

The Pragmatic Functions of Apologies and Requests in Mobile-Based Role Play Scenarios

Dr. Ismaeel Talib Ismaeel

Department of English, College of Arts, Al-Turth University, Baghdad, Iraq.

Corresponding Author: Dr. Ismaeel Talib Ismaeel

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 14 Jun
Accepted: 05 Aug
Volume: 4
Issue: 3

ABSTRACT

Pragmatics defines language as the practice of language in social, cultural and contextual contexts. Speech acts—apologies (corrective, face-repairing acts) and requests (face-threatening acts)—are important for social harmony. While traditional pragmatic research has focused on face-to-face (FtF) interactions using static Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs), the popularity of computer-mediated communication (CMC) has led to the transition of humans to digitally mediated and gamified situations like mobile role-play situations. It is still not sure, however, how mobile platform affordances (e.g., fewer social cues, permanence of text and semi-authentic role-play identities) impact the performance, perception and strategic mitigation of apologies and requests. The study addresses this gap by using a mixed-methods approach with the quasi-experimental research design. In addition to traditional DCTs, the study investigates the pragmatic strategies used by participants in a mobile-based, dynamic role-play setting and the contextual factors such as social power (P), social distance (D) and absolute ranking (R) of imposition or infraction. It shows that although Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory is still applicable (participants still evaluate (P, D and R) about face-threatening acts (FTAs) in the mobile setting, the strategies themselves are re-mediated to a mobile context. The social variables are still relevant but the study filters their effects by text and the various constraints and affordances of text-based communication. The mobile setting, on the other hand, promotes hyper-mitigation for high-stakes FTAs, bringing extra complexity to the human-computer interaction in interpersonal communication.

KEYWORDS: Pragmatics; Speech Acts; Mobile-Mediated Communication; Politeness Theory; Role-Play Scenarios; Digital Pragmatic Competence

1. Introduction

As a matter of principle, pragmatics is, by the very definition, the study of language in use, not just about how our words translate into meanings. Speech acts are actions performed via utterances when we talk to each other. The most significant speech acts to sustain harmony among people and societies are those of apology and requests. Apologies are corrective exchanges—attempting face repair after an offense—and requests are face-threatening acts (FTAs) that infringe on the hearer's freedom of action. Pragmatic about these speech acts requires a good understanding of the rules in relation to society, culture, and context that define language.

In recent decades human interaction has been getting more diverse with the digitized phenomenon. Computer-mediated communication (CMC) and mobile-based communication have revolutionized

the interaction as communication has become the main means of communication. This has brought about new types of communication scenarios, e.g. mobile role play scenarios. These are common in language learning applications, social media interactions, and digital gaming situations, where users use pragmatic strategies to achieve their goals. And yet we know little about the pragmatic functions of apologies and requests of these kinds in these digital and often gamified contexts. The standard pragmatic research has been focused on face-to-face (FtF) and written discourse and has been mainly based on Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) to get the data. While these methods have provided foundational information, they are not very fluid, interactive, and contextually rich in the face-to-face communication. In addition, the flexibility of mobile-based platforms (synchronicity, reduced social cues, perceived anonymity, permanence of written record) contributes to a different pragmatic environment. There is a lack of knowledge on how the context of a mobile-based role play scenario influences apologies and requests. Do people apologize differently when they apologize in text or mobile versus what their traditional pragmatics literature would predict for FtF scenarios? How does the role play of the speaker's identity (the semi-authentic identity) impact the speaker's willingness to perform FTAs or the force of a remedial action? This study focuses on the pragmatism of the process in such scenarios. The research is based on the following main questions:

1. What are the most common pragmatic strategies used to apologize in mobile role-playing scenarios?
2. What methods are most popular in the implementation of the pragmatic strategies to perform requests in mobile-based role play scenarios?
3. How do context factors (i.e., social power, distance, and the severity of infraction and imposition) affect a mobile-based environment and how do these strategies matter?
4. How does the mobile-based, role-play medium (e.g., affordances and limitations) affect the pragmatically important role of these speech acts?

