Exploring the Face Wants of Somali Women:
Making Requests in English

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The study of cross-cultural pragmatics is increasingly important today. In the global economy, people from very different cultural and linguistic backgrounds are interacting on meaningful levels more than ever before. Pragmatic errors have a greater potential of creating conflict than grammatical errors do. When a grammatical error is made, native speakers are aware of the error, which alerts them to the fact that the speaker is not a native speaker of English. Pragmatic failure, on the other hand, is often not recognized as a linguistic issue and is therefore more likely to cause misunderstandings. Thomas (1983) states:

> Pragmatic failure…is rarely recognized as such by non-linguists. If a non-native speaker appears to speak fluently, a native speaker is likely to attribute his/her apparent impoliteness or unfriendliness, not to any linguistic deficiency, but to a boorishness or ill will. While grammatical errors may reveal a speaker to be a less than proficient language user, pragmatic failure reflects badly on them as a person. (p. 96-97)

Due to potential misunderstandings because of pragmatic failure, the cross-cultural study of speech acts becomes important for the success of the intercultural relationships that are inevitably a part of modern society.

This study grew out of my 8 years of experience in the large Somali community of Minnesota as a volunteer English tutor. Over the years, I have witnessed numerous misunderstandings and some conflicts involving Somali students, many of which related to the directness with which they made requests and/or expressed their needs and/or desires. Making culturally appropriate requests is important for immigrants. They often need to make requests in order to receive medical care, housing, and various other types of public assistance. Additionally, making culturally appropriate requests is beneficial for the purposes of career development. I decided to investigate the way in which six female Somali immigrants make requests in English. The requests that they make in the study

will be partially analyzed inside of the framework of Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of politeness strategies.

Brown and Levinson

Brown and Levinson (1987) laid the groundwork for analyzing differences in the use of politeness strategies cross-culturally. Brown and Levinson asserted that there are several cross-cultural universals in the use of politeness strategies. Although some of these universals have since been exposed as being excessively western in their orientation, the model, and particularly their central notion of face, is still a useful tool of analysis. Some of the important criticisms of the model will be discussed following a basic description of its components.

Brown and Levinson (1987) compared the politeness strategies used in three unrelated languages, and claimed that all cultural differences could be accounted for by analyzing three variables:

1. *The difference in power (P) between the speaker and the hearer*; There are potential power differences between interlocutors that are based on class, age, or gender. Additionally, there are power differences that are contextual or situational, such as that of teachers over students or bosses over employees.
2. *The social distance (D) between the speaker and the hearer*; The notion of distance conveys how well the interlocutors know one another. It defines whether they are family, friends, acquaintances, or strangers.
3. *The rank of imposition (R)*; The rank of imposition is based on how weighty the imposition of a particular speech act is in a given culture. For example, in the U.S.,

making a request for a ride for an extended period of time is a high imposition request, while asking to borrow a pencil is not.

The speaker's decision about which politeness strategies to use in a given situation depends upon the weight of each of the variables above and finally on the sum total of the weight of these variables. The weight of each variable will differ from one culture to another and Brown and Levinson claim that all cultural variability in the use of politeness strategies can be explained by analyzing these differences.

All of this is set inside of the concept of face, the components of which, unlike the previous three variables, are defined as universal. Brown and Levinson (1987) define face as, 'the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself' (p. 61). They propose that the model person has two basic 'face wants', namely negative 'face wants' and positive 'face wants'. Negative 'face wants' are defined as 'the want of every competent adult member that his actions be unimpeded by others' (p. 62). These wants consist of the desire to have freedom from imposition, to have personal space, and to have some degree of autonomy. Positive 'face wants' on the other hand are defined as, 'the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others' (p. 61). These wants consist of the desire of have one's self-image be approved of and appreciated by others. Speech acts that threaten either the positive or the negative 'face wants' of either the speaker (S) or the hearer (H) are defined as face threatening acts (FTAs). The act of making a request is defined as an FTA, in that requests potentially threaten the negative 'face wants' of both S and H. Blum-Kulka and House (1989) assert that requests can threaten H's face, in that he/she may interpret a request as an imposition on his/her freedom of action or, further, as a show of S's power. On the other hand,

requests can also threaten S's face, in that they expose a need and, potentially, a weakness.

Brown and Levinson's model person is defined as a 'rational agent', which means that he/she has the capacity to reason and therefore make rational decisions about which actions to take in order achieve his/her proposed ends. In terms of making requests, the first decision that needs to be made by S is whether or not to make the request at all. The relevant question to ask would be whether or not, based on the variables of P, D, and R, one's desire to have what one wants outweighs the relative weight of the FTA at hand. If S decides that it doesn't, he/she may decide to opt out of the request altogether. For example, if a particular S needs help with a term paper and wants to ask for help from a fellow student, but later finds out that this student has recently refused to help someone else, S may choose not to make the request in order to protect his/her own face, as well as that of his/her fellow student. If, on the other hand, he/she decides that his/her desire does outweigh the relative weight of the FTA, he/she will opt in, meaning that he/she will make the request at hand.

If S chooses to opt in, the next decision that has to be made is whether to go on or off record. If S decides to go off record, he/she would make hints rather than actually asking for what is needed, thereby using the greatest level of indirectness. On the other hand, if the speaker chooses to go on record, he/she is deciding to make the request more directly. In this case, he/she must decide if redressive action will be employed or if he/she is simply going to make a bald on record statement, which is another way of referring to an imperative. For example, if due to the level of desperation involved, S decided to ask his/her fellow student for help and said, *Help me with my homework* , S would be making

a bald on record request. According to Brown & Levinson, due to its directness, the choice to go bald on record is rarely made and most that opt in will choose to use some form of redressive action. Brown and Levinson (1987) claim that the amount of effort (e.g. redressive action) that is put into performing an FTA is directly correlated to how polite it is. Hence, the speaker will usually use some form of redressive action. The final choice then is which kind of redressive action to use: should the speaker attempt to protect the negative 'face wants' or the positive 'face wants' of H? Brown and Levinson claim that, if the estimation of the face loss is less, positive politeness strategies will tend to occur and conversely if the estimation of the face loss is greater, negative politeness strategies will tend to occur.

Hence, negative politeness strategies are more cautious and consequently considered by Brown & Levinson to be more polite. For example, if S decides to use redressive action that protects his/her fellow student's negative face, he/she may say something like, *I know that you are really busy, but I was wondering if there would be any way that you could help me with my term paper. It won't take long. I just have a few questions. Do you think this is possible?* This request shows a lot of caution in that the pessimistic language that is used does not make any assumptions about H's ability to help; it leaves space for a comfortable refusal. If, on the other hand, S decides to use redressive action that protects H's positive face he/she may say something like this, *I know that you are a really good writer and this term paper is really difficult for me. I really need help with it. Will you please help me with it?* Although this request is not impolite, it gives H less space to make a comfortable refusal and is therefore a less cautious request.

Hence, Brown and Levinson set up a hierarchy of politeness strategies, with the use of bald on record requests being the least polite and requests that use negative politeness strategies being the most polite. Positive politeness strategies lie somewhere in between. The level of politeness is defined by how much one is willing to assume about H's wants and needs in a given situation.

As was mentioned previously, there is much that Brown and Levinson's original model cannot accommodate and consequently some have rejected it altogether, while others have sought to reform it, by adding to and/or taking away from it. The criticism has largely been aimed at the model's claim to universality, many of the researchers claiming that the cultural differences are deeper than Brown and Levinson's model can accommodate. Wierzbicka (1991) has claimed that the proposed universality of their model is based upon highly Anglo-centric cultural assumptions and asserts that:

> It is English that seems to have developed a particularly rich system of devices reflecting a characteristically Anglo-Saxon cultural tradition: a tradition which places special emphasis on the rights and autonomy of every individual, which abhors interference in other people's affairs, which is tolerant of individual idiosyncrasies and peculiarities, which respects everyone's privacy, which approves of compromises and disapproves of dogmatism of any kind. What Anglo-Saxon culture abhors is the impression that one individual is trying to impose his or her will upon another. (p. 30)

These cultural assumptions, Wierzbicka claims, lead to the interrogative forms that are so ubiquitously employed by native speakers of English, which are defined as conventionally indirect forms. Conventionalized indirectness is defined by Brown and Levinson (1987) as, 'phrases and sentences that have contextually unambiguous meanings which are different from their actual meanings' (p.132). Examples of conventionalized forms are interrogatives such as, *Could you help me clean the house?* or more elaborately, *Is there any way that you could help me clean my house?* The literal

meaning of these questions is different from what is actually being requested, in that they inquire about H's ability to fulfill the request rather than directly asking for H's help. However, native speakers know exactly what is being asked for in these types of requests, due to their conventional nature. Wierzbicka asserts that interrogatives are deemed to be most polite according to Brown and Levinson's model because of the Anglo-Saxon values by which they are influenced, which above all else are defined by an individual's right to freedom from imposition and his/her personal space and autonomy. Thus, Brown and Levinson's statements about negative and positive politeness strategies may be culturally biased.

The problem with these assumptions is that they are not based upon universal values and, hence, are not necessarily the most polite forms in cultures that do not share these values. Wierzbicka is Polish and asserts that, to an average Pole, negative politeness forms sound formal, distant, and appear to lack confidence. She states that in Poland, 'showing distance communicates that you do not feel close to H and this can be offensive' (p.52). Hence, interrogatives are seen as a distancing device and since spontaneity and closeness are valued in Polish culture, they are often viewed as impolite in that they communicate to H that S perceives their relationship to be distant.

In a similar vein, Blum-Kulka (1989) gives an example of an Israeli man who states the following about his American wife's politeness strategies:

> I think that showing consideration for others means to speak directly and sincerely with people. I think that going round and round shows lack of consideration, I feel hurt and cheated when I feel that somebody close is trying to tell me something, but does not say it. I think that to talk sincerely, directly, is much more civilized, moretrue. For example, I'm always slightly annoyed with Dina when she, as she always does, asks me whether I would mind picking up Yanu (baby). (p. 66)

Sincerity and openness are valued in Israeli culture and these values take precedence over the values of personal space and autonomy associated with negative politeness strategies. Hence, Blum-Kulka like Wierzbicka, questions the universality of Brown and Levinson's model, in that negative 'face wants' are not universally relevant and negative politeness strategies are certainly not universally more polite than other types of strategies. Further, Wierzbicka asserts that these differences are not about different politeness strategies as much as they are about entirely different cultural values and states that, 'what is at issue is not just different ways of expressing politeness, but different cultural values… The crucial fact is that different pragmatic norms reflect different hierarchies of values characteristic of different cultures' (p.61).

Similarly, Matsumoto (1987) criticizes Brown and Levinson's model, claiming that the components that make up Brown and Levinson's concept of face are also alien to Japanese culture. Like Wierzbicka, he asserts that the differences in politeness strategies used by different cultural groups are not always superficial, but that they often reflect different underlying cultural values. He also finds the individualistic assumptions inherent in Brown and Levinson's notion of negative 'face wants' as highly problematic in the Japanese context. He asserts that what is important to a Japanese person is not his/her personal space, but instead his/her position relative to others. The loss of face then is not associated with individual needs and wants, but with the maintenance of the group as a whole and of one's place in that group. Matsumoto states, 'One's commitment to the social structure and to the other members of the group is so strong that one's actions become meaningful and comprehended only in relation to others' (p. 405). Hence, like

Wierzbicka and Blum-Kulka, he asserts that negative 'face wants' do not constitute an important component of what make up Japanese 'face wants'.

On the surface, it may appear that negative 'face wants' are relevant in Japanese culture because of the preponderance of deference markers used in the Japanese language. However, the surface structure is deceiving, in that what lies behind these markers has nothing to do with negative 'face wants', as they are defined by Brown and Levinson. Japanese deference markers are not employed in order to avoid imposing on the personal space of H, but rather as linguistic devices meant to maintain the larger hierarchical social structure at hand. This is not the same thing as the right to non-imposition. Non-imposition is related to the notion of distance, which is unrelated to the hierarchy of interpersonal relationships that dominate Japanese culture. Blum-Kulka (1989) asserts the following about the potential difference between the surface structure and the intended meanings of utterances made in different cultural contexts:

> Though all languages examined manifest request patterns that share the pragmatic properties attributed to indirectness, it will be posited that these patterns differ cross-linguistically in ways that deem their equivalence questionable. Hence, the universality of conventional indirectness should be regarded as a matter of shared linguistic properties, rather than as cross-linguistic equivalence in form and usage. (p. 37)

Therefore, it cannot be claimed that a similarity in form necessarily points to a similarity of intention, of cultural values, or of what constitutes the definition of face in a given culture. It is therefore imperative, if one is to use Brown and Levinson's model, to look beyond form and into what the cultural values are that help to shape the way in which particular forms are employed in particular situations.

Meier (1995) contends that, due the problems outlined by Wierzbicka and Matsumoto, politeness is not a useful concept upon which to do quantitative research. She asserts that politeness can only be judged relative to a particular culture and a particular situation and that, as Matsumoto pointed out in regards to Japanese deference markers, without the cultural context, linguistic forms and/or features will be misinterpreted. Hence, specifically in the context of quantitative and empirical research, she proposes a return to focusing on particular linguistic patterns and/or features rather than on politeness at large. She does not abandon universality altogether, as she contends that all cultures have 'norms of appropriate behavior' and that social harmony, to a certain extent, depends upon these norms. Hence, just as Wierzbicka asserted that the focus of research in cross-cultural pragmatics should be on specific cultural values rather than on politeness, Meier asserts that the focus should be on 'norms of appropriate behavior' in particular cultures and situations. They both propose that, given the diversity of politeness strategies cross-culturally, a focus on politeness only leads to more confusion.

Matsumoto (1988), on the other hand, contends that Brown and Levinson's model can still maintain its relevance in cross-cultural pragmatics if it leaves the components of what constitute face in a given culture less pre-determined and/or more open. He states, 'Insofar as politeness is a form of social behavior, *face* defined as one's *socially-given self-image* is plausibly a useful notion in explaining a universal motivation for politeness (p. 423). In leaving the concept of face more open, one's 'socially given self-image' can be seen as another way of describing 'cultural values' and/or 'norms of appropriate behavior'. Interlocutors negotiate between the 'face wants' of themselves and of others in

all human interactions, and the politeness strategies that they choose to use can still be said to be based upon the nature of these 'face wants', even if the 'face wants' themselves are not universal.

