Exploring Speech Acts of Request Among the Speakers of English and Pahari Language: A Cross-Cultural Comparison

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Abstract:

This paper identifies and contrasts the speech acts of request between native speakers of English and Pahari using a framework based on the Data Completion Task model. Fifteen native speakers of Pahari produced samples that were transcribed in the Pahari script. The results show deep contrasts between the two languages: English users favor indirect forms, which shift emphasis to politeness and minimize imposition, while Pahari users favor more direct forms of request, such as imperative forms. This lack of unconventionally indirect requests among the Pahari speakers and the infrequent use of conventionally indirect expressions suggests that Pahari's communication is straightforward. The comparative analysis there thus explains the cultural as well as the linguistic factors that influence the pragmatics of requests and hence contributes to the observation regarding cross-cultural communication patterns. Moreover, it enhances the English Learning experience for Pahari speakers by providing them in-depth insights of pragmatics of English language and facilitating better way in understanding contextually appropriate use of English.

Keywords: Data Completion Task model, Pahari Language, speech acts, categories of speech acts, comparative analysis, cross-cultural communication

INTRODUCTION

Language is considered a tool of communication and has its distinctive features. It represents a specific identity of a community that used to share their feelings, emotions and shared knowledge. Knowing all the sociocultural norms and linguistics features is crucial to all the speakers of the

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community for living and accommodations and adaptation in their local communities. As the world is considered a global village where speakers from diverse communities communicate. These cultural diversities are the beauty of a diverse world, but still a barrier to cross-cultural communication. According to (Meier, 1995), the investigation of speech acts could help in the realization of social norms and beliefs of a particular community. The investigation of speech acts of different languages not only helps in understanding the norms of communication but also helps the learners and teachers of a foreign language to learn and teach language in a better way. (Bardovi-Harlig, 1996) mentioned that such studies are helpful for curriculum developers in designing syllabi in the pragmatics domain of the language. Further studies of (Meier, 1995 & Al-Ghamadi, Almansoob, & Alrefaee, 2019), acknowledged that teaching cross-cultural pragmatics aspects of language can help in minimizing cultural stereotyping and communication barriers.

There are three main types of speech acts studies: Interlingual, cross-cultural, and intercultural. The interlingual study is concerned with a single culture and language. The investigation of compliments (Qanbar, 2012) and requests in Arabic (Al-Marrani 2018) are examples of interlingual. Similarly, Intercultural pragmatics study, learners realize speech acts in the baseline date of L1 and L2. The investigation of apology (Al-Zumor, 2011) and request (Al-Momani, 2009) are examples of intercultural.

Cross-cultural is concerned with the investigation of linguistic features in some different cultures and languages. Such as (Almansoob, Patil, and Alrefaee 2019) comparing compliments of Yamni and Arabic speakers. The notion that speech acts are shared and universal or vary from culture to culture is still controversial. Researchers like Fraser (1985) acknowledged that speech acts of request are shaped under the same universal pragmatics principles while Weizbicka (1985) figured out that speech acts vary from culture to culture. So, the current study of speech acts of request among the speakers of English and Pahari languages investigated the similarities and differences between Pahari and English speakers to know the uniqueness and universality of the two cultures. This study will explore not only

This study will focus on the cross-cultural pragmatics similarities and differences in using speech acts of request between the native speakers of English and the Pahari language. It is hoped that identification and analysis of the speech acts of English and Pahari will help know their cultural and pragmatic diversity. Furthermore, it helps English learners of Pahari speakers in using accurate and contextually appropriate language in communication. Last but not least, Pahari is an indigenous language in Pakistan so the cross-cultural comparison between English and Phari languages will open new doors in research.

The objectives of this research are: to figure out the similarities and differences in speech acts of request between English and Pahari speakers; to explore the pragmatic similarities and differences in the realization of the speech act of request between English and Pahari English native speakers; to figure out how the speech acts of English and Pahari help in understanding cross-cultural pragmatics.

