests in CMC, particularly in WhatsApp text messages, and its impact on the modification devices in situations of equal power. Therefore, this study aims to fill gaps in speech act literature by examining Saudi women's Arabic requests in WhatsApp messages and comparing them to FTF interactions. It focuses on the impact of CMC interaction on modification devices used to mitigate or aggravate requests in equal power situations. The study attempted to answer the following two questions:

1- Do Saudi female postgraduate students' requests differ in FTF interactions from WhatsApp text-based requests in terms of the number of words produced in equal power situations?

2- What kind of modification devices do Saudi female postgraduate students use in FTF and WhatsApp text-based interactions?

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

A mix-method design was employed by collecting quantitative and qualitative data to get deeper insights into how Saudi female postgraduate students request in Arabic. The quantitative analysis examined the number of words that the Saudi females produced in both FTF and WhatsApp text-based interactions and see if there was any statistically significant difference between them. Whereas the qualitative analysis investigated the interactions at the discourse level by categorizing the modification devices that the participants used in their Arabic requests into two main subcategories: internal and external modification devices.

The present study investigated equal power (=P) situations with variations across the degree of imposition i.e., low imposition (-I) and high imposition (+I), and social distance i.e., low distance (-D) with familiar interlocutors and high distance (+D) with unfamiliar interlocutors. Equal power situations were chosen to be the focus of this investigation to ensure that communication media is the dependent variable on the modifications of the request.

B. Participants

The study examined the requests of 40 Saudi female postgraduate students who were studying at a Saudi University. The study only investigated monolingual speakers of Arabic since being a bilingual with an excessive exposure to another language and culture may affect their way of requesting in Arabic. The participants' age ranged from 24 to 30 years old.

C. Instruments

A DCT, which consisted of four situations, was used to collect data. According to Rasekh and Alijanian (2012) DCTs are written or spoken scenarios in which the participants are asked to produce what they think to be appropriate for a particular situation. A DCT was employed as an instrument for collecting data as it helps to control social variables such as social status (Kwon, 2004) and to easily collect data from a large number of respondents in different situations. Furthermore, to elicit more spontaneous and accurate results, different modes of interactions were used to mimic real-life situations. Therefore, an oral DCT was employed in FTF communication, while a written DCT was used in WhatsApp text-based messages. A recorder was used to record the participants' requests in the FTF communication, while WhatsApp text-based messages were used to send the situations to the participants and receive their responses.

D. Material

In order to ensure that the FTF and WhatsApp text-based interactions' conditions were comparable in all respects aside from the communication medium, four situations were adopted from Alqahtani (2015) which were equal power situations with variations across the degree of imposition and social distance level. These situations were adopted

because they were administrated in Saudi Arabic, rather than MSA, allowing the elicitation of more natural responses. A brief description of the four situations is provided in Table 1.

TABLE 1
DCT SCENARIOS DESCRIPTION

Situation	Imposition & distance	Description
1	+I, -D	A woman asks her friend to borrow money although she did borrow before.
2	-I, -D	A woman asks her friend to look after her kids for some time, while she attends a wedding.
3	+I, +D	A teacher asks her colleague for help in invigilating her subject exam.
4	-I, +D	A student asks her classmate to borrow her laptop to do her presentation.

E. Data Collection Procedures

Forty participates were randomly selected and divided them into two equal groups, one for the FTF communication and the other was for the WhatsApp communication. A consent form was obtained before data collection for voluntary participation and are assured that all information collected were kept confidential. After that, the situations were read to the FTF participants individually and then the participants gave their responses. The participants were given only one minute to provide their requests to ensure the spontaneousness of their responses. Moreover, the situations were texted via WhatsApp to the CMC group and screenshots of their requests were taken. Then, all responses were transcribed and translated in a word file. For Arabic transcription, the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) was adopted from Brierley et al. (2016).

F. Data Analysis

The collected data consisted of 160 requests, 80 requests per channel. To check if there was any statistically significant difference between the two communication channels in terms of the number of words produced, a two-samples i.e., independent samples, t-test was conducted through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Regarding the qualitative data, the data was analyzed according to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project's (CCSARP) coding manual which contained a classification scheme for internal and external request modifications. According to Rue and Zhang (2008) an internal modifier is a modifier that is part of the head act, whereas an external modifier is a modifier that is not part of the head act, but rather within its immediate context and is called supportive move.

Internal modifications. In CCSAPP coding scheme, internal modifications are devices that are used to modulate the illocutionary force of the request. They are classified into downgraders and upgraders. Downgraders are modifiers that function to soften the imposition of a request and they can be subcategorized into lexical/phrasal and syntactic downgraders, while upgraders are modifiers that increase the force of a request. Additional modifiers from Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) (as cited in Alqahtani, 2015; Halupka-Rešetar, 2014) were added to this taxonomy, which are conditional clauses, politeness markers, time intensifiers, and repetition of requests. In addition, the in-group identity markers modifier was added to the taxonomy since it was found in the findings of Al-Ageel (2016) who investigated the speech act of request in Saudi Arabic. The final taxonomy of internal modifications used in the present study is presented in Table 2, 3 and 4 below.