Meier is therefore correct in asserting that the model is not useful for quantitative purposes, due to the fact that an effective use of the model requires more than analysis of linguistic forms. It requires additional ethnographic or qualitative research in order to avoid the ethnocentrism inherent in the original model. Hence, where there is space for the cultural context and/or the voices of individuals to play a central role in the conclusions that are drawn, the model can maintain its usefulness.

Additionally, in the context of this study, the model is relevant in that it is not two different languages that are being compared, but two groups of speakers who are using the English language; one group as an L1 and the other as an L2. Because many of the assumptions inherent in Brown and Levinson's model were shaped by politeness as defined in relationship to the English language, many of its assertions about positive and negative politeness strategies ring true in English speaking contexts. The Somali immigrants in this study are currently living in a culture and speaking a language inside of which Brown and Levinson's views about positive and negative politeness maintain their relevance. Hence, the model becomes a useful way of bringing to light the ways in which Somali politeness strategies may differ from the politeness strategies used in the culture in which they are living.

Research on Requests by Immigrants

Li (2000) conducted a longitudinal study on the process of socialization that a Chinese immigrant woman in the U.S. underwent as she learned how to make requests in

English. The study focused on requests made in the context of the workplace, as this is a place of vital importance for the success of immigrant women. The study started with the assumption that the process of acquiring a second language is also a process of integrating and/or negotiating sociocultural aspects of the target culture. Working under this assumption, Li investigated a Chinese immigrant woman's (Ming's) process of developing pragmatic competence in making requests in English. Traditionally, Chinese women are taught to restrain themselves and to avoid being demanding and, hence, are socialized to make requests in very indirect ways. Not surprisingly, at the beginning of the study, Ming's requests were 'tentative and circuitous', and were often not taken seriously by her co-workers and/or managers. This could have had negative consequences for Ming in terms of her long-term success and well-being, in that her working conditions were often less than desirable. Hence, making appropriate requests was an important part of changing this and, further, of gaining power and control over her own life. Due to the problems she was facing at work and to her desire to be successful, she had a strong desire to learn how to speak in the 'American way', which from her perspective, was to be much more direct. As the study continued and her process of socialization progressed, Ming became increasingly direct in her requests and reflected upon her process of acculturation in the following way:

> I have changed! Most is stronger and directly. More directly. And I feel better, stronger!...If you talk lower, and too afraid, they think *what are you doing there?* I am not going to listen to this nonsense. And, and they think maybe it's nothing important. You cannot get their attention, and you cannot get their- respect (p. 77).

Hence, she saw her process of acculturation as positive and the consequences of her adaptations were beneficial, in that she was able to succeed in the attainment of her career goals here in the U.S.

This study highlights the importance of making culturally appropriate requests for immigrants, in that the appropriateness of a request can open and/or close many doors and, hence, can play a significant role in a given immigrant's success and/or failure in the United States. Ming appeared to be very comfortable with the adaptations that she had to make and was able to effectively negotiate between the 'face wants' with which she grew up and those with which she was assimilating into her linguistic repertoire. Hence, she showed little resistance to the dual process of acculturation and second language acquisition. However, for many of the Somali immigrants in Minnesota, this may not always be the case given their refugee status and their strong religious values, as the following sections will illustrate.

Somali Cultural Values

What constitute 'face wants' in Somali culture and more generally what are the cultural values that help to shape these 'face wants'? An important place to begin this discussion is with a definition of culture. Ochs (1988) claims that culture, according to Cultural Anthropologists, is 'a complex system, (partially) shared and created among members of a society, that organizes meanings of events at different levels' (p. 6). Hence, culture is defined as the basic assumptions that are held by a particular group of people; assumptions that organize and bring meaning to the world. However, culture is not static. It is constantly being re-created by its members and does not manifest itself in the exact same ways in every individual and is consequently only 'partially' held by all members

of a given society. For example, Wierzbicka (1991) views Anglo-Saxon culture as a culture that shares the basic assumption that individuals deserve autonomy, personal space, and freedom from imposition. However, this does not mean that every Anglo-Saxon individual holds these cultural assumptions and beliefs to the same degree or that they manifest themselves in the same way in every individual whose cultural values are shaped by these assumptions. However, it does mean that these assumptions are present and that they weave their way through the lives and choices of those influenced by them.

American culture, perhaps due to the fact that it developed from Anglo-Saxon norms, is a very individualistic culture. On the other hand, Somali culture is shaped more by interdependence and on a 'collective identity'. Somalia is a kinship-based society, meaning that the 'self' is seen primarily in relation to its kin group and/or tribal group and, consequently, the individual 'self' is largely irrelevant in and of itself. On the other hand, Islam is absolutely central to Somali cultural values, and the integration of Islam into Somalia has challenged the traditional kinship and/or tribal system in that all Muslims are theoretically viewed as one family. Somali individuals are therefore part of two collective units, their kin group and/or tribe and the larger global community of Islam. Farid and McMahan (2004) state,

> Islamic teaching is so integrated into the fabric of Somali society that it is often difficult to see where religious influences begin and end. The most highly valued deeds that Somali Muslims can perform are those that contribute positively to society, maintain harmony, and help preserve and perpetuate Islamic belief and practice' (p. 1-2).

One of the central values of Islam is the notion of charity. What one does to or for others is expected to be reciprocated in this life and the life hereafter. If one does good things, one can expect to receive good things in return and, conversely, if one does bad things,

one can expect to receive bad things in return. Farid and McMahan (2004) assert the following about the importance of charity, 'When a beggar comes to a Somali's door, he is not given the table scraps and sent away. Instead, he is invited into their house for a meal and stays until he is finished eating' (p.1-2). Hence, when someone is in need, a Somali Muslim is expected to help generously. If a distant relative or even a friend of a distant relative shows up at one's door asking to stay, one is expected to open one's door to them indefinitely. Further, one's willingness to help and to be available to others does not only reflect upon and effect the individual at hand. An individual's choices also reflect upon his/her kin-group. Farid and McMahan (2004) state, 'Collective identity is important to Somalis. Somalis believe that a person who behaves properly and accomplishes many good things in this life is seen not only as a credit to himself and his immediate family, but also as a credit to his father and forefathers' (p.2). Extending beyond one's extended family, Farid and McMahan (2004) also state, 'In Somalia, children do not refer to adults by name. Instead, they are referred to as uncle or aunt. This reinforces respect for elders and the idea that Somalis are all part of a larger family' (p. 2). Hence, setting tribal conflict aside, all Somalis are to some extent viewed as members of a larger family and consequently one's obligations extend outward beyond one's immediate kin-group, into the larger community as a whole.

In view of this central Somali cultural value, it should be clear that preserving one's individual space and personal autonomy does not rank high as a cultural value. Just as Matsumoto (1988) asserted about Japanese culture, the concept of an autonomous individual is irrelevant; Somali culture does not view the world through a prism that is made up of the values that are associated with individualism and personal autonomy.

Therefore, like the Israeli and Polish examples, one would expect that the politeness strategies used by Somalis when making requests would not reflect individualistic values, but rather the values of a collective identity and the importance of being helpful towards one another framed inside of a strong belief in reciprocity. If everyone is expected to be of service to one another and this is viewed as a central component of one's identity as a member of a group, a greater confidence may be present when one group member makes a request of another. One is safe in making an assumption about H's willingness to help and consequently more confident that his/her request will be honored. Blum-Kulka (1989) states, 'The higher degree of obligation for compliance built into the situation, the higher the requester's degree of right for demanding compliance, the less indirectness is to be expected' (p. 144). If Somali culture places a lot of value on the act of helping one another and one's willingness to do so reflects upon all of one's relations, and the degree of obligation in terms of compliance is high, then more direct language could potentially be viewed as more polite than the indirect and cautious language employed so ubiquitously by NSs of English.

Intercultural Adaptation and Interlanguage

The Somali participants in this study are not in Somalia; they are living in a culture that is very different from their own. Essentially, they are living between two cultures and may identify to varying degrees with the cultural values of each. Consequently, they are all in the process of some degree of adaptation. Kim (2001) states:

> Adaptation in a new environment is not a process in which new cultural elements are simply added to prior internal conditions. As new learning occurs, deculturation of at least some of the old elements has to occur, in the sense that new responses are adopted in situations that previously would have evoked old ones. The act of acquiring something new is the act of losing something old. (p.25)

This means that in the process of adaptation there is a certain level of threat to one's present identity, in that gaining something new always means the loss of something old, something that may be viewed as integral to one's identity. Kim (1991) further asserts that the more differences there are between two cultures, the more difficult this process of adaptation will be. This means that the adaptation process for Somali immigrants who are living in the U.S. is not easy, as the values implicit in the two cultures are often times at odds, so that finding a middle ground between the two is not easily negotiated. This is especially true, in that the values that are held by Somali immigrants are based in religion and therefore not as open to negotiation as other values may be. Goddard (2000) states about Islam that, 'As a religion, Islam demands insistence on absolute submission to Allah and offers its followers a complete system of guidance upon which to base all behavior and morality' (p. 86). This means that adaptation, although to some extent inevitable, will not come without considerable costs and a fair degree of resistance for many Somali immigrants.

However, some Somali immigrants are engaged in conscious processes of adaptation and in the creation of an inter-cultural self. The process of becoming an intercultural person is described by Kim (1991) as ' a working through of all cultural experiences, so as to create new constructs, that is, constructs that did not exist previously' (p. 196). In the process of becoming an inter-cultural person one culture is not replaced by another, but rather the two are synthesized to create something entirely new and unique.

The act of adding a new language to one's linguistic repertoire can be viewed as a similar process. Selinker (1972) coined the term interlanguage to describe the

separateness of a language learner's linguistic system from both his/her second language (L2) and first language (L1). The structure of a learner's interlanguage is intermediate to the two language systems, but is also idiosyncratic, in that no two learner's interlaguages are exactly the same. Like an intercultural identity, a learner's interlanguage is an entirely new construct in that it is distinct from both the L1 and the L2 of the learner. Further, adaptation to the norms of another language is not simply an act of adding onto one's already existing linguistic repertoire. Learners are active participants in constructing the structure of both an intercultural identity and an interlanguage. For example, Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993) assert that 'negative transfer' from one language to another may have nothing to do with the competence of the speaker. Instead, it could be a matter of personal choice that one can make in working through the process of constructing a new identity. One may not want to wholly identify with the cultural values that lie behind certain linguistic forms and hence may consciously choose to resist them. Blum-Kulka and House (1989) state, 'Previous research by ethnographers of speaking has shown that speech communities share detectable patterns of speech, and that such culture specific interactional styles are particularly important for the creation and the affirmation of cultural identity' (p. 132). Hence, just as there is resistance to shifting cultural values that are integral to one's identity, there can also be resistance to certain linguistic norms that threaten this same identity.

Requests, in addition to being very important speech acts in the context of the immigrant experience, are particularly interesting for the purposes of this study, in that they are directly related to one's assessment of the relative importance of 'helping one another' and of 'maintaining personal autonomy'. This study will look at the strategies

that six Somali women use in making requests in English in comparison to those used by six NSs of American English. Brown and Levinson's categories of positive and negative politeness strategies will be used to analyze the results. However, due to the previously delineated criticisms of their model, the analysis of the requests will be framed in terms of how the Somali participants characterize their intercultural experiences as women who live in between two very different cultures and how they characterize politeness in Somali culture. The study attempts to leave the definition of 'face wants' open, thereby using their characterizations of their experiences as clues to how Somali 'face wants' are to be defined and, in light of this, how their politeness strategies are to be interpreted.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: How do the Somali participants characterize the adaptations that they have had to make to American culture with regards to individualism?

Research Question 2: How do the Somali participants characterize politeness when making requests in Somali?

Research Question 3: What politeness strategies are used by Somali participants when making requests in English in comparison to those used by native speaker participants and what comments do they make about the strategies that they use?

The Study

Participants

The researcher selected six Somali women and six female native speakers of American English to participate in this study.

Table 1
Characteristics of Somali Participants

Somali participants	Age	Age when left Somalia	Years in transition	# of years in the U.S.	Ethnic identity	Part of Somalia they are from
Saynab	53	18	27 years in Saudi Arabia and Egypt	8 years	Somali citizen)	Urban: Hargeisa
Sophia	32	14	5 years in a refugee camp in Kenya	13 years	Somali American	Urban: Mogadishu
Amman	26	14	8 years in a refugee camp in Kenya	4 years	Somali	Urban: Mogadishu
Amina	26	14	8 years in a refugee camp in Kenya	4 years	Somali	Urban: Mogadishu
Asha	34	21	8 years in a refugee camp in Kenya	5 years	Somali	Urban: Kismayo
Fathiya	29	16	4 years in a refugee camp in Yemen	9 years	Somali American (citizen)	Urban: Mogadishu

Table 2
Characteristics of Native Speaker Participants

Native speaker participants	Age	Native and Current Residence	Education
Christa	54	Minneapolis	MA
Jessie	28	Minneapolis. She lived in Minneapolis until she was 18 and then spent the next 8 years in Colorado and Chicago. She moved back two years ago.	BA
Laura	31	Minneapolis	BA
Kimberly	31	Minneapolis	BA
Kathy	27	Minneapolis	High school
Julie	29	Minneapolis. She lived in Minneapolis until she was 18 and then spent 8 years in Madison and Boston. She moved back 3 years ago.	MA

Pseudonyms were given to all participants in order to protect the privacy of those involved. The Somali participants were selected primarily based upon their willingness to participate. Five of them were students from the Franklin Learning Center (FLC), where the researcher is a volunteer. The sixth was one of the researcher's previous students from the Minnesota English Center at the University of Minnesota. Amina and Asha were the researcher's tutees and the others were acquaintances from the FLC. The requirements for the Somali participants were that they be women, that they be residents of the Twin Cities, and that they be in ESL or college level classes and/or tutoring programs that were at least at the intermediate level of proficiency. They were all women

due to the gender of the researcher and consequently for reasons of accessibility. The minimum requirement of proficiency was based on the difficulty of the tasks involved in this research. The level of the participants' English skills was assessed based on the FLC's and the Hubbs Center's assessments, which are the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) respectively. The following are more detailed descriptions of the Somali participants.