The study focuses on the following research questions: What are the different speech acts of request used by English and Pahari speakers? What are the pragmatic similarities and differences in the realization of the speech act of request between English and Pahari English native speakers?

How do the speech acts of English and Pahari languages help in understanding cross-cultural pragmatics?

LITERATURE VIEW

Pahari Language

Pahari is an Indo-Aryan language indigenous language spoken primarily in the northern regions of Pakistan and India. It belongs to the Lahnda subgroup within the greater Punjabi branch of the Indo-Aryan language family (Shackle, 1979). The language is known for its rich linguistic diversity and forms a continuum with other neighboring languages, including Hindko and Standard Punjabi (Lothers & Lothers, 2010). The Pahari-speaking regions extend across the Murree Hills, the Galyait area of Abbottabad District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and parts of Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir.

Pahari is a diverse language with several dialects. Among these varieties, the dialect commonly referred to as "Thundi Kuryali" (or Dhundi-Kairali) is a prominent one. This dialect is spoken predominantly in the southeastern parts of Abbottabad District and the Murree Tehsil of Rawalpindi District (Khurshid & Rehman, 2012). Historically, the term Dhundi-Kairali, introduced by Grierson in his *Linguistic Survey of India* (1919), derives its name from two dominant tribes in the region—the Dhund and the Kairal who are known as Abbasi and Sardar respectively. While it shares many features with other Pahari dialects, it is distinct due to its phonological and lexical variations, which reflect the local heritage and linguistic influence (Tariq, 2018).

The language is spoken by millions of people across Pakistan, with a significant diaspora in countries like the United Kingdom (Lothers & Lothers, 2010). In the Galyat region, where "Thundi Kuryali" is predominantly spoken, it functions as a symbol of regional identity and pride, offering insight into the sociolinguistic dynamics of northern Pakistan (Abbasi, Khattak, & Arafat, 2021).

Speech Acts of Request

In pragmatics, an action done in response to language utterance is called a speech act. According to Yule (1996:47), speech acts are connected to the utterances of the speakers. The utterances of the speaker are not simply words or sentences, but they are actions. For example, If the head of any institute says to his employee " You are sacked off" is not only a chain of words but an action. (Mey, 1994:112) acknowledged that utterance can change the status of someone. In utterance, the speaker performs three types of action and they are locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary. According to (Levinson, 1983:236), locutionary are concerned with only utterances providing only sense and reference. For example, It is cold outside. This is just an utterance and the speaker wanted to say that winter has set in and it is cold. In Illocutionar, action is performed in response to utterance e.g. In a sentence It is cold outside and demands some action. It may be a request to the hearer to shut the door or put on a jumper. The hearer will act in the context of the sentence said. The action may be promising, offering, or apologizing. Perlocutionary shows the result or effect of utterance on the speaker or hearer. As in the above-stated example, if it is cold outside, the door will be shut or the person will have to put on the jumper to save himself from the cold.

Categories of Speech Acts

According to Searle via Trosborg (1985:14) there are five main categories of speech acts which are declarative, representatives, expressive, directives, and commissive.

Declarative

In the declarative speech act, the speaker changes the world through his utterance. The speaker has something to do to act. e.g. quitting his study means he is no longer studying. Excommunicating, declaring war, christening, firing from employment.

Commissive

In commissive, the speaker commits some future action. Promising, offering, threatening, refusing, etc are utterances of commissive. I will call you later is an example of commissive.

Directives

In the directive, speakers get someone to do something through utterance. Requesting, questioning, commanding, orders, and suggesting are all examples of directives. For example: Could you please pass me the salt? This utterance is an example of requesting.

Expressive

Expressive speech acts as an utterance that states what speakers feel. The acts are apologizing, complimenting, condoling, congratulating, deploring, praising, regretting, thanking, etc, I love your car is an example of an expressive speech act where the speaker his feelings about the beauty of the girl.

Representative

In representative speech acts, the utterances commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition. Arguing, asserting, boasting, claiming, complaining, criticizing, denying, describing, informing, insisting, reporting, suggesting, swearing, etc, she is very beautiful.