TABLE 2
SYNTACTIC DOWNGRADERS

Modifier	Example
Interrogative	Could you do the cleaning up?
Negation	Look, excuse me. I wonder if you wouldn't mind dropping me home?
Past tense	I wanted to ask for a postponement.
Embedded 'if clause	I would appreciate it if you left me alone.
Conditional clause	If you are not using the car, can I take it?

TABLE 3
LEXICAL DOWNGRADERS

Modifier	Definition	Example
Politeness markers	Expression to bid for cooperative behavior.	Please
Consultative devices	"Elements by means of which the speaker seeks to involve the hearer and bids for his/her cooperation, in addition to other strategy types." (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 204)	Do you think I could borrow your lecture notes from yesterday?
Understaters	"Elements by means of which the speaker minimizes parts of the proposition" (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 204)	Could you tidy up a bit before I start?
Hedges	"Elements by means of which the speaker avoids specification in making a commitment to the illocutionary point of the utterance, in naming the required action, in describing the manner in which it is to be performed, or in referring to any other contextual aspect involved in its performance" (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 204)	It would really help if you did something about the kitchen.
Downtoner	"Elements by means of which the speaker modulates the impact his/her utterance is likely to have on the hearer, achieving the modulation via devices signaling the possibility of non-compliance" (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 204)	Will you be able perhaps to drive me?
In-group identity markers	Elements that are used to show that the speaker and the hearer belong to the same group	My sister, my brother

TABLE 4
UPGRADERS

Modifier	Definition	Example
Intensifiers	"Elements by means of which the speaker over-represents the reality denoted in the propositions." (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 204)	Clean up this mess, it's disgusting.
Time intensifiers	Lexical items used to express time.	Right now, immediately
Expletives	"Lexical intensifiers by means of which the speaker explicitly expresses negative emotional attitudes" (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 204)	You still haven't cleaned up that bloody mess!
Repetition of request	A request can be paraphrased or repeated literally.	Get lost! Leave me alone!

External modifications. External modifications or supportive moves are the modifiers that either precede or follow the head acts to mitigate or aggravate the force of requests. The researcher added some external modifiers to the taxonomy from Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) (as cited in Alqahtani, 2015; Flores-Salgado & Castineira-Benitez, 2018). These include alerters, preparators, rewards, and imposition minimizers. Moreover, some external modifiers were added from other studies that have investigated the speech act of request in similar cultures. These include religious expressions, appreciation, small talk, apology, and affective appeal, from Alqahtani (2015) who investigated requests in Saudi Arabic, and oath-taking from Alrefai (2012) who investigated the speech act of request in Kuwaiti Arabic. Table 5 and 6 below gives the final taxonomy of external modifications used in this study.

TABLE 5
ALERTERS

Modifier	Example
Greeting alerter	Good morning, Hi
First name alerter	Sara, Noura
Title alerter	Professor, teacher
Endearment term	Honey, dear
Attention getter	Hey, excuse me, listen

TABLE 6
EXTERNAL MODIFICATIONS

Modifier	Definition	Example
Checking on availability	"The speaker prefaces his/her main speech act with an utterance intended to check if the precondition necessary for compliance holds true" (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 204)	Are you going in the direction of the town? And if so, is it possible to join you?
Preparator	A phrase used to prepare the hearer for the coming request.	I'd like to ask you something …
Getting a precommitment	"The speaker precedes the act by an utterance that can count as an attempt to obtain a precommital" (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 205)	Will you do me a favor?
Grounder	"The speaker indicates the reasons for the request. (Grounders may precede or follow the Head act)" (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 205)	I missed class yesterday, could I borrow your notes?
Sweetener	"By expressing exaggerated appreciation of the hearer's ability to comply with the request, the speaker lowers the imposition involved" (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 205)	You have beautiful handwriting, would it be possible to borrow your notes for a few days?
Disarmer	"The speaker indicates his/her awareness of a potential offense, thereby attempting to anticipate possible refusal" (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 205)	I hope you don't think I'm being forward, but is there any chance of a lift home?
Cost minimizer	"The speaker indicates consideration of the 'cost' to the hearer involved in compliance with the request" (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 205)	Pardon me, but could you give me a lift, if you're going my way.
Imposition minimizer	Reduce the requests imposition on the hearer	I will return them as soon as possible.
Religious expressions	Expressions that are used to wish and pray for the hearer that invoking the compliance with the request.	May Allah give you strength/ health
Appreciation	"Expresses gratitude for potential compliance" (Alrefai, 2012, p. 31)	I would be grateful
Small talk	"Informal discourse that reinforces social bond" (Alrefai, 2012, p. 31)	How are you?
Apology	"Expression of regret for imposing on the hearer" (Alrefai, 2012, p. 32)	I apologize for coming to your office without an appointment
Affective Appeal	"Invokes the hearer's emotion" (Alrefai, 2012, p. 32)	I have no one to help me, but you
Oath-taking	"Offering an oath as to the truthfulness of an utterance" (Alrefai, 2012, p. 33)	I swear I will bring it back
Reward	Giving a reward for fulfilling the request.	I'll buy you dinner.