This research has important theoretical, methodological and pedagogical implications. Theoretically, it will extend Speech Act Theory and Politeness Theory into a more contemporary, digital-driven context to investigate the application of these theories in practice. It will also help to understand how digital interactions affect the pragmatics of interpersonal communication more in depth. In practice, this study will prove that mobile-based role play scenarios are useful data collection tools in pragmatic research. It goes beyond static DCTs to provide a model of capturing more real, interactive data in a controlled and dynamic environment. The findings will be useful for teaching second language (L2). As digital communication becomes more prevalent, language

learners need to develop pragmatic competence not only with FtF interactions but also digital ones. This research will provide empirical data that can be used to design targeted pedagogical interventions and materials that assist with effective apology and request strategies in mobile situations.

Definition of Key Terms.

Pragmatic Functions: The social and communicative purposes served by language in context, such as apologizing, requesting, promising, or complaining.

Apology: A remedial speech act performed to acknowledge an offense and restore the speaker's and hearer's face. Its components may include an illocutionary force indicating device (IFID, e.g., "I'm sorry"), an explanation, an offer of repair, and a promise of forbearance.

Request: A face-threatening speech act that seeks to impose on the hearer to perform an act that benefits the speaker. It is often mitigated through strategies like questioning (e.g., "Could you...?") or hints (e.g., "It's cold in here").

Mobile-Based Role Play Scenarios: Simulated interactive situations, presented via a mobile device, where participants assume a specific character or social role and are required to communicate with another participant to achieve a pre-defined goal.

Face-Threatening Act (FTA): An act that inherently challenges the public self-image (face) of the speaker or the hearer, as defined by Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory.

Apologies and Requests in Speech Act Theory

Apology and requests happen most often in everyday speech acts of a human's daily life. The foundation of this research lies in Speech Act Theory, pioneered by J.L. Austin and later systematized by John Searle. Austin's seminal work, *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), challenged the logical positivist view that language is merely descriptive. People do not only present words and grammatical constructs throughout their conversation but they also execute certain acts throughout their statements. These performed or executed actions are called speech acts. Apologies, invitations, compliments, requests or promises are the diverse types of speech acts.

Austin introduced the concept of the performative utterance, where saying something is doing something. He proposed a tripartite distinction: the locutionary act (the literal utterance), the illocutionary act (the intended function, e.g., a promise or a warning), and the perlocutionary act (the effect on the hearer). Searle (1976) further classified illocutionary acts into categories, placing apologies under "expressives"

(which express a psychological state) and requests under “directives” (which aim to get the hearer to do something). The purpose of this study focuses on apologies and requests as illocutionary acts that are made for reasons based upon shared contextual knowledge, and should be interpreted as such.

Apologies and Requests in Politeness Theory and Facework.

While Speech Act Theory describes language to which we respond, Politeness Theory, and Brown and Levinson (1987) for some, explain why we need certain forms. They place their perspective on ‘face’ as a universal human desire toward autonomy or self-preservation and take two of them to be positive face (the desire to be seen, liked, and appreciated) versus negative face (the desire to be free and independent). Since both apologies and requests are FTAs, speakers use politeness strategies to mitigate their potential damage. Apologies threaten the speaker’s positive face (by admitting fault) and the hearer’s negative face (by imposing a remedy). Requests primarily threaten the hearer’s negative face. Brown and Levinson suggest that a person's choice of strategy (from bald-on-record to off-record) is based on a rational assessment of the sociological influences of social distance (D) between speakers, relative power (P), and the relative ranking of the imposition (R) in one culture.

Apologies and Requests strategies

The research on apologies, inspired in part by the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989), has presented various strategies. These include:

1. Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID): A conventionalized expression of apology (e.g., “sorry,” “apologize,” “excuse me”).
2. Explanation or Account: A reason for the offense (e.g., “The bus was late”).
3. Offer of Repair: An offer to fix the damage (e.g., “I’ll buy you a new one”).
4. Promise of Forbearance: A promise not to repeat the offense (e.g., “It won’t happen again”).