Saynab is 53 years old and has been living in the U.S. for 8 years. She is originally from Hargeisa, which is the biggest city in Northern Somalia. She is the only Somali participant who has never lived in a refugee camp and consequently the only one that did not have significant breaks in her education. She finished high school in Somalia and left for Egypt with her husband when she was 18 years old. She spent the next 27 years of her life moving back and forth between Egypt and Saudi Arabia. She had some college education, but did not finish because of the demands of motherhood. Here in Minneapolis, she works full time and is a single mother. She is currently receiving tutoring in English at the FLC, but does not have time for any other classes, as she is busy being both a 'mother and a father'. She is not a U.S. citizen and does not identify herself as an American, a Saudi Arabian, or an Egyptian. She identifies herself as Somali and, due to her age, does not see this as something that is likely to change.

Sophia is 32 years old and has been living in the U.S. for 13 years. She is originally from Mogadishu, which is the capital of Somalia. She left Somalia when she was 14 years old and spent 5 years in a refugee camp in Kenya. Beyond Koranic school, her educational background in Somalia is unknown. She had no education in Kenya. Here in the U.S., she has finished ESL classes and is currently working on her GED. However,

she has very little time to study, as she is a single mother of four and is consequently very busy . Although she has been living in the U.S. for a long time, she is not a U.S. citizen and does not identify herself as an American. She identifies herself exclusively as Somali.

Amman is 26 years old and has only been living in the U.S. for 4 years. She is also from Mogadishu. She left Somalia when she was 14 years old and spent the next 8 years in a refugee camp in Kenya. She finished middle school in Somalia and had no education in Kenya. She finished ESL classes a year ago and is now working on getting her AA at St. Paul Community and Technical College. She is studying to be a Lab Technician. Amman has no family here and plans to finish college and eventually rejoin her family in Africa. Although she has many American friends and interacts regularly with American culture, she does not view herself as a permanent resident of the U.S. and continues to identify herself solely as Somali.

Amina is also 26 years old and has been living in the U.S. for 4 years. She is also from Mogadishu. Like Amman, she left Somalia when she was 14 and spent the next 8 years in a refugee camp in Kenya. She finished middle school in Somalia and had some Survival English classes in the refugee camp. Other than that, she had no education in Kenya. When she arrived in the U.S., she went to a charter high school and received her diploma. She is currently going to St. Paul Community and Technical College and is also studying to be a Lab Technician. Although she does interact with other Americans and with American culture, she does not identify herself as an American. She identifies herself exclusively as Somali.

Asha is 34 years old and has been in the U.S. for 5 years. She is originally from Kismayo, which is the largest city in southern Somalia. She left Somalia when she was 21 years old and spent the next 8 years in a refugee camp in Kenya. She finished middle school, but did not have any high school education. Additionally, she did not have any education while she was in Kenya. Asha has the lowest level of English proficiency of the participants. She is currently in a level 4/5 ESL class at the Hubbs Center in St. Paul. Out of all of the participants, she also has the least amount of contact with native speakers of English. She lives at Cedar Riverside where the majority of residents are from East Africa and works and goes to school mostly with other East Africans. She claims to have very little knowledge about American culture and does not identify at all with anything other than her identity as a Somali.

Fathiya is 29 years old and has been in the U.S. for 9 years. She is originally from Modadishu. She left Somalia when she was 16 years old and lived in a refugee camp in Yemen for 4 years. She finished middle school in Somalia, but did not attend high school. She had no education in Yemen. Like Amina, she went to a charter high school here in Minneapolis and received her high school diploma. Like both Amina and Amman, she is currently getting her AA at St. Paul Community and Technical College and is studying to be a Lab Technician. Fathiya is the only Somali participant that is a U.S. citizen and additionally, she identifies herself as a Somali-American. Although she identifies more with Somali culture, she sees her American identity as an important part of her who she is.

The native speakers of English were also selected based on their willingness to participate. The requirements were that they be women, native speakers of English, and

native residents of the Minnesota, as politeness strategies used in Minnesota may differ from those used in other parts of the U.S. They were all friends and family of the researcher.

Data Collection

All of the data were collected in English, as the Somali participants were fluent and had no apparent problem with comprehension.

The interview

The interview data addressed Research Questions #1 and #2, which sought to find out how the Somali participants characterized the adaptations that they have had to make to American culture and, secondly, how they characterize the politeness strategies that they use when making requests in Somali. There were two sets of interview questions. The first set was constructed to find out what the Somali participants said their obligations and responsibilities were to one another, particularly in terms of family and friendship. These questions were followed by a question that asked the participants to talk about how these obligations and responsibilities had changed since coming to the U.S. and further how they themselves had changed. The last interview question asked them to talk about the ways in which they show respect and politeness towards one another in Somali culture and how they thought this differed from mainstream American culture. A second set of interviews was conducted in order to probe the last question in more depth, as it had not elicited much data from some of the participants in the original interview. More specific questions were asked about the particular politeness strategies that are used in Somali. The questions were based on some of the themes that the researcher had noticed in the ODCT data (See Appendix 2).

Oral discourse completion task (ODCT)

To answer Research Question #3, which sought to compare the strategies used by the Somali participants making requests in English to those made by the native speakers, oral discourse completion tasks (ODCT) were created. ODCTs are surveys made up of a set of hypothetical situations to which the participant is asked to respond. In the context of this study, the participants were asked to make requests based on the situations with which they were presented. Additionally, they were asked to opt out of any request that they knew they would not make, given the contextual variables at hand. Additionally, if they chose to opt out of a request, they were asked to explain what their reasons for opting out were.

There is no such thing as the perfect data elicitation method. Each researcher must choose the method that best suits his/her needs and/or constraints. In the context of this study, the researcher chose to use the DCT. As with all methods of data elicitation, there are some downsides to using the DCT, in that it is not completely authentic. Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993) assert that there are two potential problems with elicited, non-natural data. First, there is a danger that the speaker will say what they think they should say in a given situation rather than what they would actually say. Secondly, there are no real world consequences involved, which potentially leads to contrived and/or unrealistic responses.

Naturalistic data is clearly more authentic. However, collecting naturalistic data can be problematic in that it is very time-consuming, as one has to wait around in order to hear a particular structure being used by a particular set of participants. Additionally, it is difficult to control factors such as language proficiency, gender, or the relationship

between the interlocutors, making it difficult to look at specific variables. In addition, taping people without their permission is problematic and conversely, if their permission is obtained, the data are no longer authentic. Cohen (2005) asserts that one way that researchers have avoided these problems is through the use of corpora. Although corpora can be very useful, he also asserts that it is unrealistic to rely solely on corpora, as data does not exist for all types of situations and/or all types of interactions. Hence, if there is not enough time available to the researcher, he contends that 'creatively fashioned' DCTs are still a viable option. Even if they do not elicit exactly what a person would say, they still bring to light the basic appropriations of what might be said in a given situation. Given all of these factors, and to a large part due to a limited amount of time, naturalistic data collection was unrealistic for the particular study at hand.

An oral rather than a written DCT was used. First, because the study was looking at spoken language, an oral DCT was more authentic. Second, as Rintell & Mitchell (1989) contend, written language is often viewed as more formal, meaning that written DCTs may elicit more formal data than what would actually be said in real life situations. Finally and most importantly, Somali people are an oral people and are often much more at home with spoken language than they are with written language. The oral DCT sets up a context in which more authentic data is likely to occur than if a written DCT were administered.

As with the interviews, there were two parts to the ODCT. This was because some of the researcher's original assumptions about what factors would be most salient for the Somali participants were wrong. Gender originally was highlighted in the situations on the ODCT, due to the researcher's assumption that it would be an important and salient

feature, given the fixed gender roles that exist in Somali culture. However, during the administration of the original ODCT, the participants stated again and again that they would say the exact same thing regardless of the gender of the interlocutor. Further, due to the fact that the variables of distance (D) and rank of imposition (R) did appear to make a difference in the strategies that were used, the researcher decided to focus more specifically on these two variables. In order to do this, the situations that specifically manipulated the variable of gender were cut from the study and one more situation that manipulated distance was added in order to have an adequate amount of relevant data. This brought more focus to the study and made the data more manageable. Hence, the researcher went back a second time to each of the participants and had them respond to one more situation. In the data that were used for the final analysis, there were three scenarios. Inside of each scenario were two situations, one where H was a friend and one where she was an acquaintance (See Appendix 3a).

Table 3
Synopsis of the Scenarios

Scenario A: Situation #1 and #2 Medium-High Imposition H>S (+P)	In this scenario, the participant is asked to make a request of her teacher. The scenario is that she has recently missed a test and her ability to pass the class depends on retaking the test. However, the teacher had stated previously that she would not be able to retake any missed tests unless there had been an emergency. In situation #1, the teacher was a friend and in situation #2, she was not. D and P are therefore being manipulated. The scenario holds a medium to high imposition in U.S. culture.
Scenario B: Situation #3 and #4 High Imposition H=S	In this scenario, the participant is asked to make a request for a ride to work for an extended period of time. Her car is broken and she is currently unable to fix it. It will be a month before she will be able to afford this expense. Her job is relatively far away and is off the bus-line and her co-worker lives near them. In situation #3, her co-worker is a good friend and in situation #4, she is merely an acquaintance. D is therefore being manipulated. The scenario holds a high imposition in U.S. culture.
Scenario C: Situation #5 and #6 Medium Low Imposition H=S	In this scenario, the participant is asked to make a request for help from her co-worker. She is not feeling well and still has some cleaning to do before the end of her shift. Her co-worker appears to be finishing up. In situation #5, her co-worker is a friend and in situation #6, she is an acquaintance. D is therefore being manipulated. The scenario holds a medium to low imposition in U.S. culture.

During the administration of the ODCT, the participants were also asked to talk about how difficult they thought each request was, given the contextual variables at hand.

There were some cultural differences in their assessments, especially in relation to the rank of imposition inherent in each request (See appendix 3b). However, due to the fact that the Somali participants explicitly stated that they took American culture into account when making their requests, the final assessment of the level of imposition inherent in each request was based on what the majority of the native speakers said about each situation. However, where it is deemed relevant, some of the data that were elicited about the situations from the Somali participants may be used in analyzing the results of the ODCT.

Procedures

Somali participants

For the Somali participants, the first set of interviews and the ODCT were conducted between February 24th and March 31st 2005 in a private office at the Franklin Learning Center and, in the case of the participant who was not a student there, they were conducted in a private room in her home, due to the lack of another option. There were no perceptible differences in her responses to the questions, except for the fact that she was especially reticent. However, she is a very shy person in general and her reticence during the interview and the ODCT matches her personality in every day life. Hence, this difference could just as likely have been due to her personality as to the difference in setting.

The interviews and the ODCT were all audio-taped on a large Panasonic MIC with VSC (Variable Speech Control), with no external mike. The same audio-cassette recorder was used for all data collection and transcription procedures. In administering the first set of interviews and the ODCT, the researcher started with the interviews. After

reading and going over the mandatory consent form (See Appendix 4), the recorder was turned on and placed as close to the participant as possible. Each interview took between 15 and 45 minutes, depending upon how much the participant chose to disclose. After the interview, the recorder was turned off and the ODCT procedures were described to the participants. They were told to pretend that they were really inside of the situations that were about to be presented and that the researcher was going to play the part of the other interlocutor. They were also told not to respond unless they understood the situation and that the researcher would repeat the situations as many times as necessary in order to ensure their comprehension. A practice situation was then administered and when it was clear that the participant understood the procedures, the recorder was turned on and the questioning began. During the administration of the ODCT, the researcher took on the role of the other interlocutor in each situation and a role-play ensued. The authenticity of the situations may have been reduced due to the relationship present between the researcher and the participants. However, the audio-cassette recorder, the seriousness of the consent forms, and the private settings set the interaction apart from all other interactions and ensured that the participants were aware of the uniqueness of the situation.

The second set of interviews and the additional situation on the ODCT, as well as the questions that were asked about the difficulty of the requests made in each situation, were conducted at the participants' homes between April 15th and May 13th 2005, due to the temporary closing of the FLC. To ensure that the setting was as comparable as possible to the previous setting, all of the participants were told that privacy was a necessary part of the interview and the researcher and the participant were therefore alone

in private rooms at the participants' houses. This created a similar situation to that of the FLC; there were no perceptible differences in the responses that the participants gave.

Native speaker participants

For the native speaker participants, the ODCT was conducted between March 26th and April 10th 2005. They were all conducted at the researcher's house and, in all cases, privacy was maintained. The administration of the ODCT with the native speakers was fairly straightforward. After giving them the mandatory consent form to read and to sign, the researcher went over the directions and one practice situation was conducted. When it was clear that they understood the procedures, the audio-cassette recorder was turned on. The ODCT took between 15 to 30 minutes to administer. The administration of the additional situation on the ODCT and the questions about the difficulty of the requests made in each situation were conducted between April 20th and May 15th and took about 15 minutes.

Data Analysis

To analyze the interview data that was used to answer research questions #1 and #2, the data were transcribed and a matrix was created based on an example given by Brown and Rodgers (2002). In a matrix, the data is placed into columns and rows that are associated with different topics that emerge during an interview. This makes the themes more visible, allowing the researcher to decide which data is most salient and therefore most relevant to the research at hand. The answers that the participants gave to the interview questions were, therefore, put into categories so as to clarify the themes that were most salient in the data (See Appendix 2).

The answers that the participants gave to the questions about the difficulty of the requests in each of the situations were transcribed and were factored in when interpreting the results of the ODCT.

To analyze the ODCT data, Brown and Levinson's model was adapted for use. In order to make the data manageable and because of the fact that many of the components of the model are not universal and therefore irrelevant to this study, not all of their proposed categories were used in the analysis. The categories that were chosen were the ones that were most salient in the data. This simplified framework was used:

I. Opting out

II. Negative Politeness Strategies

1. Apologize: Apologize, Admit to imposition or show reluctance to ask

2. Be pessimistic: Use hypothetical modals or other encodings of polite pessimism

3.Be indirect: Embed requests in indirect forms

III. Positive Politeness Strategies

1.Assert common ground: talk about unrelated topics or greet H

2. Convey that S and H are cooperators

2a. Be optimistic: Include S and H in the Activity

2b. Assert Reciprocity

The data that did not fit neatly into this basic outline will be laid out in the Results section and discussed further in the discussion and interpretation sections of the paper.