With the FTF group, the researcher read the situations to the participants and asked them to perform a request after giving them a minute to understand the situation. The researcher used a recorder to record the participants' responses. For the WhatsApp group, the researcher messaged the participants first to check if they were available to do the written DCT before sending them the situations. The situations were sent separately. After receiving the response for the first situation, the second situation was sent and so on. The data was transcribed and translated before analyzing it.

IV. RESULTS

To investigate the influence of communication channels on the realization of the speech act of request, the data was analyzed, and the findings showed that the participants of the WhatsApp group consistently produced more words than their FTF counterparts when requesting in equal power situations as shown in Table 7 below.

TABLE 7
NUMBER OF PRODUCED WORDS

Situation	FTF	WhatsApp text-based
Situation 1	700	836
Situation 2	610	724
Situation 3	538	765
Situation 4	412	558

In order to see if this difference is statistically significant, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the number of words produced in FTF and WhatsApp text-based interactions. As shown in Table 7, in the first situation (+I, =P, -D) which was requesting money from a friend, the FTF group (M = 35, SD = 20.69, n = 20) produced 700 words, whereas the WhatsApp text-based group (M = 41.80, SD = 17.73, n = 20) produced 836 words. However, this difference was statistically insignificant, t (38) = -1.12, p = 0.27. With regards to the second situation (-I, =P, -D), asking a friend to watch over the kids for a while, the FTF group (M = 30.50, SD = 13.73, n = 20) also produced less words than the WhatsApp text-based group (M = 36.20, SD = 18.27, n = 20) as shown in Table 7. The t-test showed that this difference was also statistically insignificant at the alpha level 0.05, t (38) = -1.12, p = 0.27. In the third situation (+I, =P, +D) that is asking a colleague to help in invigilating an exam, the difference was more pronounced as the FTF group (M = 26.90, SD = 14.63, n = 20) produced 538 words while the WhatsApp text-based group (M = 38.25, SD = 19.07, n = 20) produced 765 words. The independent-samples t-test showed that there was a statistically significant difference in the number of words produced by the two communication channels, t (38) = -2.11, p = 0.04. Thus, this finding supports the hypothesis that the type of communication channel affects the number of words produced. In the case of the fourth situation (-I, =P, +D) which was about borrowing a classmate's laptop, as shown in Table 7 the FTF group (M = 20.60, SD =10.35, n = 20) produced a smaller number of words compared to the WhatsApp text-based group (M = 27.90, SD =13.27, n = 20). Nevertheless, this difference was statistically insignificant, t (38) = -1.94, p = 0.06.

Regarding the types of modification devices Saudi female postgraduate students use in both modes of interactions, the responses were first analyzed and classified in a vertical bar chart according to modifier (x-axis) and frequency (y-axis). The data analysis showed that both communication channels used more external modifiers than internal modifiers. In addition, interrogatives and politeness markers were more common in +D situations, while imposition minimizers, small talk, preparators, and affective appealers were more common in -D situations. Moreover, disarmers were more common in +I situations than in -I situations. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that rewards were more common in the third situation.

As Figure 1 below shows, the participants of this study used different kinds of modifiers in the first situation (+I, =P, -D), especially when using external modifiers.
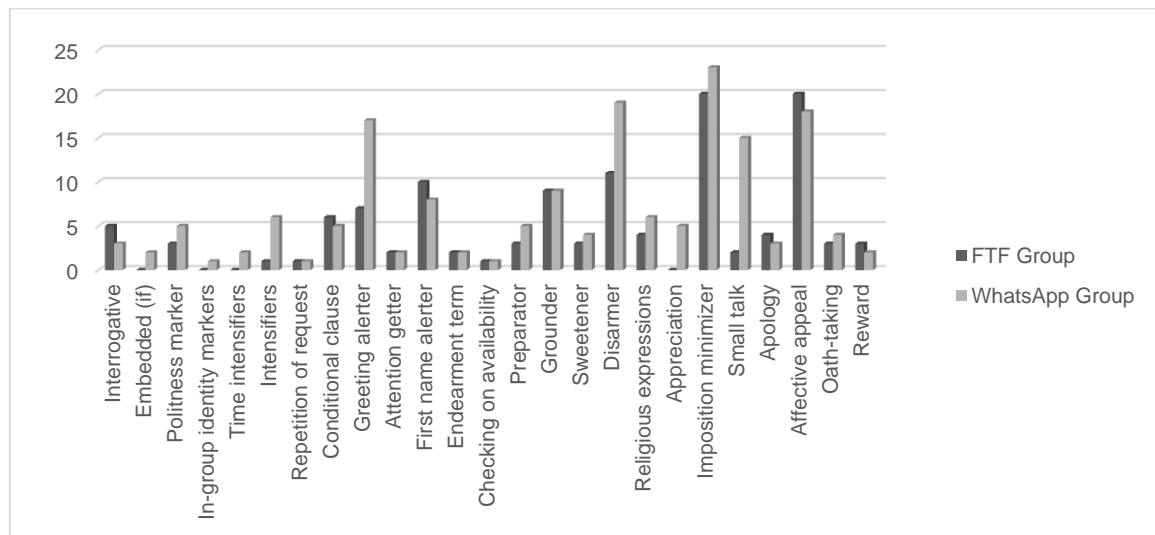