Request strategies are often analyzed on a scale of directness (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989):

1. Most Direct: Imperatives (e.g., “Close the door”).
2. Conventionally Indirect: Syntactic structures that query the hearer’s ability or willingness (e.g., “Can you close the door?”, “Could you close the door?”). This is often the most common and preferred strategy in many contexts.
3. Non-conventionally Indirect: Hints or statements that imply the request (e.g., “It’s cold in here”). Both speech acts are also modified by internal modification (e.g., “Could you possibly...?”) and external modification (e.g., “I’m sorry to bother you, but could you...?”) to further mitigate or intensify their force.

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) and Pragmatic Competence

The advent of CMC introduced a new variable: the medium itself. Early theories of CMC, such as the Social Presence Theory (Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976) and the Cues-Filtered-Out perspective (Culnan & Markus, 1987), posited that the lack of non-verbal cues would make communication less personal and more task-oriented. However, subsequent research has shown that users adapt to the medium, developing new pragmatic strategies. Herring (1996) studied computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) and demonstrated that CMC is an individual language and practical situation. Despite the rich history of pragmatics research and the growing interest in CMC, there has been relatively little research in combination of these two disciplines. Many of the existing works have regarded CMC as a monolithic category. The pragmatics of apologies and requests in mobile role play is not studied in detail. The key problem is how the fundamental features of this medium—its textual structure, its social affordances, and the distinction between public and private spaces—are related to sociolinguistic factors (P, D, R) to produce these two key speech acts. This study aims to fill this gap. The shift to mobile-based communication (e.g., WhatsApp, WeChat, or any role-play application) adds complexity. Such features as synchronicity (the possibility to edit and delay responses), writing a written record, and multi-threaded conversations all affect pragmatic choices. Users have also started to employ specific strategies for this environment, such as emojis as their way of communicating their tone (as a substitute for non-verbal signals), constructing elaborate mitigating phrases before a request, or “pragmatic transfer” from spoken language (Daries, 2010).

Mobile-Based Role Play Scenarios in Pragmatic Research

Role play is not new as a research tool being used to generate more spontaneous speech than DCTs while maintaining experimental control. However, the transition from role play to a mobile-based environment creates a unique hybrid. The scenario is scripted in terms of the situation and roles but the interaction is naturalistic and takes place in real time via text messages. The difference here is that we can make a difference in our ecological perspective as a result of this method which brings in the way people are talking today. Also, it is a controlled environment which allows researchers to play with independent variables (P, D, R) in different situations. Finally, it provides rich and interactive data with interlocutors and FTAs that can be discussed and negotiated in turn.

Research data and design

This study is a mixed-methods research design that takes place in a pragmatic paradigm. In this pragmatic paradigm, the research question is central to the research question and the philosophical and theoretical views of reality and knowledge are not essential to the knowledge but quantitative and qualitative research is applied to the research to get a complete understanding of the phenomena. The study will be quasi-experimental and will be conducted by manipulating the context (P, D, R) under conditions where participants will not be randomly assigned to the situations. The main data will be collected through mobile-based text-mediated role plays. A purposive sample of 80 students is recruited. These are university students enrolled in language or communication courses. This is an ideal sample because these students are fluent in the target language (English), are proficient in mobile-based communication, and can provide rich data. Participants will be paired to form 40 dyads. They are then asked to have a conversation with their professors again in 40 dialogues. 20 dialogues involve students asking to delay the date of their next exam. And 20 dialogues include the students apologizing for not attending the next exam due to different reasons. They provide a sample of sufficient size to reach theoretical saturation and for meaningful quantitative comparisons across all types of scenarios. For ethical purposes, all participants are provided with a detailed information sheet and will sign a consent form. They are assured anonymity and all identifying information will be removed from the data and replaced with pseudonyms. The data will be kept secure on a password-protected server. The primary instrument will be a set of mobile-based role play scenarios hosted on a platform accessible via smartphones (e.g., a private group on a messaging app or a controlled forum).