Definition of Request

According to Bach and Harnish (1984:48), the request is a type of request that he expects the hearer to perform some action. So it is a type of illocutionary type of request in which the speaker asks the hearer to do an action that is beneficial to the speaker. When the speaker asks the hearer to act, it is a kind of imposition. Haverkate via Trosborg (1995:188) defines imposition as an act a speaker imposes on the hearer to do an action beneficial to the speaker. So speech of act has three outcomes. The speaker conveys the message to the hearer to perform some action. The hearer acts, and lastly, the speaker gets the benefit.

Types of request

There are different types of requests. Scholars introduced these types. According to Zhang (1995:280), there are two types of requests which are direct and indirect.

Direct and Indirect

There is no standard definition of direct and indirect requests. According to Anna Wierzbicka (1990), the definition of direct and indirect, and between imperative and non-imperative are still not definite and it is assumed notion that a sentence like " Open the door " is considered a direct request because it is more aggressive and face threatening. The speaker applies an authoritative approach to get the benefit from the hearer. In a direct speech act, the request is made implicitly. The speaker made the request indirectly to show courtesy, greeting, and breeding. "It is too cold," the speaker asks the hearer to close the window implicitly.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This cross-cultural study is employed to analyse the speech acts of request among the speakers of English and Pahari languages through a mixed based approach. DCT (Discourse Completion Task) was used as primary tool for data collection introduced by Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper in the early 1980s. A questionnaire comprised of real life situations used in this study was developed by Soong-Hee Koh to investigate the comparison of the speech act of request between ESL speakers of American and Korean speakers. Koh's methodology serves as the benchmark for analyzing English speakers' data in this study, while its adaptation facilitated the collection of data from Pahari speakers.

Participants

The study includes two distinct groups;

Pahari Speakers

Fifteen participants were taken from Galyait region of Abbottabad where Pahari is natively spoken. The participants were selected on basis of fluency in Pahari language, educational background and familiarity of using modern communication tools. All the participants at least graduation degree, ensuring the accurate response to the given scenarios.

English Speakers

The data on English request strategies were reference from Soong-Hee Koh's (2002) original study. These pre-exist responses from native English speakers serve as a benchmark for comparison among the speakers of English and Pahari languages.

Data Collection Procedure

The adapted DCT applied in this study has been originally designed by Soong-Hee Koh (2002) for her investigation of requests' speech acts in a comparison between the English and Korean speakers' usage of speech acts. Koh claims that "DCT is written questionnaires including several brief descriptions, followed by a short dialogue with an empty slot for the speech act under study" (p. 221). The DCT, in this case, comprises hypothetical scenarios depicting incidents of requests that occur commonly in everyday conversation. Koh's study, which the present one is based upon, originally contained 12 scenarios, but due to time constraints, six were picked for the current research.

All the participants of this research are native speakers of Pahari and possess formal education as well as exposure to technology. A mobile-based DCT questionnaire was administered to the participants for response through the mobile. Responses were gathered by voice, in response to all scenarios in Pahari language, which may lead to the representation of a speech act more authentically. Being a native Pahari speaker with long-standing linguistic competence, the transcriptions were also conducted in Pahari. The transcribed data were then coded and analyzed.

In cross-cultural research, particular cultural values are manifestations of the community's norms and practices. In this study, it was restricted to only two significant dimensions of culture: directness and indirectness. The request speech acts were classified into two main categories: direct and indirect. Then, direct speech acts were categorized into three subcategories: (1) Unconventionally Indirect Requests, (2) Conventionally Indirect Requests (Hearer-Oriented Condition), and (3) Conventionally Indirect Requests (Speaker-Based Condition).

