Speech Acts Dynamics in Arabic: Investigating the Acquisition of Apology and Request Among Algerian Children

Noureddine Derki

Abstract:

During interpersonal interactions, individuals employ various speech acts, such as apologies and requests, to fulfill communicative objectives. This research focuses on investigating the acquisition of apology and request skills in Algerian children. The primary objectives are to explore the impact of age on the utilization of speech acts in children and to identify the predominant sources contributing to the acquisition of such communicative skills. The study involved 12 participants, evenly distributed across two age groups: Group A (3 to 6 years old) and Group B (7 to 10 years old). Data collection utilized an oral Discourse Completion Task (DCT) featuring six scenarios, with the researcher recording participants' responses. Quantitative and qualitative analyses, employing C. Garvey's (1974) framework for requests and R. Ely & Gleason's (2006) framework for apologies among children, were conducted. While both age groups demonstrated proficiency in using apology and request speech acts, nuanced differences emerged. Older participants (Group B) exhibited heightened linguistic awareness, employing both direct and indirect forms along with diverse strategies for apologies and requests. In contrast, younger participants (Group A) displayed more static and repetitive expressions. The study concludes that age significantly influences the acquisition and production of speech acts. Furthermore, it identifies various sources, including direct guidance from parents and teachers, as well as peer interactions, contributing to children's acquisition of apology and request speech acts.

Keywords: Speech Act Theory, acquisition, children, Algerian Arabic, Apology, Request

INTRODUCTION

People interact with each other, using language, for a variety of reasons including to communicate ideas/feelings and even to perform things. Often people use what is known as 'speech acts' to perform things like promises, requests and apologies ...etc. This 'special' type of language has (speech acts) attracted the attention of various scholars namely that of J. L. Austin who brought new insights with his revolutionary Speech Act Theory. With the rise of this theory in 1962, language became to be seen as a sort of action rather than a medium to convey information and express oneself.

Years after the appearance of this theory, scholars became interested in implementing it on a larger scope. Interest grew wild on how people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds approach speech acts. Such interest was reflected in the bulk of research conducted on this topic from various perspectives ranging from the strategies used to how children acquire speech acts. Before we proceed to our main interest, it is important to delve into the nature of the speech act theory.

SPEECH ACT THEORY

The speech act theory can be traced back to the pioneering work of J. L. Austin (1962) which sparked an interest in investigating how words are used to carry out actions instead of just

presenting information. This theory was further developed by Searle (1969) who saw speech acts as "basic or minimal units of linguistic communication" and were defined as utterances which indicate actions. The structure: 'I sentence you two years in prison', when performed in its appropriate context (court) room by the appropriate person i.e., judge, who has the authority, the sentence does not report on an action, instead it refers to a performed action (Austin, 1962, p. 6).

Austin (1962) distinguished between three elements of communicative acts. First, the locutionary act which simply refers to the basic production of a meaningful utterance. This latter helps in maintaining communication since the messages being transferred must bear certain amount of sense and reference. The illocutionary act refers to an utterance which has a communicative intention. It is seen to be composed of a propositional content plus a particular illocutionary force whereby the speaker can offer, request, order …etc. Finally, the perlocutionary act deals somewhat with external aspect of the speech act. In fact, it is interested in the consequences of the speaker's utterance on the hearer such as: persuading, convincing, scaring and so forth.

Speech acts were subject to immense investigation as researchers wanted to understand such phenomenon from different perspectives. When it comes to the linguistic perspective, researchers were interested in identifying the different forms and strategies used by people across different languages. From a cultural and sociolinguistic perspective, they were interested in the various metalinguistic factors influencing the use of speech acts such as age, identity, ethnicity, cultural diversity …etc. Speech acts were studied across different cultures and languages to verify how much languages and cultures converge or diverge in relation to their use. Since this study is related to speech acts request and apology in the Arab context, it is important to highlight some of the main studies that were conducted.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Goffman (1971), an apology is a linguistic tool which is remedial in the sense that it is used to restore damaged relationships, mitigate loss of face, and preserve social standing. Requests are too among the types of speech acts which received significant amount of attention especially in the field Pragmatics (Fukushima, 2002).

Brown and Levinson (1987) defined requests as a face-threatening speech act since they are intended to threaten the addressee's freedom of action i.e., his negative face. A request, thus, can be simply defined as a polite demand made by the speaker i.e., requester to ask for a favor from the other person (Nelson et al, 2002). People produce requests for various reasons during their daily interactions such as: obtaining information, seeking support, or acquiring assistance from others. In the following section, we will highlight some of works that were conducted on the speech acts of apology and request in the Arab context.

Studies on Apology in Arabic

Nureddeen (2008) tried to highlight the type and extent to which apology strategies are used in Sudanese Arabic. The researcher used discourse completion task (DCT) composed of 10 items which was handed over to 110 college educated adults in the capital city of Khartoum. She found that Sudanese speakers of Arabic prefer to apologize indirectly mainly through the use of explicit/implicit strategies as well as explanations. The author concluded that the results of her study confirm with to earlier studies when it comes to the universality of some apology strategies.