Each scenario will describe a situation involving two participants and assign roles to them. Scenarios are also designed to vary the situational variables of power, distance, and imposition severity. For applying high power, high distance, high imposition, a student must ask their strict, unfamiliar professor for an extension on a final paper, for example:

Student: "Excuse me, Professor? I am very sorry to disturb you during your office hours, but I was hoping I could speak with you for a brief moment regarding the final research paper."

Professor: "Yes, please. What is the issue?"

Student: "Thank you, Professor. I understand your policy on deadlines is exceptionally strict, but due to an unexpected and severe medical emergency this week, I am formalizing a request to ask if it might be at all possible to grant me a three-day extension on the final paper."

For applying equal power, low distance, low imposition, then sample of students will take part in a dialogue as every two friends will discuss where to go for dinner, and one makes a request, as in the following example:

Student A: "Hey Alex, I'm starving! Where should we grab dinner tonight?"

Student B: "Hey Sam! Same here. How about that new pizza place downtown?"

Student A: "To be honest, I'm not really in the mood for pizza. Can we go to the grill house instead? I'm craving a kebab."

Student B: "Sounds great, actually! A grill house is perfect. Let's head over there right now."

Data Analysis

The data analysis itself will be a two-step process and will follow the mixed-methods design. Stage 1: Quantitative Analysis, in which the transcribed role play interactions are coded for specific apology and request strategies, following those drawn up by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) and refined further in CMC contexts. Coding categories will be:

- Request Strategies: Mood derivable, performative, hedged performative, obligation statement, want statement, suggestory formula, query preparatory, strong hint, mild hint.
- Apology Strategies: IFID, taking on responsibility, explanation, offer of repair, promise of forbearance.
- Modifications: Internal (e.g., politeness markers) as well as external (e.g., supportive moves, disarmers). Frequencies of each strategy will be measured.

Stage 2: Qualitative Analysis, in which a qualitative, discourse-analytic approach will be used to examine the sequential and interactional development of speech acts. It will involve close reading of the exchanges to evaluate:

- Negotiation of Face: How participants co-construct and respond to FTAs over several turns.
- The Role of Medium-Specific Features: How features like typing latency, emoji use, message length, and the lack of paralinguistic cues are strategically employed.
- Emergent Themes: Identification of any new strategies or pragmatic norms that are unique to this mobile-based role play context.

Pragmatic analysis of Requests

The findings for request analysis reveals that in scenarios with high social distance and a severe offense, participants overwhelmingly favoured a combination of IFIDs (e.g., "I am so sorry") followed by

conventionally indirect speech. The following table include 10 examples of the total 20 statements of the requests of the students to their professors regarding delaying the date of the next exam.

No.	Requests of students from their professor (High social distance)
1	"Excuse me, Dr. Nabeel? I am very sorry to bother you, but I wanted to ask if I could speak with you for a moment regarding the final engineering design project.
2	Good morning, Dr. Nabeel. I deeply apologize for the interruption, but I was hoping to discuss a major issue regarding the final laboratory report.
3	Excuse me, Professor Nabeel? I am incredibly sorry to disturb you during your research time, but I need to request a brief meeting regarding the final business strategy portfolio.
4	Good afternoon, Dr. Nabeel. I am deeply sorry to trouble you, but I was hoping to speak with you regarding the final software architecture assignment
5	Excuse me, Professor Nabeel? I apologize sincerely for disturbing you, but I wanted to ask a critical question about the final comparative literature essay
6	Good morning, Dr. Nabeel. I am very sorry to interrupt your work, but I need to speak with you about the final ecology field report
7	"Excuse me, Dr. Nabeel? I apologize for the interruption, but I was hoping to discuss a major issue with my final psychology thesis project.
8	"Good afternoon, Professor Nabeel. I am deeply sorry to disturb you, but I need to request a moment of your time regarding the final astrophysics lab simulation.
9	"Excuse me, Dr. Nabeel? I am very sorry to bother you during your office hours, but I have a pressing matter regarding the final constitutional law brief.
10	Good morning, Professor Nabeel. I apologize sincerely for interrupting, but I was hoping to speak with you about the final history monograph.