Opting out

To opt out is to choose not to make the request at hand. Strictly speaking, this is neither a positive nor a negative politeness strategy, because one chooses to opt out of a request before choosing which strategy to use.

Negative politeness strategies

Yule (1996) states about negative politeness strategies that 'a face saving act which is oriented to the person's negative face will tend to show deference, emphasize the importance of the other's time and concerns, and even include an apology for the imposition or the interruption' (p.62). In short, they are about maintaining and protecting personal space and about not imposing one's wants and/or needs upon others.

Both an outright apology and indicating reluctance to ask or impose show that one is aware of the H's negative 'face wants', in that the speaker is apologizing for entering his/her space, either implicitly or explicitly. If the participant made an explicit apology, it was counted as such. If on the other hand, she showed reluctance to ask or showed linguistic recognition of the imposition involved in making the request but did not explicitly apologize, the statement was counted as an implicit apology. In scenario B, where the participants were asked to make a request for a ride for an extended period of time, offering gas money was also counted as a manifestation of this strategy, in that gas money is offered in American culture as S's way of showing H that he/she is aware of the imposition that is present in the request.

In being pessimistic, the speaker is showing through his/her language that he/she is not making the assumption that H wants to or is able to comply with the request at

hand. One way that this strategy is manifested linguistically is through the use of hypothetical modals. Through using hypothetical modals, one is asking H if he/she could potentially fulfill the request in some hypothetical world, thereby giving him/her more linguistic space in the real world. This demonstrates to H that the speaker is conscious of and is showing consideration for his/her freedom of action. There were a few ambiguous cases in the data, where a switch from a hypothetical modal to a non-hypothetical modal was made. In these cases, the data were not counted. However, they will be discussed in the interpretation section of the paper. Other ways of showing pessimism are expressions such as *Is there any way...?* or *Is there any chance...?* These statements clearly communicate to H that S is pessimistic about his/her ability to comply with the request at hand.

Embedding requests in indirect forms deals with two opposing tensions, which are the desire to get what one wants (to go on record) and the desire to provide H with a linguistic out; with freedom of action. As Brown and Levinson state, 'indirect requests encode these opposing wants'. For example, when one says, *(Do you think) you could help me...?*, one is asking H about what he/she thinks, rather than directly asking him/her for compliance with the request. By doing this, S is showing that he/she recognizes H's need for personal space and freedom of action and is giving him/her an encoded out in the form of an indirect question. Native speakers S and H both know what the speaker is asking for and are therefore likely to take the action expected. As was mentioned in the review of the literature, this type of indirectness is highly conventionalized in American English.

Positive politeness strategies

Yule states about positive politeness that, "A face saving act which is concerned with the person's positive face will tend to show solidarity, emphasize that both speakers want the same thing, and that they have a common goal" (p.62). Positive politeness addresses one's desire to be a part of a group, to be recognized as having the same wants and the same desires as others in that group.

When asserting common ground, S is establishing that he/she is approaching H because he/she is interested in him/her as a person or as a member of a certain in-group, rather than simply to make a request. In order to assert common ground, S engages H in a conversation inside of which the request is framed. The format of the ODCT did not leave a lot of room for the use of this strategy. However, the Somali participants often began their requests with a greeting, which was interpreted, based on their responses to research question #2, as a way to assert common ground. Therefore, greetings were categorized as a manifestation of this strategy.

Brown and Levinson (1987) state that another way to show positive politeness is to 'convey that the speaker and the hearer are cooperatively involved in the relevant activity. If S and H are cooperating, then they share goals in the same domain, and thus to convey that they are cooperators can serve to redress H's positive face wants' (p. 125). One way to convey that S and H are cooperators is to use optimistic language. To be optimistic is to use language that conveys that one is optimistic about H's desire and ability to help. Some ways to do this are by using the 'inclusive we' or by making optimistic statements such as *I was hoping that you could...* when making a request.

Through the use of these strategies, S is showing that he/she is optimistic about the H's response in that he/she includes them in the proposed activity and/or expresses hope about his/her willingness to comply. Through their optimism, these examples convey an expectation of cooperation.

Secondly, in asserting reciprocity S points out the habit and/or the expectation that it is good to do things for each other, which can also convey that S and H are cooperators inside of a larger reciprocal relationship. As Brown and Levinson (1978) state, by making statements such as *I'll do X for you if you do Y for me*, one is reminding H that there is an expectation of cooperation.

Results

Research question #1: How do the Somali participants characterize the adaptations that they have had to make to American culture with regards to individualism?

Most of the Somali participants spoke of having to make some level of adaptation to mainstream American culture. Asha was the only one that claimed to have not had to make any adaptations. She lives in an apartment complex where the majority of residents are Somali. She works with Somalis and Ethiopians, and takes ESL classes where many of the students are also Somali. Consequently, she claims to know very little about American culture. When asked whether she felt that some of her core Somali values, especially in relation to being available to help others, had had to shift in any way Asha stated:

> *(1) Somali people don't change. Somali people are not helping each other less here. It is strong value that does not change. It is religion. It is Islam (Asha).*

Saynab and Sophia claimed to have had to make some adaptations to American culture, but did not think that they had had to make any fundamental changes. Saynab was the oldest of the participants and stated:

> *(2) My generation, they never change. I cannot change, because I have enough experience (Saynab).*

Similarly, Sophia also claimed to have had to change very little and stated:

> *(3) I am surrounded with Somali people. Since I came to this country, there is a lot of Somalis, because the whole country come to another world, so many Somali people come here and have the same culture I have, so I still see the same...Nobody push me to another culture, because I am a grown up person (Sophia).*

Unlike Asha, following Saynab and Sophia's assertions of not having had to make any fundamental changes, they both talked about how busy they were as single mothers and how the lack of family and community support in this country had changed some aspects of their lives, in that they had less time to be helpful and available towards others. However, in the end, they maintained that their adaptations were minimal.

In contrast to the previous examples, Fathiya, Amman, and Amina did not make any claims about not having changed or adapted considerably to the culture around them. Unlike the other three participants, they have a lot of interaction with native speakers of English, as they work and go to school with people from a wide variety of backgrounds. Fathiya, more than any of the others, claimed to be at peace with these adaptations, stating:

> (4) *If I live somewhere, I have to learn their culture. If I don't, you get into trouble. We are not living in Somalia, we are living in America. We don't relate to each other often, because of the time. I don't feel bad about this, because it is just the situation. It is where we live. Either culture is O.K. In my opinion, it's O.K. both ways, but I am more toward the back home culture... I remember back home, we spent a lot of time with our families, stay with them, talk to them, but here, you have no time... I don't want to be with people as much now. I don't have enough*

> *time. If I spend more time outside the home, when I come home, I have to wash my laundry, my food, and I need to study, so I will not have time just to spend with people, but if I can't, I have to explain to them why. If I help someone, they will help me later. It all comes back. If you don't give, you will not receive (Fathiya).*

Amman also had to make adaptations to American culture and stated:

> (5) *Here, I don't have as much human interaction. I don't know all of my neighbors, I don't hang out with my friends. When I come home, I am inside. This is different. Back home, everyday you see and interact with your neighbors. Everyone is outside. Wherever you live, always you adopt their culture. I am adopting this, and now, it is O.K. At first, I said, how can you live like this?! But, now I adopt it. In this country, everybody goes to work and comes back late. Everybody's tired. Time is really short here. For me, I see something, I have to accept it. I say, this is what I have, how can I accept it? You can't live here like you did in Somalia (Amman).*

Further, in talking about the values that she brought with her she stated:

> *(6) When I came here alone, everything changed, everything. But, one thing that never ever goes away with me is the way my parents raised me. No matter what I do, I remember...In American culture, it's pressure, independent, independent, you have to become independent. This is why Americans have low self-esteem, why so many people are unhappy. How can you tell your children to go out and be independent. That is too much pressure... I don't want everything me, me, me! Share what you have! Everything that you have comes from Allah. Give to other people, because Allah gives to you. If you give, you will get more, your time, your money (Amman).*

Amina, like Amman, is frustrated by the pressure that she feels in this culture, and less comfortable with the adaptations that she has had to make. She states:

> (7) *The time is shorter here. Living in America has changed me, because I am busy, I go school, I go to work, my time is tight. I am tired and angry all the time. If I want to help someone, my time does not open for me. My time is short and this feels wrong. Some of my friends, they ask me to take care of their children and I have to do homework and I have to go to work, they ask me and I don't have time. I feel bad, because this would not happen back home (Amina).*

In summary, although the participants engaged in different degrees of adaptation and acculturation to U.S. culture, most of the participants admitted that some level of adaptation had had to take place. The most salient features were the lack of time and the

lack of people around to help and with whom to interact. Time and space are issues here and apparently were not in Somalia. To various degrees, the participants were willing to integrate these values into their lives and into the ways in which they interacted with the people in their lives. However, most of them had strong reservations about allowing mainstream American values around time and space to become too much a part of who they are, as there is a concern about not being able to be helpful and available to others in this culture. American values around time and space do not appear to be shared by the participants as much as they are seen as a necessity for survival in the U.S., even for those who were willing to adapt to them.

Research question #2: How do the participants characterize politeness they use when making requests in Somali?

Fathiya, most eloquently, explained what she perceived to be the underlying differences between the politeness strategies used in Somali and those used in English:

> (8) *In Somali culture, if I ask for help, I expect that you will help me. We ask confidently, because you expect they will help. Even if you have something to do, you stop what you are doing, your plan and I help. If you need something, you have to ask kindly and politely, like you beg. You show how much you want it, this is polite. When I ask Somalis for something, I expect 80% that they will help, and with Americans, it is 50/50. If I am confident that someone will help, I will ask. If not, I might, but it will be harder. This makes us a little bit more confident with our requests. American people are very careful about what they say. Somali people say whatever is on their mind. Americans are less direct when they want something (Fathiya).*

Hence, as was discussed in the review of the literature, the Somali culture of reciprocity leads to more confidence in making requests. With this underlying difference in mind, there were three main politeness strategies that the participants talked about in the interviews.

First, all of them talked about how it is polite to use kinship terms when making requests in Somali. Fathiya stated that this was not a strategy that Somalis generally transferred to English, in that most are aware that it is not a strategy used by Americans. Consequently, Sophia claimed that 'please' often replaces kinship terms in English and that the Somali equivalent of 'please' is not used when making requests in Somali, because the use of kinship terms makes a request polite in itself. She stated:

> *(9) I always use sister, brother, auntie, uncle, when I make a request. I don't think we use 'please' in Somali, because we always use sister and brother. You don't need 'please'. I don't even know exactly the word in Somali. English, they always use 'please', 'please', 'please', so we use it. But, in Somali, we use brother, sister, auntie, uncle, like polite way. Otherwise, you cannot say, can you do this and this and this for me?* (Sophia)

Beyond its importance as a softener that serves to replace kinship terms, Fathiya, Amina, and Saynab stated that 'please' is also important in the case of begging, which is viewed as an effective and polite request form in times of need. This leads into the second strategy that they all agreed was polite and used frequently in Somali, which is the attempt to show how much one needs what one is asking for. Namely, language that sounds like begging is not an impolite way to make a request in Somali, as it would be in most English speaking contexts. Amman asserted:

> (10) *You have to touch the person with what you need (Amman).*

Similarly, Saynab stated:

> *(11) It is polite to tell how you feel. I say I need it, I need it. Please help me, because otherwise, I get trouble. Maybe when she understand how you feel, maybe she feel sad and say O.K. (Saynab)*

Asha, Amina, and Sophia also thought expressing one's need was a polite way to make a request.

Fathiya agreed, but was less comfortable with this strategy and stated:

> *(12) If you need something badly, you say how badly you need it in Somali. I am not comfortable doing this as much as other Somalis though. It is hard for me to ask for things, so I hold back a lot. My brother refuses me a lot and it has made me more careful (Fathiya).*

The third strategy that most of them claimed was important was to talk about unrelated topics before making a request. Saynab described this strategy:

> *(13) Some people you don't know, we need help, we say please, can you tell me your name? Then, we say, will you, can you please give me your help, because I need it. All the time, first, you have to ask something, because you cannot say right away. You have to ask polite questions, a kind of conversation. After that, when you finish, you say what you need (Saynab).*

Sophia got more specific and stated:

> *(14) People, I know, I come to them, I say hi, how are you doing? How are the kids? How is your family? I say this before I make a request. If I don't know them, I just say hi, how are you doing?* (Sophia)

In summary, the strategies outlined here by the Somali participants reflect the confidence about which Fathiya spoke, in that they begin by appealing to the relationship at hand, thereby reminding H of the obligations that are a natural consequence of this relationship. All of the participants stated that kinship terms were important and most of them thought that making unrelated conversation was important when making requests in Somali. It was stated that a request would seem abrupt if one or both of these strategies were not used. In both cases, H is reminded of the relevant relationship and therefore of the obligations that are associated with this relationship. Knowing that H is also bound by the obligations at hand, S is confident about H's compliance with the request. The Somali participants also talked about the politeness inherent in expressing the depth of one's need and, hence, in appealing to H's emotions to remind him/her of the importance of his/her obligations to help inside of the larger reciprocal relationship at hand.

Research question #3: What politeness strategies are used in making requests in English by the Somali participants in comparison to those used by native speakers participants and what do they say about these requests?