A year later, Mohamed Assiri conducted a study to investigate the use of apology among Arab participants with special attention to the variable of gender. The researcher was interested in investigating whether there are differences between male and female Arabic speakers' strategies of apology or not. The sample of the study composed of 20 individuals devised equally: 10 males and 10 females.

As far as data collection tool is concerned, the researcher used a DCT which included 10 real-life situations in which an apology is required as the correct answer. Although some similarities emerged, obvious differences between the two genders were also observed in the use of apology strategies. The difference was traced back to the influence of gender on language as males and females exhibited different preferences for apology strategies. The research concluded his study by relating the findings t pervious research and thus entailing the universality of the issue

More recently, Huwari (2018) conducted a comparative study between Jordanian and Asian EFL learners at Zarqa University to investigate the influence of culture on the use of apology. The researcher used a DCT as a tool for eliciting data, it included 10 situations and distributed it among 12 participants with 6 individuals form each group. Results revealed that participants from the two groups have some similarities as well as differences in relation to the type of apology strategies used. While both groups seem to use strategies like account, and compensation quite frequently, 'gratitude' was found to be used less among Asian participants. The researcher concluded that since differences occur, there is an urgent necessity for teaching. He suggested that the teaching should combine semantics and pragmatics in order to enhance the learner's awareness.

Studies on Requests in Arabic

Al-Marrani and Sazalie (2010) investigated the main strategies used by monolinguals of Yemeni Arabic in making requests. Participants of the study were 336 individuals divided equally into two groups based on their gender making it 168 participants each group. The researchers used a DCT as a primary tool to collect data. Using the theoretical framework of Blum-Kulka, et al (1989), the data was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Results of the study indicated that male speakers adopt direct of request in man to man to situations as a way to show solidarity. In male-female interaction, male participants were seen to shift for the indirect forms as a way to show respect. Once again, the researcher proved the influence of gender on language use.

M. Aubed (2012) conducted a comparative study between English and Arabic languages in relation to polite requests. The researcher first highlighted five patterns of direct polite request in English and then tried to render into Arabic. By doing so, the researcher wanted to investigate the most effective methods for translating these polite requests. Since the two languages belong to different families, internal structures such as syntax and vocabulary influence the way requests are formulated. After analyzing different structures in both languages, the findings indicated that polite markers in Arabic are more than those in English.

M. Hammani (2019) conducted a comparative study between Moroccan Arabic (MA) and American English (AE) to investigate the speech act of request. Using a DCT, the researcher was interested in identifying the main request strategies and level of directness employed by natives of both languages. The researcher hypothesized that the request directness level is influenced by certain socio-pragmatic variables namely social power, social distance, and degree of imposition in MA and AE. Results revealed a significant difference as far as the directness level of the requests

are concerned. While speakers of Arabic favor direct request strategies, English speakers opted for conventionally indirect request strategies. Such preference was traced back to the strong influence of the socio-pragmatic variables on language use and mainly the directness level being applied.

As reflected in the bulk of research highlighted above, the majority of works focused on adults' speech while research on the children's use of speech acts remained dim. Recently, however, a new trend appeared a new trend appeared as researchers started to shift their attention towards the notion of acquisition. In this sense, they wanted to investigate how children acquire speech acts as well as the main factors that may interact with such process. Since the present research falls within the scope of the acquisition of speech acts among children, the following section is dedicated to highlight the main works which have been conducted on this topic.

Studies on the Acquisition of Apology

R. Ely and J. B. Gleason (2006) examined children's use of apology terms in parent–child discourse. Using a longitudinal approach, data was gathered from a total of nine children (5 males and 4 females) having an age span between 1,2 to 6,1 years old. After data analysis, the researchers noticed several developmental patterns including the influence of age on the directness level of the elicited apologies. Children were observed to switch to indirect forms of apologies as they grew older since during their first years, they use direct form only. Furthermore, age influenced their linguistic ability in the sense that as the children grew older, their apologies became more elaborate. The study revealed that children acquired the speech act apology through experience as apology terms were directed to them and, to a lesser degree, in talk about apologies.

More recently, Ansel and Doris (2012) wanted to analyze the developmental patterns of Chinese children's apology strategies. They investigated their perception of punishments and their production of apologies in terms of two contextual variables: degree of their own responsibility and the severity of their offence. A total of 120 Chinese children aged between 4 and 8 years old in an addition to a control group of 24 Chinese-speaking adults were required to participate in comprehension and production tasks. Chinese children, as young as four years old, were found to be aware of the offense committed as their responses indicated a sense of responsibility. Furthermore, the data revealed that children under seven years old used more direct apologies than indirect apologies, unlike their older counterparts who used indirect forms. Such findings were traced back to the child's poor linguistic abilities (during early years) which are developed through experience (Brown & Levinson 1987).