Figure 1. First Situation Modifiers

Imposition minimizers, affective appealers, disarmers, grounders, small talk, and alerters, especially greeting and first name alerters were the most commonly used modifiers by both groups. While checking for availability, repetition of request, attention getters, and endearment terms were the least used modifiers. Some modifiers were only found in the WhatsApp interaction such as embedded (if), in-group identity marker, time intensifiers, and appreciation. The data analysis illustrated that the most commonly used modification devices were external modifiers. A few internal modifiers were used, and the most frequent modifiers were conditional clauses, intensifier, politeness marker, and interrogative.

However, the analysis showed that the WhatsApp group used more greeting alerters, small talk, and imposition minimizers than the FTF group, while the FTF group used more first name alerters and affective appealers than the WhatsApp group. Both groups used alerters to initiate an interaction. The small talk modifier, which was used to reinforce social bonds before requesting, was mostly preceded by one or more alerters.

Example response 4.2 (+I, -D), FTF group

احتاج مبلغ خمس الاف ممكن تعطيني إياه؟ وارجعه لك بعدين.

Ɂaħta:dʒ mablaɣ xams Ɂa:la:f mumkin taʕtˤi:ni: Ɂi:a:h waɁaradʒiʕuh lik baʕdajan

I need 5000 Riyals. Is it possible (politeness marker) to give it to me? (interrogative) And I will pay you back later (imposition minimizer).

Example response 4.3, from situation 1 (+I, -D), WhatsApp group

السلام عليكم كيف حالك يا سارة؟ والله منحرجه منك إني اطلب منك مره ثانيه لكن انا فعلا محتاجه هالمبلغ. احتاج 5000 واوعدك ارجعه مع أقرب راتب واسفه جدا على ازعاجك.

Ɂassala:mu ʕalajkum kajf ħa:lik ja: sa:rah walla:h minħardʒh mink Ɂini: Ɂatˤlab mink marrh θa:ni:h la:kin Ɂana: fiʕlan miħta:dʒah haɁalmablaɣ Ɂaħta:dʒ xams Ɂa:la:f waɁawʕidik Ɂaradʒiʕh maʕ Ɂaqrab ra:tib waɁasfah dʒidan ʕala: Ɂazʕa:dʒik

Peace be upon you (greeting alerter), how are you (small talk) Sarah (first name alerter)? I swear (oath-taking) I am really embarrassed for asking you again (disarmer), but I really need some money (grounder). I need 5000 Riyals and I promise I will repay you as soon as I receive my salary (imposition minimizer). I am really sorry for bothering you (apology).

In the second situation (-I, =P, -D) the participants' responses included less variation in terms of the modification devices used than in the first situation as shown in Figure 2.
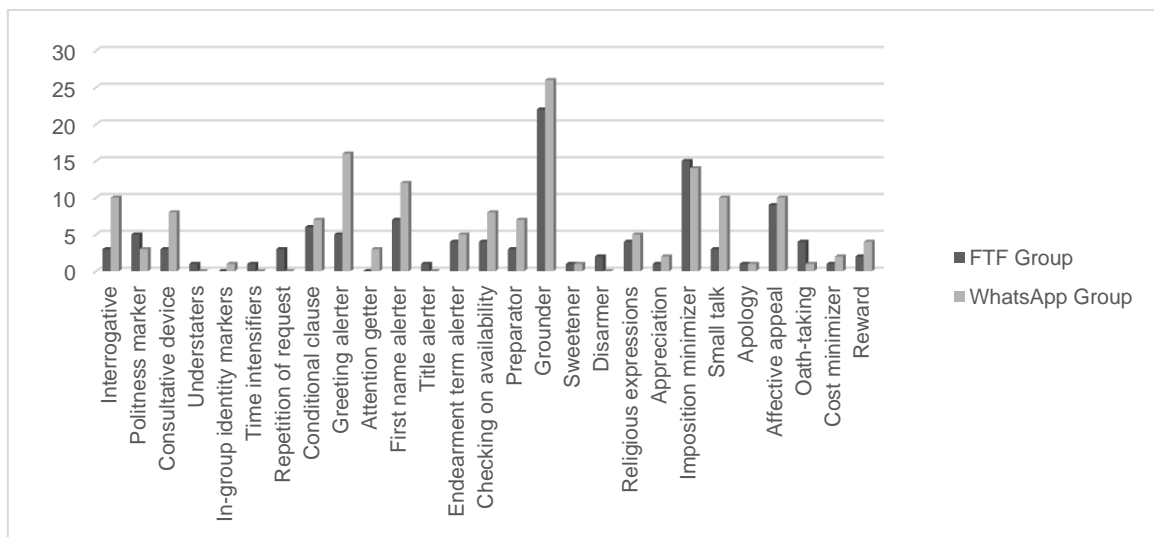