Table 4
Politeness Strategies: Somali participants
- = negative politeness strategies
+ = positive politeness strategies

	Scenario A: Situation #1		Scenario A: Situation #2		Scenario B: Situation #3		Scenario B: Situation #4		Scenario C: Situation #5		Scenario C: Situation #6		TOTAL	
Saynab	-1	+2	-1	+2	-0	+2	Opted Out		Opted Out		Opted Out		-2	+6
Sophia	-0	+2	-0	+2	-1	+3	-1	+2	-0	+1	-0	+1	-2	+11
Amman	-1	+1	-1	+2	-2	+2	-2	+2	-0	+1	Opted Out		-4	+8
Amina	-0	+2	-1	+3	-2	+0	Opted Out		-0	+1	-1	+1	-4	+7
Asha	-0	+1	-0	+1	-0	+1	Opted Out		-0	+1	-0	+1	-0	+5
Fathiya	-3	+1	-1	+1	-2	+0	-2	+0	-0	+1	-1	+1	-9	+4
TOTAL	-5	+9	-4	+11	-7	+8	-5	+4	-0	+5	-2	+4	-23 35%	+41 65%

Table 5
Politeness Strategies: Native speakers
- = negative politeness strategies
+= positive politeness strategies

	Scenario A: Situation #1		Scenario A: Situation #2		Scenario B: Situation #3		Scenario B: Situation #4		Scenario C: Situation #5		Scenario C: Situation #6		TOTAL	
Christa	-3	+0	-3	+0	-3	+0	-4	+1	-1	+0	-3	+0	-17	+1
Jessie	-2	+0	-2	+0	-4	+1	Opted Out		-0	+2	-3	+0	-12	+3
Laura	-2	+1	-2	+1	Opted Out		Opted Out		-0	+1	-1	+2	-5	+5
Kimberly	-3	+0	-3	+0	-3	+0	-3	+0	-2	+0	-2	+0	-15	+0
Kathy	-5	+0	-5	+0	-4	+1	-4	+1	-0	+1	-2	+1	-16	+4
Julie	-3	-0	-3	+0	-4	+0	Opted Out		-2	+2	-3	+2	-15	+4
TOTAL	-18	+1	-18	+1	-18	+2	-11	+2	-5	+6	-14	+5	-84 83%	+17 17%

In terms of the distribution of the participants' use of negative and positive politeness strategies in general, negative politeness strategies were used considerably more frequently by native speakers of English than they were by the Somali participants. Negative politeness strategies made up 84 out of 101 strategies used, or 83%, of the native speaker strategies. On the other hand, only 35% of the strategies used by the Somali participants were negative politeness strategies. Further, nearly half (9) of these

negative politeness strategies were used by one person. Fathiya, standing out from among the other Somali participants, used more negative politeness strategies than she did positive politeness strategies. All of the other Somali participants, on the other hand, used more positive politeness strategies; in total, positive politeness made up 65% of the Somali strategies, as compared to 17% of English native speaker strategies.

In the native speakers' general distribution of politeness strategies across situations, the level of imposition involved in making the request appeared to be the most important component in the participants' choice of strategies. Native speakers used negative politeness strategies most ubiquitously in scenarios A and B, where the imposition of the requests was relatively high. In these scenarios, the relative distance between the interlocutors did not make much of a difference in terms of the politeness strategies that were used. Hence, the presence of a relatively high imposition in these scenarios appeared to supercede the importance of distance. In scenario C, on the other hand, where the imposition of the request was relatively low, there was a marked difference between the strategies used with a friend and those used with an acquaintance. With a friend, only 5 negative politeness strategies were used in comparison to the 14 that were used with an acquaintance. Hence, when the imposition of the request was high, the distance that was present between the interlocutors did not appear to matter and conversely when the imposition of the request was relatively low, distance did appear to shift the strategies that were used.

The importance that native speakers place upon the imposition of the request also revealed itself in their use of positive politeness strategies, which were used more frequently by the native speakers in Scenario C, where the imposition of the request was

relatively low. Eleven of the 17 positive politeness strategies used by the native speakers were used in this scenario. The amount of distance present between the interlocutors did not appear to matter as much as it did with negative politeness strategies, as 5 positive politeness strategies were used with an acquaintance and 6 were used with a friend. Regardless of the distance present between the interlocutors, the relatively low imposition of the requests made in scenario C appeared to open up an opportunity to use more positive politeness strategies and hence, once again, the level of imposition seemed to supercede the importance of distance.

In contrast to the native speakers, the Somali participants had no obvious overarching patterns in their overall use of strategies. However, their use of positive politeness strategies differed considerably from those used by the native speakers. They used more positive politeness strategies in scenario A. In scenario A, where there was a relatively high imposition involved in making the request, there was also a difference in power between the interlocutors. The hearer was the teacher and with more power in this situation. In the framework of Brown and Levinson's model, it is surprising then that the Somali participants used the highest number of positive politeness strategies (20) in this scenario. This contrasts sharply to the strategies used in the same scenario by the native speakers, where out of a total of 38 strategies, only two positive politeness strategies were used. This scenario was the most desperate of the three scenarios given that the participant would not pass the class if she were not able to make up the test. The desperation of the situation seemed to warrant the use of more positive politeness strategies for the Somali participants, just as the low imposition requests did for the native speakers.

The distribution of the Somali participants' use of negative politeness strategies showed more similarity to that of the native speakers. They used negative politeness strategies most often in scenario B, where the imposition of the request was the highest and in contrast they only used one negative politeness strategy in scenario C, where the imposition of the request was the lowest. However, unlike the native speakers, the distance between the interlocutors did not appear to matter when the imposition involved in making the request was low. Instead, in Scenario C, the Somali participants' use of strategies in general dropped considerably, regardless of the amount of distance between the interlocutors. This contrasted to the strategies used by the native speakers, where the number of negative politeness strategies used only dropped when both the level of imposition and the amount of distance were low.

Opting out. In terms of the overall distribution of when each group tended to opt out, the most striking difference between the two groups was in scenario C. In this scenario, the imposition was fairly low and hence none of the native speakers opted out. However, this was not true for the Somali participants. Where H was a friend, one of the Somali participants opted out and where she was an acquaintance, two opted out. Amman opted out with an acquaintance and expressed that one should always try to do one's best, which she claimed was an important value given to her by her parents. Saynab opted out of this request in both situations and said that she would only make this request of her supervisor, due to her belief that her co-worker does not have the power to grant the request. Unlike Amman, Saynab's response has nothing to do with the level of imposition involved; it is the only example of opting out for reasons other than the level of imposition in a given request.

In the other two scenarios, the participants' choices to opt in or out of the requests were more similar. When there was no other way to get what was needed and the consequences were high for not making the request as in scenario A, no one opted out. When there might have been other potential ways of getting what was needed and the imposition was relatively high as in scenario B, opting out was more common. However, in this scenario, two of the three Somalis that opted out when H was an acquaintance expressed some tension about their decisions whereas the three native speakers who opted out showed more certainty. For example, in her assessment of the difficulty involved in making this request Saynab stated:

> *(15) If they live and work in the same place, it is not hard. Because I do that if one of my co-workers, if we worked in the same place, and broke his car and has no money to fix her car, I know what she is feeling. I have to help her. But, it is harder with someone I don't know. She maybe say yes, maybe say no. It is hard to ask... All the time, that's in our culture, we help each other. Even if I am in my neighborhood, if I don't know them and they are Somalis, I say please, I don't have car, I don't have enough money to repair my car, I am sure he say yes. Because I know my culture, we help each other* (Saynab).

Similarly Amina stated:

> *(16) It is much easier to ask a Somali for this favor, because American people are very busy and our people, they help each other no matter how the situation is. This is not a very big request to make of a Somali friend, but is always difficult with Americans, because I don't know the rules or that they will help. I might still ask a Somali person that I don't know, but it would still be hard. No matter what, if you don't know the person well, you are uncomfortable making this request. You are not sure what they will say. With a friend, it would not be as hard. Gas money seems strange though (*Amina*).*

On the other hand, the native speakers did not have a lot to say about opting out of this request, except for making the assertion that it was a particularly difficult request to make and was defined by Laura as a 'mortifying' request and as one that she 'would never expect anyone to agree to'.

Similarly, Julie stated:

> *(17) It is a horrible request of someone I don't know. I wouldn't make it. I would go broke paying cab fare, before I would make this request of someone I didn't know (Julie).*

Overall, the native speakers showed more assurance about their decisions to opt out of this request than the Somalis did. Further, even though this request did not carry as high of an imposition in Somali culture, the Somali participants expressed knowledge that this was a very big request to make in English. The comments that some of them made about this scenario speak to the tension that exists between the two cultural frameworks and their processes of negotiating between them.

In terms of the specific positive and negative politeness strategies that were used by the participants, we begin by describing the two strategies used by the Somali participants that could not be accommodated by Brown and Levinson's model. Both strategies appear to be more oriented towards positive 'face wants', as they tend to place emphasis on the common goals of S and H and on their solidarity within a larger reciprocal framework.

The first of these strategies is what I will call the use of the language of want and need, which the participants also discussed in their responses to research question #2. By communicating the depth of one's wants and needs to H, one is able to touch upon his/her common experience, which will presumably lead him/her to comply with the request. This can be seen as a more implicit way of asserting reciprocity. There is an expectation that H will be emotionally moved to help simply because that's what people do and, in the reciprocal framework at hand, H can expect to receive help in return. Hence, by using this strategy, S is implicitly reminding H of his/her obligations to others and the rewards

implicit in fulfilling them. In analyzing the strategies that were used, whenever the participants used explicit statements about what they wanted and/or needed, the statements were counted as an implicit assertion of reciprocity and more specifically as the language of want and need.

Certain uses of 'please' by Somalis were also interpreted as a part of this strategy. Brown and Levinson (1978) do not categorize the use of 'please' as either a negative or a positive politeness strategy. They do call it a softener, as it can soften the force of the request being made. However, when the Somali participants were asked about their use of 'please' in making requests, they mentioned two things. First, one of the participants stated that it is frequently used in English as a replacement for the kinship terms that are used in Somali requests. Hence, due to the fact that it would not be comfortable to use kinship terms with Americans, something is needed to soften one's requests. In some cases, 'please' fulfills this role and therefore as Brown and Levinson state, it is being used as a softener. However, two of the participants also mentioned that it was important in the case of begging, as it shows H how much the speaker needs what he/she is asking for. When 'please' was used with an expression of need, more than once, or was strongly emphasized, it was categorized as an expression of the language of want and need.

The second additional politeness strategy was the use of non-hypothetical, non-embedded modals, which were ubiquitous in the Somali data and rare in the native speaker data. When requests are not embedded in indirect forms and use modals such as 'will' and 'can', the requests enter H's personal space more quickly, with less linguistic distance. Although 'can' is an indirect form, it is not hypothetical and therefore enters H's immediate reality and shows greater optimism than the use of 'could' or 'would',

which refer to a hypothetical reality and give H more personal space. Therefore, the use of modals by both groups of participants emerges as an important difference in terms of the strategies used.

Now, in terms of the participants' overall use of specific politeness strategies, there were many differences between the two groups of participants. In scenario A, there were two striking differences; (1) the NSs used the negative politeness strategy of apology where the Somali participants rarely did and (2) the Somalis used the positive politeness strategy of the language of want and need where the NSs never did (See Appendix 1).

An apology, as it was previously defined, is anything from an overt apology to a verbal recognition of the imposition that is involved in making the request at hand. 100% (6) of the native speakers used this strategy in this scenario. 83.3% (5) did this by directly stating that they knew that they were imposing on the teacher's time and/or space. They often did this by explicitly mentioning that they were aware of the imposition of the request. Additionally, a direct apology was also made by 50% (3) of the native speakers. For example, Kathy used both types of apology and stated:

> *(18) (name), I'm, I'm really, really sorry, but I had an emergency come up for the test yesterday and, family stuff. I know this was, in class you said that this wasn't O.K. to do, but I had a huge emergency yesterday with my family(Kathy).*

In contrast to the conspicuous use of this strategy by the native speakers, only one of the Somali participants uses this strategy. Saynab made an apology when the teacher was a friend and, when she was an acquaintance, she showed that she knew that there was an imposition involved by inquiring whether or not the teacher had time to talk with her.

Instead, in this scenario, the Somali participants commonly used the language of want and need (See appendix 1). 66.6% (4) used this strategy when the teacher was a friend and 83.3% (5) used it when she was an acquaintance. For example, Saynab stated to her friend and then to her acquaintance:

> *(19) Teacher, I'm sorry yesterday I was absent, I missed my test, will you PLEASE make me favor? I need to give me chance. Will you please give me a test, otherwise I will be fail. I need to take the test. Please, give me help* …(and to an acquaintance)*Can you do me a favor, please. Please, I need help. That's the way I can pass the class, if you give me help.*

Amina, in a similar fashion, stated to her friend and then to her acquaintance:

> *(20) Please can I take test, I missed test, I was busy, I was absent that day, can I take test again? 'cause I missed that day, PLEASE. PLEASE, teacher* …(and to an acquaintance*) I didn't take the test and I missed that day. Can I take again please? Can I take that test? PLEASE? PLEASE?*

Similarly, Amman stated to both her friend and to an acquaintance:

> *(21) This is first time, this is my first time I am asking you something, and it's very difficult to ask you too. Would you PLEASE, PLEASE, can I have a chance to do my test?'*

Fathiya, in a more cautious fashion, when her teacher was an acquaintance stated:

> *(22) I missed the test, so this is very important to me, so would you PLEASE help me to retake the test?*

More baldly, Asha stated:

> (23) *Yesterday I wasn't here, so I need take test.*

Although this strategy was most ubiquitously used in scenario A, where the desperation of the scenario was high, it was also used in a few other cases. For example, when asking for a ride to work, Amman stated:

> (24) *I have something, very, very big issue. I need help. I can't fix my car for one month. Every week, I will pay gas. Like how much is it going to cost, I don't know, PLEASE. If you PLEASE, I need help, if you can* (Amman).

Further, when asking for help at work, she stated:

(25)…*Would you PLEASE, PLEASE, can you cover tonight for me?*…(Amman).

Similarly, when Amina asked her co-worker to help her at work, she stated:

(26) …*please help me. I am already late. PLEASE help me* (Amina).

The native speakers, unlike the Somali participants, never used the language of want and need in scenarios A or B. They did however use it in scenario C where the imposition involved in making the request was lower (See Appendix 1). 16.6% (1) used it when H was an acquaintance and 33.3% (2) when she was a friend. For example, Laura stated to her friend, *Jill, I need you to clean my rooms. I'm feeling really sick, I need to get out of here* and similarly Jessie stated to her friend, *I'm not feeling good, I don't want to stay late.* As well as only being used in low imposition requests, the native speakers' use of the language of need and want sounded different to that which was used by the Somali participants, in that the native speakers never sounded as if they were begging. Whereas the Somali participants' use of the language of want and need seems to be in direct relationship to the desperation of the need at hand, the same can not be said in the case of the native speakers. Instead, the level of imposition appeared, once again, to be the most important variable and, consequently, they only used this strategy when the imposition of the request was low.