Studies on The Acquisition of Request

The first pioneering work on requests among children is traced back to the work of C. Garvey (1975) where she investigated the ability of children to produce and respond to requests. When it comes to collecting data, the study was based on the spontaneous speech of 36 dyads of nursery school children organized according to age and ranging from 3 years old to 7 years old. Results indicated that direct forms of request were frequent and acknowledged verbally. This was traced back to the common ground found between the speaker and the addressee in relation to the interpersonal meaning factors relevant to requesting. These meaning factors were found to provide a basis for the indirect requests.

Ervin-Tripp and Gordon (1986) conducted a study on one participant: a four years old boy called (T) over a period of seven months to investigate his production of requests while interacting with

others. After analysing his production, the researchers focused on several forms of requests namely 'self-oriented requests', 'rule/norm' oriented requests' and 'activity- or external goal-oriented requests'. Results indicated that such requests were usually in the imperative form and occurred during shared activities such as imaginative game play. The researchers concluded that T's choice of request forms depended on two main reasons: the relation of request to the factors above and the degree of compliance.

Ward et. al (1987) conducted a study in which they investigated the speech act of request among children with regard to 'purchasing'. Their study aimed to explore patterns and factors influencing children's purchase requests and parental responses to those requests across three cultures (US, Britain and Japan). Results indicated that in cultures where there is extensive communication (discussion) between the child and his parents (in the USA and Britain), child is likely to produce more requests. The child's age as well as his exposure to commercials also proved to have significant influence on his request. All these studies indicated that children acquired a basic grasp for diverse syntactic forms used for conveying their requested intentions.

Schlosser et. al (2007) investigated the acquisition of request among five children with autism. The main aim of this study was to evaluate the influence of speech output on autistic children, more specifically, whether children learn to request more efficiently with speech output during instruction rather than without speech output. To evaluate the effectiveness of the two conditions, the researchers developed an alternating treatments design. Even though the study revealed that children frequent rate of requesting under both conditions, only one student showed some improvement. The researchers concluded that their findings go hand in hand with other previous research on the effects of speech output on requesting in children with autism.

L. King et. al (2014) investigated the influence of technology on the acquisition of requests among children with autistic children. The researcher was interested in how the (Proloquo2Go) application on the IPad can help three children, aged between three and five years old, learn how to request. Results proved that children with autism can acquire request skills using the application via a picture-based communication system.

In fact, vocal requesting increased significantly for the participants during the training phases in comparison to baseline probes. These two relatively recent studies focused on the notion of acquisition of speech acts among children with disorders. Even though such studies can be considered to be far from our current interest, they both fall within the general scope of acquisition of speech acts among children.

It is important to mention that the literature on the acquisition of speech acts in general is somehow limited and relatively old. Furthermore, the notion of acquisition somehow remained beyond their scope in the sense that researchers did not focus on it much. Studies related to the acquisition of apology among children, in particular, was found to be extremely limited since only two studies were found (to the researcher's knowledge). Research on request, on the other hand was more elaborated as it included much work and covered even children with disabilities and how they used speech acts.

The current research is hoped to contribute to the limited literature about this subject as it aims to investigate the acquisition of request and apology among Algerian children with special attention to the factor of age.

The present work, hence, will try to answer the following questions:

1. Does age have an influence on the child's acquisition of apologies and requests? and how?
2. What are the main sources used by the child to acquire the speech acts of apology and request?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The sample of the study consisted of twelve (12) Algerian children attending primary schools. The sample was divided into two age groups: group A comprises of children between 3,1 to 6 years old while group B includes children between 7.1 to 10 years old.

Data Collection

When it comes to the data collection tool, an oral DCT was used. It was piloted in a form of an interview administrated by fellow teacher (in Algeria). The DCT comprised of 6 scenarios equally divided between the two types of speech acts: 3 situations for apology and 3 for request. The children's Reponses were recorded and later on sent to the researcher (via email) for analysis. Note that the situations used in the DCT were verified and validated by a jury of 4 PhD students in Linguistics. The different situations were designed to elicit whether or not age has an influence on the child's ability to successfully acquire the speech acts of request and apology.

Data Analysis

After collecting data, several expressions were extracted for analysis. The expressions were transliterated and given an English translation to facilitate understanding for non-natives of Arabic. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used in analysis of data following two theoretical frameworks namely that of C. Garvey's (1974) and R. Ely & Gleason's (2006) works on requests and apologies among children, respectively. As far as the analysis is concerned, the responses of each group were analysed in a separate section and then later on discussed altogether. In each section, numerous examples were discussed to highlight how children used those speech acts.