Figure 2. Second Situation Modifiers

Modifiers such as grounders, imposition minimizers, greeting alerters, first name alerters, and affective appealers were the most commonly used modifiers by both groups, which is quite similar to the modifiers used in the first situation. As we can see from Figure 2, the least used modifiers by both groups were cost minimizers, sweeteners, apology, and appreciation. As in the first situation, the most used modifiers were external modifiers. While internal modifiers were not often used, especially by the FTF group, the most commonly used modifiers were conditional clauses, consultative devices, and interrogatives. Moreover, there were some modifiers that were used in only one communication channel. For example, the FTF group used time intensifiers, understaters, repetition of requests, title alerters, and disarmers. However, the WhatsApp group used modifiers such as in-group identity markers and attention getters.

Nevertheless, the in-group identity marker was used only once, and attention getters were used only three times. Similar to the first situation, small talk, greeting alerters, and first name alerters were used more by the WhatsApp group.

Example response 4.6 (-I, -D), FTF group

الله يعافيك ممكن احط عندك اطفالي؟ وتقريبا ثلاث ساعات وارجع لك.

Ɂalla:h juʕa:fi:k mumkin Ɂaħatˤ ʕindik Ɂatˤfa:li: wataqri:ban θala:θ sa:ʕa:t waɁardʒʕ lik

May Allah give you health (religious expression), is it possible (politeness marker) to leave my kids with you? (interrogative) I will pick them up in about three hours (imposition minimizer).

Example response 4.8 (-I, -D), WhatsApp group

مساء الخير كيف حالك؟ عادي اترك العيال عندك؟ بروح زواج وما في مكان اخليهم فيه.

masa:Ɂ Ɂalxajr kajf ħa:lik ʕa:di: Ɂatrik Ɂalʕja:l ʕindak baru:ħ zawa:dʒ wama: fi: maka:n Ɂaxali:hum fi:h

Good evening (greeting alerter), how are you? (small talk) Is it okay (consultative device) to leave the kids with you? (*interrogative*) I have to attend a wedding and I do not have anyone to look after them (*grounder*).

Figure 3 below shows that in +I, =P, +D situation, the most commonly used modifiers were interrogatives, first name alerters, politeness markers, grounders, disarmers, and rewards, with greeting alerters being mostly used by the WhatsApp group, while repetition of requests, appreciation, imposition minimizers, and oath-taking being the least commonly used modifiers by both communication channels.
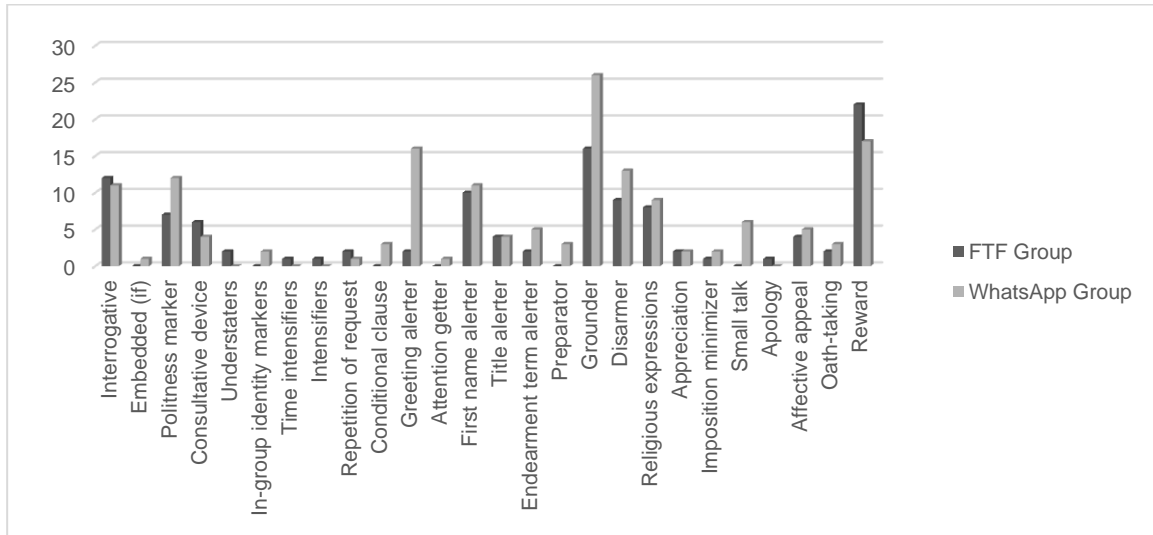