According to Speech Act Theory (specifically John Searle's categories and the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project—CCSARP), requests are classified by how directly the grammatical structure (locutionary) reveals the speaker's communicative goal (illocutionary). Here is the classification of the above 10 requests into:

Mostly Direct: Under Speech Act Theory, these are direct because the speaker explicitly states their desire, need, or intent to perform the action using high-modality verbs ("need"). The hearer does not have to look past the literal meaning to understand that a request is being made.

Request 3: "...but I need to request a brief meeting..." (Direct statement of speaker's need).

Request 6: "...but I need to speak with you..." (Direct statement of speaker's need).

Request 8: "...but I need to request a moment of your time..." (Direct statement of speaker's need).

Conventionally Indirect: These are indirect speech acts that rely on standard, culturally routine linguistic formulations. They interpretively state a past desire ("wanted to") or an ongoing hope ("was hoping to") to systematically soften the imposition. The literal meaning differs from the intent, but the routine is universally understood as a polite request.

Request 1: "...but I wanted to ask if I could speak with you..." (Embedded conditional and state of desire).

Request 2: "...but I was hoping to discuss a major issue..." (State of desire using the continuous aspect).

Request 4: "...but I was hoping to speak with you..." (State of desire).

Request 5: "...but I wanted to ask a critical question..." (State of desire / pre-request).

Request 7: "...but I was hoping to discuss a major issue..." (State of desire).

Request 10: "...but I was hoping to speak with you..." (State of desire).

Unconventionally Indirect: These are open-ended "hints" where the request is entirely implicit. The speaker does not use a standard requesting formula or state an explicit need to speak. Instead, they state a factual problem, leaving the hearer to infer that the speaker's true illocutionary goal is to ask for their time and attention.

Request 9: "...but I have a pressing matter regarding the final constitutional law brief."

(Strong/mild hint stating the problem).

The quantitative analysis of statements of request shows that from the 20 requests only 3 were considered as direct while most of the requests were conventionally indirect. This reflexes and shows the desire of the students in using the most polite style when they speak with their professors.

On the other hand, the findings for requests of low social distance reveals a strong preference for the most direct as well as conventionally indirect strategies, as in:

No.	Request between friends (low social distance)
1	I'm treating you to traditional Mansaf downtown tonight
2	Let's grab chicken Kabsa at the restaurant nearby
3	How does some smoky Iraqi Kebab and Tikka sound tonight?
4	How about some loaded falafel sandwiches and hummus.
5	We need sugar ASAP. Warm Nabulsi Kunafa?
6	Excellent, let us celebrate with spicy chicken Biryani at the Indian restaurant
7	I'm craving tacos and nachos. Want to try that new Mexican spot?

8	T.: Haha same here, my energy level is at zero. Y.: We need a double shawarma wrap with extra garlic sauce to recharge.
9	I'm craving grilled fish or shrimp. Let's skip chicken tonight.
10	Let's head to the food court for some grilled salmon and salad
11	In the courtyard, I haven't even had lunch yet. M.: Okay quick, let's grab some cheese and thyme fatayer on the go.
12	What's your opinion of taking dinner in the new restaurant beside our building?
13	Would you like to have some Italian pasta at the restaurant near the campus?
14	Y. I know, we definitely need something warm. F: How about chicken and hot lentil soup?
15	S: Faisal, remember that new Yemeni restaurant that opened across from the dorms? F: Yeah, the one everyone is praising for its Mendi? S.: Exactly, want to try it for dinner tonight?
16	Let's order spicy vegetable noodles delivery to the dorms
17	I found an Egyptian place that makes amazing Kushri with chicken and rice
18	I'm treating you to a Turkish cheese and meat claypot dish. What do you say?
19	Hi F., what are you having for dinner tonight?
20	Dinner is on me tonight, double cheeseburgers at that gourmet place downtown

The pragmatic analysis of the above requests of low social distance shows that this request can be classified into three types of directness:

The Most Direct Requests: These requests use explicit, imperative language ("Let's"), declarations of obligation ("We need"), or direct statements of action ("I'm treating you") where the speaker's intent is stated plainly without questioning the listener's ability or willingness.