RESULTS

Numerous studies, such as the work conducted by Kochanska, DeVet, Goldman, Murray, and Putnam (1994), have underscored a pivotal developmental milestone: children typically acquire a fundamental sense of morality by the age of three. This moral compass is substantially influenced by their interactions with external influences, notably parents and teachers. By the elementary level, children demonstrate the ability to discern basic transgressions in both moral and social realms. Consequently, when a child errs, they exhibit awareness of their transgressions and undertake corrective measures, often through strategies such as apology. The subsequent section delves into an examination of how Algerian children, aged between 3 and 10 years, employ apology to rectify their misbehavior, while also exploring the potential impact of age on this process.

Apologies Among Algerian Children

The initial segment of the Directed Communication Task (DCT) comprised three scenarios wherein a breach of social norms occurred. Participants were tasked with immersing themselves in these scenarios and responding accordingly. Following the framework proposed by R. Ely and Gleason (2006), the participants' reactions were scrutinized to discern a discernible pattern linked to the directness level of the apology. The frameworks employed in the present study categorize

the directness level of structures based on their construction. Given the limited linguistic capabilities of children, preventing them from articulating themselves as comprehensively as adults, responses were classified according to the presence or absence of polite terms. Structures incorporating 'polite' terms were deemed indirect, whereas those lacking such terms were considered direct. Consequently, the ensuing table delineates the way participants utilized apologies:

Table 1: Results Indicating Apology in Children's Speech

Type of apology	Group A	Group B
Direct	10	6
Indirect	3	5
Total	**13**	**11**

As evident in Table 1, participants manifested the previously discussed notion of awareness. Despite both groups attaining relatively high scores across all situations, a notable divergence in distribution is discernible. Specifically, participants from Group A (children aged 3 to 6 years) exhibited a propensity for more direct forms of apology compared to their counterparts in Group B (children aged 7 to 10 years). This variance can be attributed to the influence of experience on a child's linguistic creativity. Younger children, having limited experiences, tend to adhere to simpler and more basic forms, lacking access to complex linguistic structures.

Having addressed the overarching pattern, a deeper exploration of how children's express apologies is warranted. Since Group A demonstrated a higher inclination towards the use of direct forms of apology, we will commence our analysis with their responses. In the first scenario, participants were required to apologize for damaging a borrowed book. The majority of participants employed direct forms of apology, notably utilizing the term 'smahli,' translated as 'forgive/excuse me.' It is noteworthy that participants in this situation predominantly offered concise, one-word responses, indicating a limitation in their pragmatic skills and an absence of elaboration in supporting their apologies. Additional factors, such as the context of utterance and the interpersonal relationship between the child and the interlocutor, further influence a child's production, as will be elucidated subsequently. Notably, only one participant in Group A utilized an additional polite marker, 'hambouk,' as in 'hambouk smahli,' which translates to 'I beg you/please excuse me,' thereby rendering her apology slightly less direct.

In the second scenario of the Directed Communication Task (DCT), participants were prompted to articulate their apologies for losing money that belonged to an elderly family member (mother or father). Young participants in this situation demonstrated a proficiency in employing both direct forms of apology, using the term 'smahli,' and indirect forms. Notably, participants exhibited a proclivity for providing more elaborate information than in the preceding scenario, as exemplified in the following excerpts directly extracted from the participants' discourse. This enhanced verbosity can be attributed to the intimate nature of the relationships shared with the family members involved.

1. *| ismahili tajahtom. nʕʒtader menha |*
   Exp. Excuse me, I lost the money. I apologize to her
2. *| … samhili ma nʕawdʃ |*
   Exp. Forgive, I won't do it again
3. *|… ma nʕawdʃ ntajh drahem |*
   Exp. I won't lose money ever again

In the aforementioned examples, one may discern the utilization of direct forms of apology, revealing a nuanced variation. Specifically, the terms 'samhili' and 'ismahili' carry identical meanings but differ in formality, with the former being less formal than the latter. Furthermore, the additional utterances accompanying the core apology term can be viewed as apology strategies. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) delineated various apology strategies, encompassing statements of remorse, explanations, offers of repair, and blaming the victim.

Examining the first example, a six-year-old girl explained that 'the money was lost,' providing a rationale for the occurrence, thus employing an explanatory strategy. In the second example, a participant, experiencing fear, not only sought forgiveness but also pledged 'not to do it again,' constituting an offer of repair as she promised to rectify her behavior. In the third example, a participant indirectly acknowledged fault. Although devoid of explicit polite terms, the commitment expressed in her promise implies an indirect form of apology.