In scenario B, unlike in scenario A, the Somali participants did show some reluctance to make the request and showed some awareness of the imposition involved. Asking someone for a ride for an extended period time carries a very high imposition in American culture. The use of negative politeness strategies increased for the Somali participants in this scenario, attesting to their awareness of this. The most common

strategy used was an implicit apology/recognition of the imposition involved, through an offer of gas money. In the questions about the difficulty of the requests, they all claimed that they were aware of this convention in U.S. culture and consequently would make the offer. However, as Amina stated, *Gas money seems strange* and, more elaborately ,Amman stated:

> *(27) If the person lives close to me, like we see everyday each other, I ask. No problem, I don't care if you are my cousin, my friend, my neighbor. I will treat you the way I treat my sister. But, with American people, you have to offer money.*

Hence, although this custom differed from what they would do with other Somalis, they were aware of the difference and were able to make the shift. Another way that they showed that they were aware that the imposition of this request was high was through a slight increase in the use of hypothetical modals (See appendix 1).

In terms of hypothetical vs. non-hypothetical modals, the use of hypothetical modals emerged as an important strategy for the native speakers and was especially important in scenario B, where 100% (6) of those who opted in used them. In scenario A, only 50% (3) used hypothetical modals, but this was due to the use of other types of indirect language such as embedding non-hypothetical modals inside of indirect and/or pessimistic language. The only time that native speakers used non-hypothetical modals that were not embedded in more indirect or pessimistic forms was in scenario C where the imposition of the request was relatively low (See Appendix 1). In scenario C, 16.6% (1) of the native speakers used a non-hypothetical, non-embedded modal with an acquaintance and 50% (3) used them with a friend, meaning that they were only used with any frequency when both the imposition and the distance between the interlocutors were low. This contrasts sharply to the use of modals by the Somali participants who

used non-hypothetical, non-embedded modals quite ubiquitously throughout the situations. For example, in asking the teacher to make up the test Sophia stated:

> *(28) Hi teacher, (can) I, (can) I take a test, retake a test, cause I couldn't able to take yesterday (Sophia).*

More directly, when asking for a ride for an extended period of time Asha stated:

> (29) *My car is broken. (Can) you pick up me for job a month?* (Asha)

Saynab, in making the same request stated:

> *(30) Julie, my car is broken, I don't have enough money to fix my car. (Will) you please give me ride until I fix my car? (Saynab)*

These non-embedded, non-hypothetical modals enter H's personal space much more directly than the embedded structures and hypothetical modals used in the majority of cases by the native speakers. For example, when asking her teacher to make up a test, Julie stated:

> *(31) I know that you originally said that there, that we couldn't retake the test, but (is there any way that I can find a way) to make up the test or do extra credit or something...*(Julie).

In asking for a ride to work for an extended period of time Jessie stated:

> *(32) I (was wondering if there's any way you could), maybe, we could carpool and I would be willing to help you pay gas (Jessie).*

Similarly Julie stated:

> *(33) (name), is there a chance, my car just broke down, I can't fix it for a month. (Is there a chance that you could) pick me up on your way to work and we could ride together?* (Julie)

Even when the imposition of the request was relatively low, this strategy was still common. For example, in scenario C Julie stated to her friend:

> *(34) (name), I'm sorry to do this and (I am just wondering if I could) ask you a huge favor. I'm not feeling well. (Is there any way that you can) help me finish my rooms today?* (Julie)

Overall, this was the most common strategy used by the NSs. The only real drop in the use of this strategy was in scenario C where H was a friend. This strategy, on the other hand, was very uncommon for the Somali participants. Fathiya, Amina, and Amman used hypothetical modals in a few cases, but the strategy of embedding one's request in an indirect form was only used once. Asha, Sophia, and Saynab never used indirect forms or hypothetical modals in any of their requests.

Discussion

Summary of the results

As was mentioned previously, negative 'face wants', defined as 'the want of every competent adult member that his actions be unimpeded by others' are largely irrelevant inside of the Somali cultural context, in that they directly contradict the central operative value in Somali culture, which is the reciprocal obligation to be continually helpful and available to help one another. When this is the central value, politeness is no longer defined by giving H personal space and freedom from imposition. Instead, S expects that H will be happy to help, leading to more optimistic language. Positive politeness strategies are no longer 'less safe' in that it can be assumed that people want to help one another and, as Fathiya stated in example 8, Somalis are more confident in their requests because of this. In light of this confidence, giving H linguistic distance through the use of indirect language becomes unnecessary. This explains why optimistic strategies such as the use of non-hypothetical, non-embedded modals and the language of want and need (implicit assertions of reciprocity) were more commonly employed by the Somali participants than were the negative politeness strategies so ubiquitously employed by the native speakers.

The components that make up 'face wants' in Somali culture are different than the 'face wants' that exist in American culture. 'Face wants' in American culture are largely based upon the individualistic values of maintaining autonomy and freedom from imposition. In the context of Somali 'face wants', one's self-image and well-being are dependent upon one's willingness to be helpful towards others. This means that negative politeness strategies could potentially threaten H's face in that they may communicate that S does not view him/her as a helpful person. In Somali culture, it may actually be safer to assume that H wants to help and consequently that he/she wants to be imposed upon, as his/her self-image and well-being depend upon being given this opportunity. Consequently, in contrast to the native speakers, the Somali participants appeared to be more comfortable with the optimistic language inherent in positive politeness strategies; 65% of the strategies that they used were positive. In comparison, only 17% of the strategies used by the native speakers were positive. Further, when the Somali participants talked about the politeness strategies that they use in Somali, they talked mainly about positive politeness strategies, continually coming back to the idea that Somalis have a higher obligation to help one another than Americans appear to have.

The relationship between acculturation and 2nd language acquisition becomes apparent in looking at the Somali participants' use of politeness strategies when making requests in English inside of the framework of their processes of adaptation to U.S. cultural values. Each one of the participants is at a different place in terms of their definition of 'self' in relation to these two cultures and/or sets of 'face wants' and the politeness strategies that they chose to use are, to some extent, a reflection of this. Fathiya was the most acculturated of all of the participants, as can be seen from the observations

and assertions she made about U.S. culture and about her adaptation to it in example (8). Interestingly, the politeness strategies that she used also stood out as being different from those used by the other Somali participants, in that 9/13 of the politeness strategies that Fathiya used were negative. At the other end of the spectrum was Asha, who had the lowest English proficiency of the participants and, additionally, claimed that she had not had to make any adaptations to U.S. culture (example 1). Like Fathiya, her politeness strategies reflected this. She used no negative politeness strategies at all. It is difficult to say whether this was due to her level of proficiency or to her resistance to the process of cultural adaptation. It is likely that both play a role, as second language acquisition and cultural adaptation are not processes that are isolated from one another. The remaining four participants were all somewhere in between Fathiya and Asha in their processes of adaptation and, consequently, in the strategies that they used in making requests (See tables 4 and 5). Some of these strategies reflected the tension that exists for them as they navigate between Somali and U.S. cultural values, which will be discussed further in the interpretation section of the paper. In conclusion, the results of this study are a reminder that the components that make up 'face wants' in a given culture can not be universally defined and, further, that there is an intimate relationship between the process of acculturation and the acquisition of a second language.

Interpretations and Personal Reflections

In the following section, I will talk further about the two additional strategies that the Somali participants used when making requests in English; 1) the language of want and need and 2) non-hypothetical non-embedded modals. I will then look more closely at

some of the intercultural tension that appears to exist for some of the Somali participants in their processes of acculturation.

As was discussed previously, the ubiquitous use of the language of want and need by the Somali participants is related to the expectation of reciprocity that exists in Somali culture. In examples 4 and 6, Fathiya and Amman both assert that in Somali culture, if you help someone you can expect that your favor will be returned and, conversely, if you refuse to help, you can expect the opposite. Therefore, in the context of Somali culture, it is not necessary to say, 'If you do X for me, I'll do Y for you' in that this is obvious and inevitable. Instead of stating one's reciprocal intentions, one operates under the basic assumption that reciprocity and cooperation are present in all human interactions. Reciprocity is implicitly referred to rather than explicitly verbalized and the language of want and need can be seen as a manifestation of this. In describing this strategy, Saynab claimed in example 11 that if S expresses how badly he/she needs something, H may understand how S feels and will empathize and so will feel obliged to help. S is implicitly reminding H of what it feels like to be in need and, in creating an emotional response, he/she is reminding H of his/her obligations and of the potential consequences of not fulfilling them. In the use of this language, S is also making an assumption that H is working under the same frame of reference or, at least, that H is ultimately bound by the same rules of reciprocity.

For example, Saynab, Amina, Amman, and Fathiya all used the language of want and need in scenario A (examples 19, 20, 21, and 22). In these requests, the participants are directly and forcefully stating that they are in need of the teacher's help and that a positive outcome rests on the teacher's willingness to comply with the request.

Saynab asserts this most explicitly in her request stating, …*Can you do me a favor, please? Please, I need help. That's the way I can pass the class, if you give me help.* In this request, Saynab is implicitly reminding the teacher of the need that people have for one another and of the consequent obligation to be available to help. This strategy is only effective if the teacher essentially operates under the same reciprocal assumptions that Saynab does; namely, the assumption that reciprocity is fundamental and inevitable inside of all human relationships.

The language of want and need also gives H the opportunity to demonstrate that he/she is a helpful person and a valuable member of the reciprocal community. Hence, given the previously discussed 'face wants' present in Somali culture, it may be safer to make this assumption than to make the assumption that H does not want to be imposed upon. Therefore, it could be said that an imposition is not viewed so much as an imposition, but as an opportunity to fulfill a religious duty and/or a general duty towards humanity, as well as an assurance that good things will come in return.

In American culture, on the other hand, not only does the language of want and need enter H's personal space too directly, it also stands in direct opposition to the value that Western culture places upon self-sufficiency. In addition to threatening H's face by making a refusal very difficult, the language of want and need also threatens S's face in that it makes him/her appear needy, namely as a person who has failed to succeed at being autonomous. The value that American culture places upon self-sufficiency makes any assertion of need, especially when it sounds like begging, very face-threatening. In Somali culture on the other hand, not only is self-sufficiency not a value, it is viewed as a liability. Amman asserts in example 6 that there is far too much pressure to be

independent in U.S. culture and that this pressure is the cause of the widespread unhappiness that people here experience. Conversely, in Somali culture, where everyone is expected to depend upon one another for their basic needs and consequently to expect to be helped, the language of want and need is not face-threatening, it is face-saving. Just as negative politeness strategies give H the autonomy that is so important for his/her self-image in American culture, the use of the language of want and need in the context of Somali culture gives H the opportunity to prove that he/she is a helpful person and therefore a valuable member of the reciprocal community, thereby protecting his/her self-image and well-being.

Given that most Americans do not operate under the same assumptions that Somalis do, why did the Somali participants use this strategy so ubiquitously? I would argue that, just as with our assumptions about the importance of personal space and autonomy, the assumptions about reciprocity that the Somali participants hold are tied to fundamental values that are not easy to shift. The fact that they used this strategy most ubiquitously in the most desperate of the three scenarios may mean that, in the end, they have more faith in its effectiveness than they do in the effectiveness of negative politeness strategies, in that it is intimately tied to their fundamental beliefs about how the world works.

The Somali participants' ubiquitous use of non-hypothetical, non-embedded modals in comparison to the native speakers propensity to use more distancing devices, is another indication of the different values that are at play. Using hypothetical modals and embedded structures in requests relates to American values, in that they give H more personal space through their reference to a hypothetical reality rather than to the

immediate situation at hand. Additionally, they serve to warn H that a request is about to be made, which also provides him/her with more personal space.

Given the different values and/or 'face wants', these distancing devices were rare in the Somali data and, for three of the participants, were completely non-existent. The more immediate modals of 'can' and 'will' were much more commonly used. 'Can' and 'will', in their reference to immediate time, show more optimism about H's willingness and ability to help and, as Fathiya stated in example 8, this optimism is safe in the context of Somali culture. Showing confidence in H's willingness to help shows greater concern for his/her 'face wants' than do the distancing devices that Americans tend to use, in that Somali 'face wants' depend more on one's ability to appear helpful than they do on his/her ability to remain autonomous. Hence, when Asha stated, *Can you pick me up for job for month?* in her request for a ride for an extended period of time, this might not have been as offputting if it had been asked of another Somali, especially if it had been framed inside of kinship terms or inside of a larger conversational framework. Although the immediacy of these types of requests feels direct and potentially offensive to native speakers of English, the greater optimism that they convey may be more polite in the context of Somali 'face wants'. It is important to convey optimism in order to communicate to H that he/she is perceived to be a valuable member of a reciprocal community. The strength of this belief in reciprocity may make it difficult for Somalis to comfortably incorporate distancing devices into their interlanguages.

I recently had a relevant misunderstanding with one of the participants in this study. The misunderstanding illustrates how these different cultural 'face wants' can play

themselves out in a real world interactions and, additionally, how changing one's politeness strategies does not always come easily.

Amman often calls me and very directly asks me for help stating, *I need help with something Angie and I want you to help me. Do you have time?* After all of the time that she has put into this research as one of my most informative participants, I am always quick to help. Additionally, I am very reluctant to ask for any more of her time. However, I recently needed a non-native speaker of English to be a participant in a study that I was conducting for a class. I knew that Amman was really busy with school, but I also knew that she would be a good candidate for the study. I felt like I was imposing on her time and was very hesitant to ask for her help. When I finally got around to asking for her help, I offered her money as compensation for participating in the research, which was my way of showing her that I valued her time and that I was aware that she did not currently have a lot of it to give. She refused to take any money and cancelled her original plans for the evening in order to help me out as soon as possible. At her home that evening, she told me that she had been very sad about the way in which I had asked her for help. She stated that I was her friend and that in offering her money for her time, I had made her feel as if she were a bad friend and a selfish person. Further, she told me that it was her religion to be helpful and that I had made her feel like she was not being true to her religion. Hence, my pragmatic strategies had been an affront to her 'face wants', which consist in part of being a helpful and giving person. What for me was a polite way of showing Amman that I valued her time was, for her, a very face-threatening act.