Request 1. I'm treating you to traditional Mansaf downtown tonight.

Request 2. Let's grab chicken Kabsa at the restaurant nearby.

Request 6. Excellent, let us celebrate with spicy chicken Biryani at the Indian restaurant.

Request 8. T.: Haha same here, my energy level is at zero. / Y.: We need a double shawarma wrap with extra garlic sauce to recharge.

Request 10. Let's head to the food court for some grilled salmon and salad.

Request 11. In the courtyard, I haven't even had lunch yet. / Maryam: Okay quick, let's grab some cheese and thyme fatayer on the go.

Request 16. Let's order spicy vegetable noodles delivery to the dorms.

Request 20. Dinner is on me tonight, double cheeseburgers at that gourmet place downtown.

Conventionally Indirect: These are standard, formulaic polite questions used specifically for making proposals or requests. They inquire about the hearer's desires, preferences, or willingness using conventional linguistic frames ("How about", "Want to", "Would you like to").

Request 3. How does some smoky Iraqi Kebab and Tikka sound tonight?

Request 4. How about some loaded falafel sandwiches and hummus.

Request 7. I'm craving tacos and nachos. Want to try that new Mexican spot?

Request 9. I'm craving grilled fish or shrimp. Let's skip chicken tonight. (The core invitation contains an explicit directive, but it is cushioned by a stated craving).

Request 12. What's your opinion of taking dinner in the new restaurant beside our building?

Request 13. Would you like to have some Italian pasta at the restaurant near the campus?

Request 14. Y.: I know, we definitely need something warm. / F.: How about chicken and hot lentil soup?

Request 15. S.: F., remember that new Yemeni restaurant that opened across from the dorms? / F.: Yeah, the one everyone is praising for its Mendi? / S.: Exactly, want to try it for dinner tonight?

Request 18. I'm treating you to a Turkish cheese and meat claypot dish. What do you say?

Non-Conventionally Indirect: These sentences rely entirely on context, hinting, and inference. They do not contain a grammatical invitation or request, but rather state facts or ask open background questions that imply a proposal.

Request 5. We need sugar ASAP. Warm Nabulsi Kunafa? (An elliptical phrase/hint based on a stated physical need).

Request 17. I found an Egyptian place that makes amazing Kushri with chicken and rice. (Stating a fact to hint at going there).

Request 19. Hi F., what are you having for dinner tonight? (A pre-invitation background question rather than a direct proposal).

The quantitative analysis of statements of request shows that from the 20 requests only 3 were considered as non-conventionally indirect while most of the requests were mostly direct and conventionally indirect.

This reflexes and shows the desire of the students in using simple and clear style with short sentences when they speak with their peer students.

Pragmatic Analysis of Apologies

The findings for apologies reveal that in scenarios with high social distance and a severe offense, participants overwhelmingly favoured a combination of IFIDs (e.g., I am so sorry, please accept my sincere apologies, I am deeply sorry for the disruption, I am incredibly sorry for the short notice, ...etc. followed by an explicit offer of repair. The following examples include apologies of the students to their professors regarding delaying the date of the next exam.

Student 1: Dear Professor Nabeel, please accept my sincere apologies. I have unfortunately woken up with a severe fever and am unable to attend today's exam. 🤒

Student 2: Good morning Dr. Nabeel. I am deeply sorry for the disruption, but my minor medical procedure has been scheduled for next Tuesday during our exam time.