The final scenario dedicated to apology further underscored the influence of the relationship between the child and the interlocutor on the production process. Participants were prompted to articulate how they would apologize if they damaged their brothers' mobile phone, a relationship denoting greater closeness compared to that between a child and their parents. Responses to this scenario varied, as illustrated in the following examples:
1. / … *Ma nzidʃ nxrb fih* /
   Exp. I won't touch it again
2. / … *Ma nʕawdhaʃ* /
   Exp. I won't do it again
3. / … *Smahli dayʕtah* /
   Exp. Forgive me I ruined it
4. / … *Smahli ma ʃeftahʃ* /
   Exp. Forgive I was not on purpose
5. / … *smahli labghit rabi* /
   Exp. Please forgive me

In the examples, participants demonstrated diverse approaches to the scenario, notably indicating a substantial increase in the level of indirectness in their apologies. For example, in Example 4, a child conveyed indirect remorse by pledging not to touch his brother's phone again. A similar strategy was employed by another participant who assured that he would not repeat the action (Example 5). Notably, both instances lacked explicit polite phrases such as 'forgive me' or 'I am sorry,' a characteristic attributed to the intimacy of the relationships involved. Conversely, there were participants who opted for a more direct form of apology, as illustrated in Examples 6 and 7. In addition to utilizing the polite term 'smahli,' these participants incorporated additional information. Their strategies for expressing remorse differed, with one choosing confession as a means to articulate remorse, while the other emphasized the unintentional nature of the action.

Regarding the second group, they exhibited a relatively higher propensity for employing indirect forms of apology, as evident in the following examples. This tendency was traced back to the influence of age and experience on language production, given that participants in Group B were older:
1. / … *Smhili w ma nzidʃ nʕawd* /
   Exp. Am sorry and I won't do it again.
2. / … *Mama samhili ma tayhthomʃ ʕan kasd* /

Exp. Mom, forgive me it was on purpose.
3. *| … taholi labghiti samhili! |*
Exp. I lost the money can you forgive me!
4. *| … smhili |*
Exp. Forgive me

The examples shed light on the participants' responses to the second scenario (apologizing for losing money). What stands out is the distinctiveness in the expression of direct apology between the two groups, particularly in the amount of accompanying information provided alongside the polite term. Some participants adhered to the basic direct form, straightforwardly saying "smahli" (I am sorry) or "forgive me" with no additional information, as exemplified in Example 12. However, the majority surpassed this basic expression and employed various strategies to articulate their apologies.

In Example 11, a seven-year-old participant first admitted to committing an offense (losing his mom's money) and then requested forgiveness. The directness of the apology was mediated using the polite term "labghiti," which translates to "if you want." Children exhibited the utilization of diverse apology strategies in accordance with the framework proposed by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), as evident in Example 9, where a participant pledged not to repeat the offense after directly seeking forgiveness. Example 10 showcased a higher level of information compared to previous excerpts. The participant employed two polite terms-an address term (honorific) "mama" and the apology term "samhili" (excuse me). Subsequently, she provided an explanation for the transgression, emphasizing that it was unintentional. Notably, the use of standard Arabic to justify herself indicated the influence of formal education on the acquisition of polite forms, a point that will be further explored in the subsequent discussion.

The variation in the level of directness persisted in the second situation, pertaining to apologizing for a damaged book. The following sentences illustrate how children approached this scenario:
1. *| … nʃrilik wahdaxor |*
Exp. I will get you a new one
2. *| … Nta gtaʕthom w mʃi ana |*
Exp. You teared the papers off and not me
3. *| … kan mgataʕ wahdah |*
Exp. I found it this way

In the above examples (13-15), the absence of explicit polite terms does not necessarily render the utterances impolite, as they represent instances of indirect apology. Taking Example 13, the child offers to buy a new book as a means of rectifying the offense, constituting an indirect form of apology known as 'offering repair' according to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984). Another strategy observed is 'blaming the victim,' exemplified in Example 14, where the child accuses a friend of being responsible for the book's damage, asserting that it was not her fault. This theme persists in Example 15, where the child denies any knowledge of the incident, assuming a neutral stance.

While Examples 14 and 15 may initially seem not to directly convey an apology, contextual factors such as tone and delivery suggest otherwise. Considering the context, one can infer that these utterances indeed function as apologies. It is noteworthy that certain participants indicated their intention to involve a teacher to resolve the issue; however, such responses were excluded as they did not involve a direct apology.

Transitioning to the final scenario involving the brother's broken mobile phone, participants from the second group employed both direct and indirect forms of apology, as follows:

1. / … *Ma ʃetfhomch aja taho* /
   Exp. I did not pay attention and it fell down
2. / … *Smhili bezaf w ma nziʃ nʕawd* /
   Exp. I am so sorry and I won't do it again

In the sentences, the indirect form of apology is evident in Example 16, where the child provides an explanation asserting that the phone falling was not his fault. This indirect apology can be attributed to the close relationship between the brothers. In Example 17, a direct apology is expressed, incorporating the polite term 'sorry' along with the intensifier 'bezaf,' meaning 'a lot.' Additionally, a promise is made not to repeat the action. It is noteworthy that, given the context of dealing with children, repetition of certain expressions, especially the polite term 'smahli,' is inevitable.