I knew enough about Somali cultural values to hypothesize that an offer of money might not be received very well, but I have a difficult time shifting the politeness strategies that I perceive to be connected to respecting the personal space and time of others. I feel disrespectful and demanding when I don't use these strategies. Knowing that they are interpreted differently in Somali culture does not always stop me from using them. Somali immigrants probably experience the same tension when they try to use politeness strategies that do not correspond very well with their religious and cultural values. However, unlike me, Somali immigrants have more pressing reasons to use the politeness strategies about which they experience this tension: using these strategies effectively can have a huge impact on their success or lack thereof in this country. The tension that they experience is clearly much greater than mine, in that the stakes are much higher. Their success may depend upon it at the same time that their identity as Somali Muslims is in danger of being lost due to the different cultural values. Some of the participants have found creative ways of dealing with this tension. All of the participants use language that is reflective of both English and Somali politeness strategies and, at times, of the tension that exists between the two systems. Fathiya, Amman, and Amina are all engaged in active processes of adaptation and their interlanguages reflect this. Asha, Saynab, and Sophia are not as engaged and their interlanguages also reflect this.

The tension that exists between the desire to succeed in this country and the Somali cultural values with which the participants identify is apparent in Fathiya and Amina's interlanguages, but is especially apparent in the case of Amman. To begin with, Amman is aware of which requests held the highest imposition in American culture. When asking for a ride for an extended period of time, she knows that it is polite to offer

gas money and, hence, she does so. However, she would never do this with a Somali and states, in example 24, that one should treat everyone as if he/she were his/her sister and that, given one's obligation to help one's sister, an offer of gas money seems very strange. Hence, even though she is not comfortable with it, she is willing to make the necessary adaptation. Amman also shows that she is aware of the imposition of this request by her use of pessimistic language; ending her request with *if you can.* This pessimism conveys that she is not necessarily confident about H's willingness and/or ability to comply with the request. It doesn't appear from what she says about treating everyone as if they were her sister, that this pessimism would be present when asking a Somali for the same favor. She is therefore willing to shift her strategies when she is interacting with Americans, but some of these shifts are in conflict with her Somali values and the tension that this conflict can create became particularly apparent in the offense that she took when I offered her money to participate in research.

The language that Amman uses in making her requests often demonstrates this tension. The following examples were not reported in Results due to their ambiguity, but are discussed here because they illustrate the tension that exists between Amman's American and Somali identities. First, in making a request of her teacher, in addition to using the language of want and need, she uses a hypothetical modal and then switches to a non-hypothetical modal in mid-sentence stating, *...(Would) you PLEASE, PLEASE (can) I have the test today, if it's possible?* Similarly, in asking for help at work she stated, *...Would you PLEASE, PLEASE, can you cover me tonight?* These requests may signify that she is not entirely comfortable with the distance that is created by the use of

the hypothetical modals. It may also feel as if they lessen the level of need that she is trying to convey through the language of want and need.

Additionally, in the first example, she frames the request in *if it's possible,* the pessimistic language which is so commonly used by native speakers of English to communicate that she is not entirely optimistic about H's willingness to help. Hence, she appears to be moving back and forth between both strategies, not feeling entirely safe and/or effective in the American context without doing this. She also uses a mixture of negative and positive politeness strategies in her request for a ride stating, *I have something very, very big issue. I need help...I don't know, PLEASE. If you PLEASE, I need help, if you can.* Again, she appears to be using both strategies From these examples, it appears that given the strength of her cultural values, Amman knows where negative politeness strategies are most necessary, but is not always completely at home in using them. Further, they point to the larger tension that she may feel as she navigates her way between her two opposing identities.

Sophia and Saynab also display some tension in their processes of adaptation but, like Asha, make claims about not having had to make any fundamental adaptations (examples 2 and 3). They are both single mothers and, unlike Fathiya, Amman, and Amina, have very little time to participate in furthering their own success or in interacting with the culture around them. Consequently, they have not felt as much pressure to actively adapt and acculturate to U.S. cultural norms. As in the other cases, this is apparent in the politeness strategies that they use. Neither Sophia nor Saynab use many negative politeness strategies in their requests. The only negative politeness strategy that Sophia uses is to offer gas money in her request for a ride to work. She does not use any

hypothetical modals, embedded structures, or pessimistic language. Although she uses interrogative forms ubiquitously, she always uses non-hypothetical, non-embedded modals. The only time that Saynab uses negative politeness strategies is in scenario A, when she is making a request of her teacher. She apologizes to her teacher for being absent and shows that she is aware that there is an imposition involved in making the request by asking the teacher if she has time to talk with her. However, these negative politeness strategies could have had more to do with the power that the teacher ultimately held in that, on the whole, Saynab appears to be more conscious of the power relationships inherent in a given situation than she does of the imposition involved in making the request. For example, although the imposition of the request for a ride to work is high, power is irrelevant and, interestingly, Saynab does not use any negative politeness strategies. Further, she opts out of asking her co-worker for help at work not because of any concern for the imposition of the request, but instead because of her belief that her co-worker does not have the power to grant this request. Consequently, it appears that, for Saynab, the power relationship between the interlocutors holds more weight than the level of imposition does. This may mean that the negative politeness strategies that Saynab uses are not due to the integration of American politeness strategies, but are potentially more of a consequence of the transfer of Somali politeness strategies. As further evidence of this, Saynab uses a lot of language that conveys that she is optimistic about H's willingness to help. In her requests, she uses *will you...*, which is even more direct than the interrogative *can you...* that was used more often by the Somali participants. She also openly and confidently talks about the language of want and need in example 11 and uses it in her requests (example 19). Hence, like Sophia and Asha,

Saynab does not appear to have integrated very many American politeness strategies and/or cultural norms into her present identity.

As Kramsch (1993) points out, culture is not merely the information that is conveyed by a language, it is a feature of language, in that it is embedded in the everyday language that we use. It follows that the language that the Somali participants use when making requests can not be looked at independently of the cultural crossroads in which they all find themselves. As they all work to reformulate their identities as Somali Muslims who live in the American diaspora, they are led to involve themselves to different degrees in a dialogue between the culture with which they were raised and the culture in which they currently live. Where they are in this process is partially reflected in their use of the English language.

Limitations of the present study

There are a number of limitations to the present study and they must be kept in mind as one considers and assesses the conclusions that are drawn. First, the most obvious limitation of this study was the method used to elicit the request data; namely, the ODCT. Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford (1993) point out that with data that is not natural, there is a danger that it will reflect what the speaker thinks they should say rather than what they would actually say. Secondly, they contend that there are no real world consequences involved in DCTs, which may lead to contrived responses. This should be kept in mind when assessing the conclusions that are made in this study.

Another limitation was that the exact level of English proficiency of the Somali participants was not measured. They were simply at roughly an intermediate level of proficiency. There is a lot of variability inherent in this basic requirement and, beyond

knowing what their present level in the educational system was, their exact abilities were unknown. The extent to which the participants' English proficiency may have affected the results is unknown.

Another limitation lies in the fact that there were a limited number of situations that the participants were asked to respond to. Consequently, some of the responses could have been specific to the situation at hand rather than to any real pattern in terms of language use. Hence, without further research into the situations that were chosen by the researcher, the previously delineated conclusions could only be made with caution.

Another limitation is that the format of the DCT limited the participants' use of a conversational strategy that asserted common ground by framing requests inside of a larger conversational framework. The participants stated that making conversation prior to a request was an important strategy when making requests in Somali. Allowing for this might have brought further insight into the strategies that the participants use in making requests in English and elicited more authentic data.

The final limitation to this study was that the structure of the DCT did not permit another dynamic in the reciprocal relationships that shape Somali interactions. On the other side of the obligation to be continually helpful towards one another, there is an expectation that the favor will not only be rewarded in the afterlife, but that the favor will be returned in the here and the now. Consequently, it is extremely shameful to ask for multiple favors without giving something back. Maintaining some level of equality or balance is paramount. Therefore, if multiple interactions had been built into the study, different strategies might have emerged.

Pedagogical Implications

As Kramsch (1993) states, 'At the intersection of multiple native and target cultures, the major task of language learners is to define for themselves what this 'third place' that they have engaged in seeking will look like, whether they are conscious of it or not' (p. 57). What are the pedagogical implications of this construction of a 'third place'? First of all, the teacher must begin by asking what the goals of his/her learners are. As is seen in the Somali participants' data, Somali cultural values are often at odds with the values of American culture that are embedded in the English language. Consequently, since the use of certain request structures in English stands in opposition to key Somali cultural values, they are not fully integrated into the participants' interlanguage. To varying degrees, they have developed what Blum-Kulka (1997) defines as 'intercultural styles', so that they can both associate and disassociate with their culture of origin and the culture of the target language. Hence, to start with, teachers should be aware of the cultural values of his/her students and, further, should have knowledge of their goals in relation to the target culture.

However in the context of teaching immigrants and refugees, it is the ESL teacher's job to teach his/her students effective ways of using the English language and, through this, to help them gain more power and control over their own lives. Even if we recognize that the ultimate choice to use or not to use particular forms is theirs to make, it is important that immigrants be explicitly taught native speaker norms for making requests. Cohen (2005) contends that much research points to the benefit of explicitly teaching students how to perform speech acts and that students' success in picking up pragmatic forms implicitly is not well supported by research. Additionally, Cohen

focuses on the importance of teaching students how to use effective strategies in the process of learning how to perform speech acts in culturally appropriate ways. This also appears to be very important, given the complex nature of many speech acts. Given the nature of requests and the important role that they can play in helping immigrants attain the power and success that they deserve, it appears that the explicit teaching of speech acts, as well as of learner strategies would be very beneficial. However, the challenge that this study presents is that there are students who may find that the structures that they are taught are at odds with important aspects of their cultural identities. Hence, it is important for ESL teachers to reflect upon how to address this issue when they are developing curriculum and classroom activities.

One solution would be to aid students in reflecting upon the cultural values that help to shape the politeness strategies about which they are learning as well as those that they use in their L1. In this study, much of what the participants had to say about American cultural values was negative and some of what they had to say about American communication styles was also negative. Although many of their reflections were true and some were very insightful, they were also partial. I think that it is important to help them critically reflect upon these perceptions and observations. It would be useful for them to learn about some of the positive values that help to shape the politeness strategies that are used in American English. For example, many Americans would assert that, through their politeness strategies, they are attempting to be respectful of the time and space of others. By showing their interlocutors this respect, they are communicating that the needs, wants, time, and space of others are as important as their own. In essence, it may be useful to talk openly about the pros and cons of these underlying values, so as to

give the students an opportunity to reflect upon how the strategies could be most positively and effectively integrated into their respective interlanguages and identities.

In addition, it would be useful to have Somali learners reflect upon particular experiences that they have had while performing particular speech acts and, where there has been conflict or pragmatic failure, to reflect upon the possible reasons for this. In talking about these real life situations, the teacher could then help the students reflect upon how they could creatively preserve their cultural identities while constructing more effective requests for similar situations in the future. This would help to ensure that the speech acts and the situational contexts were relevant and important for the students, as well as give the students the freedom to creatively construct their own intercultural identities. Then, the teaching of learner strategies could be taught inside of this larger framework.

Further Research

The first recommendation for further research is to develop curriculum using the ideas laid out in the section on pedagogy by integrating these ideas with relevant research that has been done on the teaching of speech acts. If time and space permits, it would be interesting and useful to use the curriculum in an advanced ESL class for immigrants and to write up an evaluation of how well it did or did not work.

Second, a study might look at Somali immigrants' requests in particular contexts and then analyze the real and/or potential consequences of the requests that they make. High stakes contexts would be most useful; the workplace, higher education programs, or settings where public assistance is given.

A future study should integrate multiple turns into the requests, either by collecting naturalistic data or by doing less structured role plays. The Somali participants said that requests were often couched in longer conversations. My DCT did not leave enough space for this. It would be interesting to see how this would change the results and whether it would make a difference in terms of how direct the requests sounded.

Future research should look more specifically at how gender and/or power relationships shift and/or change the strategies that the participants use. Although the participants said that gender would not make a difference, it may be interesting to investigate this further being that the gender roles in Somali culture are so structured. It may also be interesting to focus on other types of power relationships for the same reasons.

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Appendix 1: Distribution of Politeness Strategies

Table 6
Somalis participants: negative politeness strategies

Somali negative politeness strategies (6)	Opted out	Direct Apology: Direct Apology	Indirect Apology: Show reluctance to ask/ admit to imposition	Hypothetical modals	Pessimistic language	Be indirect: embed requests in indirect forms	Totals in numbers
Scenario A, Situation #1	0% (0)	16.6 % (1)	0 % (0)	16.6% (1)	33.3% (2)	16.6% (1)	5
Scenario A, Situation # 2	0% (0)	0%(0)	33.3% (2)	16.6% (1)	16.6% (1)	0% (0)	4
Scenario B, Situation #3	0% (0)	0% (0)	50% (3)	33.3% (2)	16.6% (2)	0% (0)	7
Scenario B, Situation #4	50% (3)	0% (0)	100% (3)	16.6% (1)	16.6% (1)	0% (0)	5
Scenario C, situation #5	16.6% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0
Scenario C, situation #6	33.3% (2)	0% (0)	16.6% (1)	16.6% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	2
Totals	6	1	9	6	6	1	23

Table 7
Native speakers: negative politeness strategies

Native speakers' negative politeness strategies (6)	Opted out	Direct Apology: Direct Apology	Indirect Apology: Show reluctance to ask/ admit to imposition	Hypothetical modals	Pessimistic language	Be indirect: embed requests in indirect forms	Totals in numbers
Scenario A, Situation #1	0% (0)	50 % (3)	83.3 % (5)	50% (3)	50% (3)	66.6% (4)	18
Scenario A, Situation # 2	0% (0)	50%(3)	83.3% (5)	50% (3)	50% (3)	66.6% (4)	18
Scenario B, Situation #3	16.6% (1)	0% (0)	83.3% (5)	83.3% (5)	50% (3)	83.3% (5)	18
Scenario B, Situation #4	50% (3)	0% (0)	50% (3)	50% (3)	33.3% (2)	50% (3)	11
Scenario C, situation #5	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	16.6% (1)	16.6% (1)	33.3% (2)	5
Scenario C, situation #6	0% (0)	16.6% (1)	33.3% (2)	66.6% (4)	33.3% (2)	83.3% (5)	14
Totals	4	7	20	19	14	24	84