To codify the data, the following scheme was used;

- Direct Speech (DS)
- Unconventionally Indirect Speech (UIS)
- Unconventionally Indirect Speech, Hearer-Oriented Condition (UISH)
- Conventionally Indirect Speech, Speaker-Based Oriented Condition (CISS)

The data were subjected to chi-square statistical analysis to assess the significance of the differences and cultural implications between the Pahari and English languages. The study provides insights into the cultural values underpinning speech acts in these languages, with a particular emphasis on their manifestation of directness and indirectness in request-making behavior.

Data Analysis

To explore the difference in speech acts of English and Pahari speakers, the Chi-square test was applied. This statistical test was used to compare the observed frequencies of direct and indirect request types with the expected frequencies, as derived from the null hypothesis. The analysis focused on distinguishing whether the differences between the two languages in terms of directness, indirectness, and subcategories of request strategies were statistically significant.

Table 1: Different types of speech acts of request in the speech of English and Pahari speakers

Types	Description of terms
Direct Request	Request can be authoritative Performative Imperative Example: You need to be quiet or move to a study room
Unconventionally Indirect Request	The discrepancy between what he/she said as well as their true intentions Applied by using hints Example: It is too cold.
Conventionally Indirect Requests (Hearer-Oriented Condition)	Hear-oriented The hearer is open-ended to accept or deny the request. Example: Could you please tidy up the room?

Conventionally Indirect Request (Speaker-Based Condition)	The request is more directly in demand Difficult for the hearer to refuse The strategy of the speaker`s wishes and desires. The strategy of statements of the speaker`s needs and demands. Example: I want you to fix my car

Table 2: Observed and Expected Frequencies of Speech Acts of Pahari and English Speakers

Request Type	Observed Frequency (O)	Expected Frequency (E)	(O-E)	(O−E) 2	(O-E)2/E
Direct Requests (Pahari)	11	6.00	5	25	4.17
Direct Requests (English)	03	8.00	-5	25	3.13
Unconventionally Indirect (Pahari)	00	0.86	-0.86	0.7396	0.86
Unconventionally Indirect (English)	02	1.14	0.86	0.7693	0.65
Hearer-Oriented (Pahari)	03	7.29	-4.49	18.41	2.52
Hearer-Oriented (English)	14	9.71	4.49	18.41	1.90
Speaker-Oriented (Pahari)	01	0.86	0.14	0.0196	0.02
Speaker-Oriented (English)	01	1.14	-0.14	0.0196	0.02

$$\chi^2 = \sum_i \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$$

χ^2 =4.17+3.13+0.86+0.65+2.52+1.90+0.02+0.02=13.25

Degree of Freedom

df =(2-1)(4-1)=3

P-Value=0.0041

The results showed that both the Pahari and the English speakers use strategies that are different, chi-squared = 13.25, p = 0.0041; thus we can assume that the differences were not due to chance. Pahari speakers were found to have used highly direct requests (11 out of 15), which meant that they preferred being direct and to the point. On the other hand, English speakers preferred the use of hearer-oriented indirect requests (14 out of 20), which simply meant that there was been more emphasis on politeness and face-saving. The analysis illustrates that culture and language determine how requests are made. English is made up of more linguistic allowances while Pahari

speakers are more straightforward. This study also demonstrates how language structure and social norms influence communication style.

DATA DISCUSSION

In requesting behavior, Pahari and English speakers showed great differences proven by the Chi-square test. Evidence was found of 11 out of 15 of the requests being direct – for Pahari speakers, this implies a clear and strong tendency towards direct requests. This trend also is in keeping with a Pahari particular value of being straightforward in communication. As, for example, in" Nakyo shoor na karo, bacha paie laga parna, shor karna yaho da duhia kamra bitch chla gacho "

نِکیو شور نہ کرو، بچے پڑنے لگے پئے، شور کرنے یہو دا دھئے کمر ےوچ چلے گچھو۔

Situation 1 it sounds: "Pahari language clearly shows the fact of requesting people without further explanations, not wishing for other people's needless interference in their business. Thus, this exemplifies the Pahari practice. Another instance from Situation 5 where the headmistress asked the Pahari speakers for money exemplifies the directness of Pahari requests. "Yrra, mahāṛe kol bīyān rūpiyā nā ṭhak nōṭ ā, mehrabānī karī dā aik rūpiyā chaī dā"

یرا، محاڑے کول بییاں روپیہ نا ٹھک نوٹ آ، مہر بانی کری دا اک روپیہ چئی دا"،

 "I only have twenty rupees in my wallet. I only ask one more rupee-please" which is straightforward and unambiguous.