Having scrutinized the data related to how children employ apology in their daily communication, the analysis transitions to the second type of speech acts, namely requests. The examination of children's speech in this regard will unfold in two steps. Initially, requests made by each group will be categorized according to the directness level of the utterance. Subsequently, the production will be analyzed in terms of the request strategy adopted by each child, using examples extracted from the recordings. These examples will be scrutinized to comprehend why a particular type of request was employed instead of another, considering factors such as context and the relationship between the child and the interlocutor.

Requests Among Algerian Children

When it comes to the second part of the DCT, our participants exhibited diverging approaches regarding the type of request used. Each group showed the preference for certain form over another. This preference was first classified in terms direct vs. indirect request following the framework of C. Garvey (1975). Each request found in the children's discourse was later on deeply analysed in terms of context and the strategy used. Each group's preference can be clearly seen in the following table:

Table 2: Results Indicating Request in Children's Speech

Type of Request	Group A	Group B
Direct	4	5
Indirect	5	4
Total	**9**	**9**

Upon reviewing the results, it's evident that responses are similar, especially in children's requests, regardless of apology. Both groups generated nine instances of requests in direct and indirect forms. Group A demonstrated a balanced use of both forms when responding to the three distinct DCT situations, where formality wasn't a factor due to the close relationship between speakers. Two situations involved 'borrowing something,' and the third focused on seeking 'help.' In the first situation about borrowing a book, Group A participants supplied the following utterances:

1. / … *selfouli* /
   Exp. Give me (the book)
2. / … *hambouk selfli kteb* /

      Exp. Please! Lend me your book
3. | *… hambouk slefli kteb baʃ nkra bih* |
      Exp. Please! Lend me your book to study with it
4. | *… min fadlik selfili kteb* |
      Exp. Can you lend me a book
5. | *… aʕtini* |
      Exp. Give me

Most children predominantly chose the indirect form of request, incorporating polite terms like 'hambouk' and 'min fadlek,' akin to 'please' in English. Notably, 'hambouk' is less formal than 'min fadlek.' These children added details such as specifying the object (book) and the purpose (studying). In contrast, direct requests were abrupt, lacking introductions, politeness, or additional information. Examples 18 and 22 illustrate this, with the latter being more authoritative. Despite potential impoliteness, considering children's limited pragmatic skills, it was deemed normal. The second situation wasn't adequately discussed, addressed in the limitations section. For the last scenario, requesting help with an assignment, children employed both request forms, each with distinct preferences.

Their utterances were as follows:
1. | *… hambouk fahmini* |
      Exp. Please! Explain to me (the assignment)
2. | *… hambouk ʕawnini* |
      Exp. Please! Help me
3. | *… fahmini* |
      Exp. Explain to me
4. | *… ʒalmini* |
      Exp. Teach me

The provided examples underscore the diverse approaches children take when seeking help. Examples 23 and 24 utilize an indirect approach, incorporating the polite term 'hambouk' (please). Conversely, examples 25 and 26 are brief, single-word utterances lacking politeness or additional information. It's crucial to note that the context of indirect requests differs, with participants in 23 and 24 seeking help from their teacher, justifying the indirect form. Participants in 25 and 26, addressing their peers, opted for the indirect form.

Transitioning to group B, as shown in Table 2, their responses varied from direct to indirect requests. In the first scenario, their answers were as follows:
1. | *… aʕtini kteb* |
      Exp. Give me a book
2. | *… aʕtini wahed w zawdj kra fih* |
      Exp. Give me one and use the other one
3. | *… selfouli* |
      Exp. Borrow me (a book)
4. | *La ʕandek kteb … mʕʒlich tslfli* |
      Exp. Would you please lend me (a book) if you have one
5. | *… nsit ktebi tselfouli wahed* |
      Exp. I forgot my book would you lend me one.

In the first situation, direct requests were predominantly employed, particularly by male participants. Examples 26 and 27 feature the imperative 'aʕtini' (give me), while example 28 uses 'slfouli' (lend me) without additional polite terms. Following Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) framework, these direct requests fall under the category of 'obligation statement.' Indirect forms typically began with an introduction. In example 30, a nine-year-old girl starts by asking if her colleague has an extra book, then softens her request with 'mʕ3lich' (if you don't mind). This aligns with 'suggestory formulae,' suggesting before making a direct demand. Example 31 follows a similar structure, with the participant admitting to forgetting her book. Notably, these older participants demonstrate greater pragmatic awareness than the first group due to their age and linguistic experience.

Transitioning to the last situation, demanding help, participants' responses were as follows:
1. | … fahmoni |
   Exp. Explain to me
2. | … maʕlich tfahmini dars |
   Exp. Can you explain the lesson for me
3. | … min fadlek ʕawdili edars |
   Exp. Could you please re-explain the lesson for me

In this situation, there's a noticeable shift in the preferred way of making requests. Example 32 uses a direct form, featuring a straightforward imperative verb. Conversely, examples 33 and 34 employ an indirect approach with polite terms 'maʕlich' and 'min fadlk' (please and could you). This shift is once again tied to the interlocutor's status, akin to group A. In example 32, the participant addresses a friend, while in examples 33 and 34, the girls request their teacher to re-explain the lesson. These instances underscore that, despite their young age, the context and the interlocutor's status impact the directness level of the speech act.