Figure 3. Third Situation Modifiers

As shown in Figure 3, modifiers such as understaters, time intensifiers, intensifiers, and apology were rarely used, and they were only used by the FTF group. On the other hand, only the WhatsApp group used embedded (if), in-group identity markers, conditional clauses, attention getters, preparators, and small talk. In addition, the analysis showed an increase in the frequency of internal modifiers compared to the previous situations, especially interrogatives and politeness markers. Moreover, the data analysis revealed that there was an increase in the frequent use of the reward modifier compared to the three other situations.

Example response 4.10 (+I, +D), FTF group

عزيزتي عادي تجين توقفين معي شوي لحد ما أخلص اختباري؟ ثم نرجع انا وانت ونكمل مع بعض تصحيح.

ʕazi:zati: ʕa:di: tidʒin tu:qifi:n maʕi: ʃiwaj laħd ma: ʔaxalasˤ ʔixti:ba:ri: θumm nardʒiʕ ʔana: waʔanti wanikamil maʕ baʕdˤ tasˤħi:ħ

Dear (endearment term), is it okay with you (consultative device) to invigilate my students' exam with me for a little bit (understater)? (interrogative) And after we finish, we can continue grading your students' exam together (reward).

Example response 4.12 (+I, +D), WhatsApp group

صباح الخير عندي اختبار واحتاج مساعدتك في المراقبه إذا سمحتي. أدري إنك مضغوطه بالتصحيح بس لعلي إذا خلصنا مراقبه اساعدك في إنجازه.

sˤaba:ħ ʔalxajr ʕinnadi: ʔixti:ba:r waʔaħta:dʒ musa:ʕadatik fi: ʔalmura:qabah ʔiða: samħati: ʔadri: ʔanaki madˤɣu:tˤah biʔattasˤħi:ħ bass laʕalj ʔiða: xallasˤana: mura:qabah ʔasa:ʕidik fi: ʔindʒzih

Good morning (greeting alerter) today is my students' exam (grounder) and I need your help to invigilate the exam, please (politeness marker). I know that you are stuck with a pile of papers to grade (disarmer), but hopefully, when we finish, I can help you with that (reward).

In the last situation, Figure 4 below shows that modifiers such as interrogative, politeness markers and grounder were the most used modifiers, with Embedded (if), repetition of requests, preparator, getting precommitment, and reward being the least used modifiers by both communication channels.
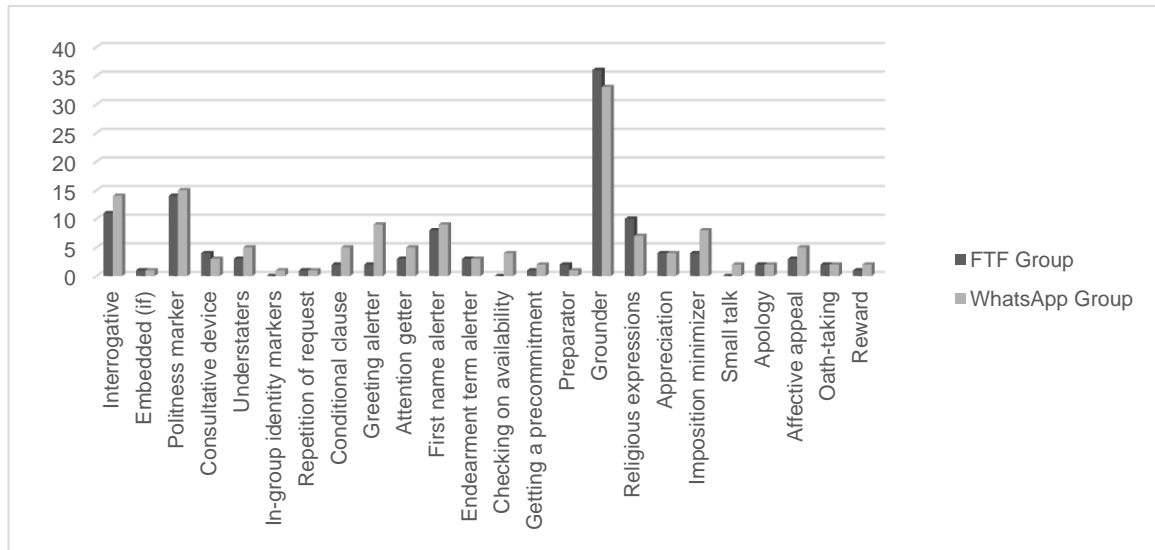
Figure 4. Fourth Situation Modifiers

Some modifiers were rarely used such as in-group identity markers, checking on availability, and small talk; and they were only used by the WhatsApp group.