Student 3: Dear Mr. Nabeel, I am so sorry to inform you that I have an emergency root canal tomorrow morning and will miss the test. I apologize for any inconvenience caused.

Student 4: Hello Mr. Nabeel. I am deeply sorry, but I am currently experiencing severe health issues that prevent me from sitting for the exam today. I kindly request your understanding.

Student 5: Dear Professor, I am incredibly sorry for the short notice. My father was just rushed to the hospital, and I am unable to attend the exam today.

Student 6: Good morning, sir. Please accept my apologies, but my grandfather passed away and I must travel for the funeral, meaning I will miss Friday's test.

Student 7: Mr. Nabeel, I am so sorry to trouble you, but my childcare fell through last minute and I cannot leave my toddler. I apologize for missing the exam.

Student 8: Dear Dr. Nabeel, I am very sorry to inform you that an urgent family crisis requires me to travel tonight. I deeply regret missing the midterm.

Student 9: Professor! Please accept my sincere apologies. My car has broken down on the highway and I am stuck waiting for a tow truck, so I will miss the exam. 🚗

Student 10: Hello Mr. Nabeel. I am so sorry for the bad news, but my return flight was canceled due to the storm. I deeply apologize that I will miss tomorrow's exam.

Conversely, for low-severity offenses between friends, the apology might be minimal, consisting of a simple “sorry” and an explanation, often punctuated with mitigating emojis like 😊, as the following example show:

1. A. Bro, finally done with the presentation. Let's order spicy vegetable noodles delivery to the dorms.

B. Nice job man! Sounds killer but I am going to pass tonight, sorry.

2. A. : Hey Farah! I found an Egyptian place that makes amazing Kushari with chicken and rice. Let's go tonight!

B. Oh wow, I love chicken! But I'm so sorry, I can't make it tonight.

3. A. Hello Fatima! Would you like to have some Italian pasta at the restaurant near the campus tonight?

B. Hello Yousra! That is very kind of you, but I must apologize as I cannot join you tonight.

4. A. FAISAL! Remember that new Yemeni restaurant that opened across from the dorms? Want to try it for Haneedh tonight?

B. DUDE yes! Everyone is praising it! But ugh, I'm so sorry, I can't tonight. 🙄

5. A. We need sugar ASAP! Warm Nabulsi Kunafa downtown right now?

B. Omggg Kunafa sounds perfect, but I'm so sorry, I can't! 🙄

6. A. I'm craving grilled fish or shrimp. Let's skip chicken tonight and hit the seafood spot near the harbor?

B. Sounds delicious Zaid, but sorry man, I have to pass

7. A. Bro, how does some smoky Iraqi Kebab and Tikka sound tonight after this study session?

B. Man, that sounds like a dream, but I honestly can't make it. Sorry.

8. A. How about some loaded falafel sandwiches and hummus on campus before the night shift?

B. Hey Rania! That sounds great but I'm so sorry, I can't join today.

9. A. Hey! Let's head to the food court for some grilled salmon and salad after gym?

B. Hey man! Perfect post-workout meal, but sorry, I have to skip tonight.

10. A. Excellent, let us celebrate your high grade with spicy chicken Biryani at the Indian restaurant!

B. Yay!! Thank you so much! But oh no, I'm so sorry, I can't tonight.

The Influence of Contextual Variables

A key section would synthesize the data to answer the core research question about the influence of power, distance, and imposition. Statistical analysis demonstrated a significant correlation between the perceived power differential and the level of directness. For instance, requests made to a figure with higher power (e.g., a professor) were significantly more indirect and heavily mitigated with supportive moves (e.g., "I know you're very busy, but...") compared to requests made to a peer. The qualitative data showed how participants' internal thought processes, captured in retrospective interviews, confirm their strategic choices were guided by these very variables. For more explanation, see how the following examples of indirect requests mitigated with supportive moves :

1. "Excuse me, Dr. Nabeel? I am very sorry to bother you, but I wanted to ask if I could speak with you for a moment regarding the final engineering design project.