DISCUSSION

Upon detailed analysis of participant data using R. Ely & B. Gleason's (2006) and C. Garvey's (1974) frameworks, the results were categorized in Table 3 below. The table presents the total occurrences of both direct and indirect forms for both speech acts—apologies and requests—in children's discourse:

Table 3: Overall Use of Apology and Request

Type of Speech Act		Group A	Group B	Total
Apology	Direct	10	6	
	Indirect	3	5	
	Total	**13**	**11**	**24**
Request	Direct	4	5	
	Indirect	5	4	
	Total	**9**	**9**	**18**

Table 3 above exhibits how children between 3 and 10 years have the ability to express the speech acts of apology and request. However, a difference can be noticed regarding the way such utterances are expressed namely in relation to the level of directness. As far as apology is concerned, we can say that younger children i.e., between 3 and 6 years old tend to be more direct. This preference is reflected in their production of single-word utterances namely '*smahli*'

(excuse me) with no additional information. On the other hand, the addition of the polite term '*hambouk*' (please) rendered the apology less direct.

Older children between 7 and 10 years old used direct apology too, but scored higher when it came to indirect forms of apology. One important difference which can be noticed is the manner in expressing the indirect apology. While participants from group A settled for the integration of polite terms, group B elaborated on their utterances and used other techniques. Based on Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) theoretical framework, children were found to use several apology strategies including: providing explanation, statement of remorse, offering repair and even blaming the victim.

The various forms of apology reflected in the children's discourse revealed a similar pattern between the two age groups. In the case of direct apology, children from both groups used single-word utterance '*smahli*' (excuse me) with an occasional integration of the polite term '*hambouk*' (please). Such static pattern can be traced back to the difficulty in acquiring apology, since this type of speech acts seem to appear infrequently in daily conversations. During his early years, the child learns from his environment by using the input around him to build his linguistic abilities. The fact that apology is rarely used during daily encounters makes the child less exposed which in return negatively influences his abilities and forces him to stick to static patterns (Becker, 1990; Snow, Perlmann, Gleason & Hooshyar, 1990; Ninio & Snow, 1996).

As far as requests are concerned, the same number of instances was recorded in the two groups with 9 instances in each one. What is interesting is that the younger group used significantly more indirect requests than the older group. This difference was noticed namely in the last situation (requesting assistance) and was traced back to the status of the interlocutor. We can notice that all the children who used indirect forms of requests were addressing their teacher i.e., she has a higher status and thus the indirect (more polite) form seemed more suitable. Older participants, on the other hand, pictured themselves in a conversation with their peers i.e., having equal status as the interlocutor and thus opted for the direct (less polite) form.

Furthermore, children exhibited a sense of creativity in terms of the strategies used to perform the speech act of request. As highlighted in the results section, Algerian children were able to provide rich amount of information and used multiple request strategies. Such behavior can be traced back to their experience with this type of speech act. Unlike apology, requests are much more common to children since they are exposed to such speech acts ever since their early years act through parent-child interaction (Gleason, Perlmann & Greif, 1984). Such interactions create a significantly large amount of input which is stored in the child's brain. As the child starts growing up, the stored input makes him more aware to this type of speech acts and later on help in the production process i.e., precise and creative.

To sum up, children from the two groups successfully used the speech acts of apology and request. As far as apology is concerned, our findings go hand in hand with what (Kochanska, DeVet, Goldman, Murray & Putnam, 1994) found which is that children by the age of three develop a basic sense of morality. This later allows the child to differentiate between what is right and wrong and engage in the process of repair (via apology) when he feels that there is a kind of transgression.

One important difference was recorded, besides the directness level, in relation to the strategies used and amount of information. Older children (7-10) years old exhibited the use of information-rich utterances, unlike their younger counter parts, which indicates that age plays a crucial role in the acquisition process. The way age influenced the acquisition is reflected in the variation of the speech act's formality (formal vs. informal).

In the case of apology, we noticed how young children (3-6 years old) used informal terms to apologize '*maʕlich*' and '*hambouk*'. These terms were acquired during the child's early years (2 to 4 years old) i.e., before attending school namely in his home environment and through interaction with peers. On the other hand, older children (7-10 years old) exhibited the use of terms in standard Arabic such as '*min fadlk*' (please), '*ismahili*' (excuse me) and '*ʕan kasd*' (intentionally). Such behavior can be traced back-to-back to the influence of formal instruction children are exposed to in schools. Thus, we can say that age does indeed influence the acquisition of speech acts. This leads us to the second question another which is related to the sources of acquisition.