Example response 4.13, from situation 4 (-I, +D), FTF group

الله يسعدك أنا مضطرة استعمل لابتوب الابل لان ما يشتغل عرضي الا على اللابتوب وانا نسيت اللابتوب في البيت.

Ɂalla:h jasʕidk Ɂana: mudˤtˤarrah Ɂastaʕmal la:btu:b Ɂal?abl liɁan ma: jaʃtaɣil ʕardˤi: Ɂilla: ʕala: Ɂala:btu:b waɁana: nasijat Ɂala:btu:b fi: Ɂalbajt

May Allah grant you happiness (religious expression), I have to use the Apple MacBook because my PowerPoint file can only run on a MacBook (grounder) and I forgot mine at home (grounder).

Example response 4.15, from situation 4 (-I, +D), WhatsApp group

لو سمحتي انا نسيت لابي، ممكن استخدم لابك شوي في العرض؟

law samħati: Ɂana: nasijat la:bi: mumkin Ɂastaxdim la:bik ʃiwaj fi: Ɂalʕardˤ

Excuse me (attention getter), I forgot my laptop (grounder), is it possible (politeness marker) to use your laptop for my presentation for a bit (understate)? (interrogative)

V. DISCUSSION

As was previously mentioned in the literature review, few studies have investigated the pattern of requests in CMC. Therefore, for the purpose of discussion, the results of the studies that employed voicemail or role-play were compared to those of the FTF group, and the results of the studies that employed written DCT were compared to those of the WhatsApp group.

With respect to the first research question, the findings of this study showed that the WhatsApp group produced more words than their FTF group counterpart. Although the difference in the number of words was insignificant, except for situation three (+I, =P, +D), this finding coincides with the findings of Duthler (2006) who found that e-mails produced more words than voicemails. According to Flores-Salgado and Castineira-Benitez (2018) online communication allows interlocutors to plan, organize, and edit their messages before sending them. Hence, the verbosity that characterizes the WhatsApp text-based interaction is most likely due to these advantages that the interlocutors have in CMC. Furthermore, it appears that high-imposing scenarios and high distance ones generated more words because of the notable difference in word count between the two communication channels in the third scenario (+I, =P, +D) and fourth scenario (-I, +D) respectively. This is consistent with Duthler's (2006) research, which demonstrated that more words were produced in response to demanding requests than in response to less demanding requests. High imposition degree scenarios, however, did not yield results that were similar.

Additionally, the findings evidently revealed that both groups used more external modifiers than internal modifiers. Such a finding is consistent with the findings of previous research (Al-Ageel, 2016; Alqahtani, 2015; Alrefai, 2012; Nodoushan & Allami, 2011). The most commonly used modifier by both groups was grounder. Aldhulaee (2011) explained that giving reasons is a way to achieve a smooth interaction that signifies the speaker's expectation of the hearer's understanding and cooperation. This finding was also reported in different Arabic studies (Aldhulaee, 2011; Al-Ageel, 2016; Alqahtani, 2015; Alrefai, 2012; Sattar et al., 2014). According to Al-Ageel's (2016) and Aldhulaee's (2011) studies, interrogatives and politeness markers were the most commonly used internal modifiers by Saudi women and Australians.

An additional discovery highlighted is the use of alerters, and sometime small talk, to open a conversation or interaction and draw the addressee's attention, especially in the WhatsApp messages. This finding is consistent with

Flores-Salgado and Castineira-Benitez's (2018) results, who concluded that native Spanish speakers in Mexico used alerters as an opening strategy for their WhatsApp messages. Likewise, Nodoushan and Allami (2011) found that Persian women used a lot of alerters to draw the addressee's attention to the request. Many requests begin with one or more alerters such as greeting alerter, first name alerter and, in some cases, followed by small talk. This finding implies that establishing a social encounter with the addressee paves the way to perform the request.

The analysis also revealed that there was an increase in the frequency of interrogatives and politeness markers in +D situations, and an increase in the frequency of imposition minimizers, small talk, preparators and affective appealers in -D situations. This finding was also reported in Alrefai's (2012) study, who found that greeting alerters and politeness markers were more common in +D situations, whereas imposition minimizers, softeners, preparators, and small talk were commonly used in -D situations. Likewise, Garc á (1993) found that female participants intensified their request by employing emotional appealers and repeating their requests in different ways. Moreover, Aldhulaee (2011) found that Iraqis used less internal modifiers in -D situations. Aldhulaee (2011) explained that the low frequency of internal modifiers in -D situations is associated with the interlocutor's anticipations of the addressee to cooperate as part of his/her moral obligation towards the interlocutor. In addition, Al-Ageel (2016) stated that social distance has a significant impact on Saudi women's requesting behavior.