2. Good morning, Dr. Nabeel. I deeply apologize for the interruption, but I was hoping to discuss a major issue regarding the final laboratory report.

3. Excuse me, Professor Nabeel? I am incredibly sorry to disturb you during your research time, but I need to request a brief meeting regarding the final business strategy portfolio.
4. Good afternoon, Dr. Nabeel. I am deeply sorry to trouble you, but I was hoping to speak with you regarding the final software architecture assignment
5. Excuse me, Professor Nabeel? I apologize sincerely for disturbing you, but I wanted to ask a critical question about the final comparative literature essay

The analysis of mobile mediation shows that participants used synchronicity strategically as they delay responses to a request to signal reluctance or to craft a more polite refusal. Moreover, they used Emojis and punctuation as de facto prosodic and paralinguistic cues. An apology ending with “...” might be interpreted as hesitant, while “!!!!” could be interpreted as enthusiastic agreement to a request.

The message length was also a marker of facework. Lengthy, multi-part messages were often used for high-stakes apologies, while short, quick messages were used for low-stakes requests between close friends. And because the written text doesn't have the softening effect of a smile or tone of voice, speakers overstep words so that they can add a lot in their vocabulary and language strategy to their communication. In low-stakes FTAs with close friends, the medium can be so fast that a single emoji or a two-word reminder seems to suffice for a response or apology because the shared context and history are important. For examining the contextual variables analysis of peer requests, let's examine the following dialogue:

Mona: Deena, happy weekend! What's the plan?
Deena: Hey Mona, nothing yet. What's on your mind?
Mona: I'm craving fried fish or shrimp. Let's skip chicken tonight, Can we go?
Deena: Oh, good point! That seafood restaurant on the boardwalk?
Mona: no, let's try the new restaurant beside the new mall.
Deena: Can't wait, see you soon.

The analysis of contextual variables of the above dialogue can be explained as follows:

- Power (P): Equal ($P = 0$) — Both speakers are peers/university students with identical social standing.
- Distance (D): Low ($D \approx 0$) — They are close friends or study partners, using casual vocabulary ("fried").
- Imposition (I): Low ($I = \text{Low}$) — Changing the dinner location is a minor preference change requiring minimal effort or sacrifice from the other party.
- Speech Act: direct/
- Politeness Strategy: Bald on Record / Positive Politeness. Mona makes a direct request ("Can we go...") without formal hedges, and Deena immediately validates her reasoning ("Oh, good point").

And similarly, all other statements can be analysed to show the effect of contextual variables.

Conclusion.

The study investigated the pragmatics of apologies and requests in mobile-based role play. Pedagogically, the discussion emphasized the value of digital pragmatic competence in digital pragmatics. L2 learners are not only learning in FtF, but they now also are participating strongly in digital conversations. The findings suggest that curricula should inform their orientation towards mobile communication strategies (emojis), structure of digital requests in terms of structure/framing, and face organization in the written record. The study adds to a refinement of Politeness Theory for digital environments so that the sociological variables (P, D, R) are not the only determinants, but the affordances of the medium form also a very strong moderator. This is a possibility for a new formula to assess the weight of an FTA in CMC, where the “weight” for P, D, R, and M (medium) is higher in text-based (cue reduction) situations.

The findings largely support the universality of Brown and Levinson’s Politeness Theory; participants rationally assessed P, D, and R and chose strategies to mitigate FTAs accordingly.

The discussion also highlights how these strategies are re-mediated for the mobile context.

The discussion proposes that the mobile medium encourages a form of hyper-mitigation for high-stakes FTAs.

With a mixed-methodical study of quasi-experimental situations, it can be seen that traditional pragmatism still matters, but the strategy will be tweaked for the situation provided by the mobile mode. The social variables are key for strategy and are reflected in strategies, but these strategies are only possible in the situation of text-based and mobile-based communication. The results demonstrate a new layer of complexity in speech act realization rather than being purely interpersonal from a talk point of view to human-computer interaction.

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