Based on the above analysis and discussion, we can deduce that there are certain factors influencing the acquisition of speech acts. The initial step for the child to learn speech acts is the family, starting from the direct instructions of family members for the child such as: say '*please*' and '*sorry*'. Another way is the imitation process (indirect exposure) where the child observes how the people around him react to each other (apology, request …etc.) and then starts imitating them. When the child steps outside his home, he moves to the second stage of acquisition i.e., the environment. As the child engages in the process of widening his circle of knowledge at the age of 3-5, he starts Interacting with his peers and outsiders. These interactions push the child to employ the basic knowledge he learnt from the house which makes him gain more experience as reflected in (Arendt, 2019). At a later stage, comes the formal education as the child starts attending school. In this phase, direct instruction begins as the child starts learning the standard form of the language (words and useful expressions). The child moves to integrating this form of language (from time to time) in his interaction with peers and family members.

Another important source of the acquisition of speech acts is that of media reflected in the use of technological devices (mobile, tablets and T.V). Nowadays, technology dominates our everyday life including children who are learning to use devices such as mobile phones and tables from an early age. Via playing video games and watching cartoons, they learn and acquire certain expressions including speech acts. As time passes, the children start to integrate the learnt expressions during their interactions with others. One clear example of such form of acquisition can be found in the Algerian community as children often use certain polite terms in a foreign language (French) including '*merci*' (thank you) and '*bon jour*' (good morning). This can be traced back to their extensive exposure to this language via watching different content in French.

CONCLUSION

Speech acts are a common phenomenon in our everyday life. This type of utterance was extensively studied across different languages and cultures to understand the main strategies and factors influencing its use. A new trend appeared going beyond studying speech acts' use among adults, as scholars became interested in the notion of acquisition i.e., how children come to learn and later on use speech acts. This study aimed to cover that point with regard to the Arab context particularly the influence of age on the acquisition of apology and request among Algerian children. The study revealed that age indeed plays a crucial role with regard to the acquisition and use of apology and request among children.

As far as apology is concerned, the study revealed that children as young as three years old have a sense of morals and can detect violations as soon as they take place. When a transgression occurs, children appeared to successfully use politeness strategies (apology) to right the wrong. This entails that at the age of three, a child has already acquired the basic notion of speech acts. When it comes to the use of such utterances, children exhibited divergence as far as structures and strategies are concerned. Age played an important role in such divergence as unlike young children, older ones were found to use, relatively, more complex and longer structures. Such complexity crystalizes in the use of indirect forms and various strategies of apology (statement of remorse, explanation …).

Similar to apology, younger children again showed preference for simpler constructions to perform requests. The findings showed how experience accumulated throughout the years influence the success rate of speech act production. This means that as children grow older, they become more linguistically aware and produce elaborated utterances. Several sources were identified as crucial to the acquisition process of speech acts namely: direct instructions received at home and schools, interaction with peers and the use of technology were found to be primary sources.

While conducting this study, the researcher faced certain limitations starting with the number of participants involved. The sample was originally set at fifteen (15) participants (children) who were supposed to be equally distributed into three age groups (5 in each group). Only twelve (12) participants were recorded as schools all over the world got shut down to limit the rapid outbreak of the Corona virus. Since this precaution hindered the researcher from recording the remaining three (3) participants, only two age groups comprising of six (6) children were used.

The second limitation was in relation to the participants themselves. While analysing the data, two participants caught the attention of the researcher. There was a three years old boy who did not understand the task very well which affected his production rate. Instead of answering all six situations, the child provided only two answers. Another seven years old boy who was extremely shy could not properly answer the questions directed to him. These two instance somehow affected data as we could not collect more valuable information. Hence, it is advisable for researchers investigating such topic to have a larger sample in order to have as much data as possible and to compensate in case problems appeared.

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Appendix
The Original Version of the DCT (Algerian Arabic)

1) كي بغيت تَرد كتاب تاع صاحبك لقيتَها مقطع شا تقوله ؟

2) ماماك عطاتك دراهم تَشري بصح في الطريق طيحتَهم شا تقولها؟

3) خوك قالك ديرلي تلفون يتشارجا و في الطريق طيحته شا تقوله

4) نسيت كتابك في الدار و بغيت تسلف على صاحبك شا تقوله؟

5) كنت غايب الحصة اللي فاتت و ما كتبتش الدرس شا تقول لصاحبك؟

6) عطاوك درس تحضروه بصح ما فهمتش شا تقول لصاحبك؟

The English version of the DCT

1) When returning a borrowed book to your colleague, you discovered that there are some missing pages. What would you say to him?

2) Your mom asked you to buy some stuff for the house and while returning home, you lost the money. What will you say to her?

3) You brother asked you to take his phone and put it in the charger but on the way you slipped and broke the phone. What will you say to him?

4) You have forgotten your book at home and you want to borrow it from a fellow colleague. What would you say to him?

5) You didn't come to class yesterday and you ask a fellow student for his/her notes. What would you say to her?

6) You were given a homework and you had hard times understanding it, you wanted you friend to help you solve it. What would you say to him/her?