In terms of the degree of imposition, the data analysis indicated that there was an increase in the frequency of disarmers in +I situations. Beltran and Martinez-Flor (2008) found that grounders and disarmers were the most commonly used modifiers in all situations. However, this finding contrasts Alqahtani's (2015) observation that some modifiers (i.e., alerters are one of them) disarmers were not significantly affected by the degree of imposition. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) explained that disarmers are what the interlocutor use to show his/her awareness of possible refusal. This definition of disarmers may explain why the participants used them to mitigate +I situations since +I requests can correspond to a high possibility of refusal.

The results indicated an increase in the use of rewards in the third situation, (+I, +D). In this situation, the interlocutor is requesting a high imposing favor from a distant hearer, which may make the interlocutor feel uncomfortable with this request. Thus, the interlocutor may feel the need to return the favor. Goldschmidt (1988) explained that requesting a favor implies the notion of reciprocity. This finding coincides with Alqahtani's (2015) findings, in which Saudi women used the modifier reward a lot in (+I, +D) situation. Similarly, Alrefai (2012) found that Kuwaitis used a lot of rewards in =P situations compared to +P and -P situations. Alrefai (2012) justified that such increase in the use of rewards is because the Kuwait culture is a reciprocity culture.

In the literature, modification devices are considered optional elements to the head act of the request. However, the findings of this study showed that across all situations, every participant's response included at least one modification device to the head act. This finding suggests that modification devices seem to be obligatory in the Saudi culture. The high tendency towards accompanying modification devices to the head act was also reported in previous Arabic studies (Alqahtani, 2015; Alrefai, 2012). Moreover, in almost all the participants' requests, the participants employed more than one modifier to mitigate or aggravate the head act. This finding is in line with Nodoushan and Allami's (2012) observation that it is quite possible to find more than one internal modifier or external modifier or even both in the same request.

VI. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Considering the aforementioned results, WhatsApp text-based group tends to produce more words than the FTF group. However, this tendency for verbosity was only significant in the third situation (+I, +D). The study also implied that social distance may play a role in the participants' verbosity in WhatsApp text-based interaction. In addition, the study revealed that both communication media used more external modifiers than internal ones, especially grounders, which supports previous studies findings. The study also showed that the most frequently used internal modifiers were interrogatives and politeness markers. Moreover, the study pointed out that alerters and sometimes small talk were used as opening strategies, especially by the WhatsApp group.

Furthermore, the findings also indicated that social distance influences the frequency of some modification devices such as politeness markers, imposition minimizers, small talk, and affective appealers, while the degree of imposition influences the frequency of disarmers only. The study also revealed that rewards were more commonly used in the third situation when asking high imposing requests to a distant addressee than the other situations. Interestingly, the study revealed that Saudi females' requests were always accompanied by modification devices to the head act.

The findings of this study imply that the realization of requests in WhatsApp text-based interactions is quite similar to the realization of requests in FTF interactions in terms of modification devices. Moreover, the findings imply that the use of modification devices, is not optional in the Saudi culture, especially supportive moves. These findings offer insight into how Saudi females request in Arabic in FTF and WhatsApp text-based interactions. In addition, the findings of the study would help linguists to understand some of the socio-pragmatic knowledge of native speakers of Saudi dialect. From a pedagogical perspective, the findings of the present study would help Arabic learners learn and understand the cultural aspect of how to request in Arabic. Moreover, this study attempted to bridge a gap in the literature since not many up to date studies in the Saudi context have compared the speech act of Arabic requests in FTF

interactions to WhatsApp text-based interactions. Furthermore, it helps multilingual societies researchers in their studies, especially when comparing their findings to monolingual societies.

For future research, it is recommended that other speech acts should be investigated in CMC. It is also recommended that another instrument should be used along with a DCT such as a follow-up interview with the participants to provide deeper insights into the participants' decision in choosing these modification devices and their perceptions of the contextual factors that influenced their decision. Moreover, future studies should examine the motives for using CMC and FTF interactions. In addition, since one of the main limitations of the present study is that it only investigated interactions between female interlocutors and addressees, it is highly recommended that the current study could be replicated to investigate Saudi male interlocutors and addresses requests in FTF and WhatsApp text-based interactions. Moreover, future research should investigate mixed-gender interactions in FTF and WhatsApp text-based interactions. Furthermore, the present study did not investigate paralinguistic cues in FTF interactions nor emojis in WhatsApp text-based interactions. Therefore, it is important to investigate the paralinguistic cues in FTF interactions and how are they represented in WhatsApp text-based interactions through emojis. Moreover, differentiation between regional and tribal dialects in investigating and analyzing the participants' requests could be explored in future research.

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