In contrast to this, English speakers have clearly shown an inclination to make indirect requests that are hearer-oriented. In Situation 1 in English the phrase "Could you please be quiet? This is a library." is softer in communication as the speaker makes use of the modal 'could' before the entailment, hence allowing for a weak request and adding the courteous 'please'. In the same way, in Situation 5 the speaker in English states, "Do you have change for a twenty? I need a dollar for the bus." This pronouncement uses politeness strategies since "excuse me" is used as the framing and the statement which may be assumed as a command is made as a question.

Additionally, with regards to Situation 6, when seeking to be absent from work, English speakers tactfully employ polite hedging: "Sir, is it possible for me to take leave tomorrow? I have some personal reasons." The phrases "Would it be possible" and "I have some personal reasons..." are perfect examples that fit the definition of politeness and hedging strategies designed to lessen the force of the request in opposition to the outright Pahari style.

Moreover, Pahari speakers were careful about using unconventionally indirect speech acts, a small number of such moderate forms however nonetheless did emerge. In Situation 2, a Pahari speaker might say, "Yara kharki band naian karna, baro thadi hawa achni da us ni waja nal mari tabiyat khrab hori"

یررا کھڑکی بند نئں کرنا، بَاروں ٹھنڈی ہوا اچنی دا، اس نی وجہ نال مَاہڑی طبیعت خراب ہو نڑی۔

("Hey, please close the window, the cold wind is bothering me and making me sick"). This is still direct, but it gives an indirect explanation for the request by saying that the speaker is cold. In this case, the reason is not the indirectness of speech, but the indirectness of communication which is still not used as often as in English.

In Situation 3, English speakers are also more likely to issue requests in the form of conventionally indirect speech acts. For instance, an English speaker may say, "I love this music, maybe you can record it for me if I bring a blank tape?".

This example illustrates a hearer-oriented indirect request, allowing the listener the option to decline politely, which respects their autonomy. The use of speaker-oriented indirect requests was relatively uncommon in both groups, but it was more evident in Pahari. For instance, in Situation 4, a Pahari speaker might say, "Do you think it would be possible for me to borrow your book for a week?" This phrasing is polite yet still directly requests the book. In English, a similar request might be expressed as, "Would it be alright if I borrow your book for a week?", where the speaker employs softening language like "Would it be alright" to lessen the impact of the request. The directness of Pahari is also apparent in requests for space or addressing noise, as seen in Situation 1, where one speaker might say, "Tusa ni away taiz he, tus tsiz awaz vich parna ho, mehrabani kari da agar thus apni awaz thori ahista kari shatoo"

تُساں نی آواز تیز ای، تُساں تیز آواز وچ پڑھنے ہو، مہر بانی کری دا اگر تُساں اپنی آواز تھوڑی آہستہ کری

شٹو۔

 ("Your voice is too loud, please lower it or go to a study room"). This straightforward request for reducing volume or changing behavior contrasts with the more-polite, indirect suggestions that are typical in English.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals important cultural and linguistic differences in how Pahari and English speakers make requests. The findings show that Pahari speakers generally prefer direct requests, which reflects a communication style that emphasizes clarity, efficiency, and straightforwardness. On the other hand, English speakers are more likely to use indirect requests, employing politeness strategies to lessen the burden of their requests and uphold face-saving norms. These results highlight how linguistic resources and cultural expectations influence communication practices, with Pahari being more direct and clearer, while English tends to be more indirect and socially polite. The study enhances our understanding of how language structure and culture shape the way people express requests in different languages.

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Date of Publication	September 01, 2024