Table 8
Native speakers: positive politeness strategies

Native speakers' positive politeness strategies (6)	Opt Out	Assert common ground: talk about unrelated topics	Be optimistic: include S and H in activity and other optimistic language	Be optimistic: Use non-embedded, non-hypothetical modals	Assert reciprocity explicitly	Assert reciprocity implicitly: language of want and need	Totals in numbers
Scenario A, Situation #1	0% (0)	0% (0)	16.6% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	1
Scenario A, Situation # 2	0% (0)	0% (0)	16.6% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	1
Scenario B, Situation #3	16.6% (1)	0% (0)	33.3% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	2
Scenario B, Situation #4	50% (3)	0% (0)	16.6% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	16.6% (1)	2
Scenario C, situation #5	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	50% (3)	16.6% (1)	33.3% (2)	6
Scenario C, situation #6	0% (0)	0% (0)	16.6% (1)	16.6% (1)	33.3% (2)	16.6% (1)	5
Totals	4	0	6	4	3	4	17

Table 9
Somali participants: positive politeness strategies

Somali positive politeness strategies (6)	Opt Out	Assert common ground: talk about unrelated topics	Be optimistic: include S and H in activity and other optimistic language	Be optimistic: Use non-embedded, non-hypothetical modals	Assert reciprocity explicitly	Assert reciprocity implicitly: language of want and need	Totals in numbers
Scenario A, Situation #1	0% (0)	16.6% (1)	0% (0)	50% (3)	0% (0)	66.6% (4)	8
Scenario A, Situation # 2	0% (0)	33.3% (2)	0% (0)	50% (3)	0% (0)	83.3% (5)	10
Scenario B, Situation #3	0% (0)	33.3% (2)	16.6% (1)	50% (3)	0% (0)	33.3% (2)	8
Scenario B, Situation #4	50% (3)	33.3% (2)	0% (0)	16.6% (1)	0% (0)	16.6% (1)	4
Scenario C, situation #5	16.6% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	50% (3)	16.6% (1)	33.3% (2)	6
Scenario C, situation #6	33.3% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	50% (3)	16.6% (1)	16.6% (1)	5
Totals in numbers	6	8	1	16	2	15	41

Appendix 2: Analysis of Interview Data

What do you see as your obligations to your family?

Saynab	Our Koran tells us, you have to help your family. Your family, all the time they waiting for you, if one time or two times or three times, if I give something or help them, maybe they don't expect more than that, but my family does.
Sophia	Closest family members are father, mother, husband, kids, grandma, and grandpa.If any of my family needs help, I have to help them, financially, everything. My aunts and uncles and cousins, I should help, but only if I can. I think that we should have more responsibility to your kids and your husband, more than anyone else, but you're also responsible to your parents too. Whatever they need, you have to give them, help them. When they get old, you have to take care of them. Even with your grandparents. If you can, you must help these family members. But, you can only do what you can. Try hard to do it. Always think about them. This is your responsibility
Amman	When I came here, everything changed, everything. But, one thing that never goes away with me is the way they raised me, respect, try your best, always share your opinion with people. It you want to make friends, talk to them. What do they have in common with you? If you like it, take it, if you don't like it leave it. Do not judge people. One thing that keeps me going is the way they raised me.. I never forget. That is the basis of my life, always, wherever I go. Sometimes, the things you want, maybe your parents don't like. Sometimes, they agree with you. Always, share with them, but the final decision is yours. Sometimes, when you think something, it's not good for you, but you want it, but when you share it with them, you might get idea from them. Don't make the decision in front of them, leave them, and think about what they say.
Amina	My culture, we have to support our families, we don't go out at night time, we have to follow our parents rules. We don't use Social Security, we have to support even my family back home in Africa. We have to give them money, even if I live here. We have to respect our family. We have to work and take care of them. I have to give them what they need. I am responsible to obey and help my father, mother, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, cousin, all my family. Sometimes, I feel like crying. When I ask, 'Where's your mom?' and she says, 'My mom is 90 years old and she lives by herself' I say, 'What, what are you doing? Why doesn't she live with you and your husband?' She says, because 'she has social security' That is weird for our culture. You should not need government for help, you should get it from your family. Your family, when you were little, your mom take care of you, she feed you, she do everything for you
Asha	I have to help my family. I cannot say no to them.
Fathiya	We are obligated to help our family, to take care of them.

What do you see as your obligations to your friends?

Saynab	If someone, they really my friend, I treat them and they treat me like my sister and then, we have to give them a hand, because I expect, they will do that also.
Sophia	Your family can die for you, but your friend cannot. Some friends can, but you cannot expect it from them. But, friends are sometimes like family.
Amman	If I call you my friend, You have to be there for me, not matter what the situation I am in. But if you become my friend you become my family. My friends are my sisters. If you have one really good friend, it is enough. If you have two friends, you can't give equal everything. I don't want everything me, me, me, no! Share what you have. Everything that you have comes from Allah. Give to other people, because Allah gives to you. If you give, you get more. Your time, your money.
Amina	If they don't have a place to live, you let them live with you. You can't say no. You are not my friend if you don't help me when I need you. I would expect my friend to help me, if I need help. Friend is more valuable than time. Friends are like sisters, or more than sisters. They advise each other. They visit each other and they help each other. They share things with each other.
Asha	I have to help my friends. Friends are like family.
Fathiya	I give my confidence to my American friends, but my very good Somali friends are like family. Americans are more private and more concerned about interfering. In my culture, for example, this apartment building where I live, if I need something, I have to ask people for it and they don't think it is strange. They are gonna give whatever I ask them, but more than I ask, but I cannot knock on my American neighbor's door and ask for something when I don't have it. We can go and see their home and interact with them, but maybe we can't interfere.

In what ways have you had to adapt to American culture? How have you changed since coming to the U.S.?

Saynab	My generation, they never change. I cannot change, because I have enough experience… I like to help, but all the time, I am busy, because I'm a single mother, because I'm a father and a mother. I'm a really, really busy lady, because nobody help me. Everybody's busy their own. Sometimes, we don't see each other for months and months. Only we talk to each other on the phone. Actually, this is the difference.
Sophia	I am surrounded with Somali people. Since I came to this country, there is a lot of Somalis, because the whole country come to another world, so many Somali people come here and have the same culture I have, so I still see the same. If I did not have the Somali people, maybe I would be more like Americans and have American friends. Also, nobody can push me to another culture, because I am a grown up person. The living is different, but inside nothing has changed. You cannot take care of the family by yourself. You have nobody else to help you here. In Somalia, there is always help and people around, family and friends. You are isolated here and men don't understand.
Amman	Here, I don't have as much human interaction. I don't know all of my neighbors, I don't hang out with my friends. When I come home, I am inside. This is different. Back home, everyday you see and interact with your neighbors. Everyone is outside. Wherever you live, always you adopt their culture. I am adopting this and now, it is O.K. At first, I said how can you live like this, but now I adopt it. In this country, everybody goes to work and comes back late. Time is really short here. For me, I see something, I have to accept it. This is what I have, how can I accept it? You can't live here like you did in Somalia. But, I also resist. In American society, it's pressure, independent, independent, you have to become independent. This is why American people have low self-esteem, why so many people are unhappy. How can you tell your children to go out and be independent. The pressure is too much.
Amina	The time is shorter here. Living in America has changed me, because I am busy, I go school, I go to work, my time is tight. I am tired and angry all the time. If I want to help someone, my time does not open for me. My time is short and this feels wrong. Some of my friends, they ask me to take care of their children and I have to do homework and I have to go to work, they ask me and I don't have time. I feel bad, because this would not happen back home.
Asha	Somali people are not helping less here. It is strong value that does not change. It is religion. It is Islam. I stayed my culture.
Fathiya	Here, I don't have as much human interaction. I don't know all of my neighbors, I don't hang out with my friends. When I come home, I am inside. This is different. Back home, everyday you see and interact with your neighbors. Everyone is outside. Here, when I come home, I have to wash my laundry, my food, and I need to study, so I will not have time just to spend with people, but if I can't, I have to explain to them why. If I help someone, they will help me later. It all comes back. If you don't give, you will not receive. Americans are more private and more concerned about interfering. This is not Somalia. We cannot live like we lived before. At home, you have mother, cousins, a lot of people helping you. You have nothing to do, but here, if you have a cousin, your relatives that are busy themselves, so you have to depend on yourself or your husband. In my culture, for example, in this apartment building where I live, if I need something, I have to ask people for it and they don't think it is strange. They are gonna give whatever I ask them, more than I ask, but I cannot knock on my American neighbor's door and ask for something when I don't have it. We can go and see their home and interact with them, but maybe we can't interfere. When I ask for things from Americans, I feel like I am interfering. In our culture, we help neighbors. We help relatives, we help friends. If I know someone and they ask me a favor to do something, I have to help. If I live somewhere, I have to learn their culture. If you don't, you get into trouble. We are not living in Somalia, we are living in America. We don't relate to each other often, because of the time. I don't feel bad about this, because it is just the situation. It is where we live. Either culture is O.K. In my opinion, it's O.K. both ways, but I am more toward the back home culture.

How is being polite different in Somali culture than in U.S. culture? What differences are there in the way that you make requests in Somali? – (Additional questions) Do you use kinship terms in Somali? Do you talk about unrelated topics before you make a request? Is it polite to say how badly you need something? Do you use a word that means 'please' in Somali?

Saynab	When making requests, all the time, we use something, we say auntie, we say brother, we say my friend, or uncle, or something like this. Also, Some people you don't know, we need help, we say please, can you tell me your name? Then, we say, will you, can you please give me your help, because I need it. All the time, first, you have to ask something, because you cannot say right away. You have to ask polite questions, a kind of conversation. After that, when you finish, you say what you need. It is polite to tell how you feel., say I need it, I need it. Please help me, because otherwise, I get trouble. Maybe when she understand how you feel, maybe she feel sad and say O.K.
Sophia	I always use sister, brother, auntie, uncle, when I make request. People I know, I come to them, I say, hi , how are you doing, how are the kids, how is your family, before I make a request. If I don't know them, I just say hi, how are you doing? But, I always use sister, brother, I need this. Can you do it for me? -It is polite to show your need. It is helpful to tell how you feel and it is not unpolite, I think. I don't think we use please in Somali, because we always use sister and brother. You don't need please. I don't even know exactly the word in Somali. English, they always use please, please, please, so we use it. But, in Somali, we use brother, sister, auntie, uncle, like polite way. Otherwise, you cannot say can you do this and this and this for me?
Amman	It is always more polite to say brother, sister, auntie, this is more respectful, more polite. It doesn't matter how well you know the person, it is always polite. It is polite to show how much you need something. You have to touch the person with what you need.We use please a lot when making requests in Somali. For me, please and thankyou are my religion. If you give me something today, Allah will give you more.
Amina	We say how are you doing? How is your husband, your family, before we make request. Americans smile, but they don't smile inside. They aren't really smiling, but they show you a smile. It seems like you are hiding something. Somalis are more open, more honest, we say what we think. In our culture, if we see something bad, we say it, but Americans, even if they hate you, they think that they like you.
Asha	We don't say please in Somali. We only say it in English. We say how much we need. This is polite way to make request. If you need something, you have to be polite.
Fathiya	If you need something badly, you say how badly you need it in Somali. I am not comfortable doing this as much as other Somalis though. It is hard for me to ask for things, so I hold back a lot. My brother refuses me a lot and it has made me more careful. When we make requests, we use sister, brother, but not with Americans. I like to say please, but I might forget. American people say it more. I like to use it all the time, because it is polite. I don't think that we use a word for please in Somali very often when we request. You need to say it when you beg. If women are your age, you call them sister. It doesn't matter who she is. Even if you don't know someone, you call them sister. This is for respect. Not always, but sometimes. It is respectful., especially with people you know, even a little. Older man and woman, we call aunt and uncle. If I ask for help, I expect that they will help me. We ask confidently, because you expect that they will help. Even if you have something to do, you stop what you are doing, your plan and I help. If you need something, you have to ask kindly and politely, like you beg. You show how much you want it, this is polite. When I ask Somalis for help, I expect 80% that they will help, and with Americans, it is 50/50. If I am confident that someone will help, I will ask. If not, I might, but it will be harder. This makes us a little bit more confident with our requests. American people are very careful about what they say. Somali people say whatever is on their mind. Americans are less direct when they want something.

Appendix 3a: ODCT Situations and the Requests Made

Scenario A: Situation #1

Yesterday, you missed a test in one of your classes and you need to take the test in order to pass the class. The first day of class, your teacher said that you couldn't retake any tests unless there was an emergency. You did not have an emergency. You are friends with your teacher and have spent time with her outside of class. After class, you walk up to the teacher's desk to ask her about taking the test. What do you say?

Somali responses

Saynab- *Teacher, I'm sorry yesterday I was absent, I missed my test, will you PLEASE make me favor? I need to give me chance. Will you please give me a test, otherwise I will be fail. I need to take the test. Please, give me help.*

Sophia- *Hi Mrs. Angie, how are you doing?*
I say: *good, how are you?*
She says: *I missed my test yesterday, so can I have, can I retake test? Yesterday, I was sick, so I couldn't able to come here and take the test. ('If she is friend, I ask until she say yes, I ask again and again')*

Amman- *Yesterday, I have some, something to do and, for emergency, would you PLEASE, PLEASE can I have a test today, if it's possible. If you say yes, I will accept it, if you say no, I will accept it.*

Amina- *Please can I take test, I missed test, I was busy, I was absent that day, can I take test again? 'cause I missed that day, PLEASE. PLEASE, teacher.*

Asha-*Yesterday I wasn't here, so I need take test.*

Fathiya- *I would like to ask you if I have another chance to take the test. Is it possible to take it?*

Native speaker responses

Christa- *I know that you said that we weren't supposed to be able to take the test, but, I really had an emergency, do you think I could reschedule to take the test at another time?*

Jessie- *Angie, I am so sorry that I missed yesterday, Is there any way I can retake the test?*

Laura- *I'm sorry I didn't call you yesterday. I know you stated that there's no way to make up the test, but I'm willing to let you know what happened and I'm hoping that you can hear me out and see if we can come up with me being able to take the exam.*

Kimberly- *Angie, I know that you said that I couldn't retake any tests, but I still wanted to ask you if I could retake the test that I missed yesterday.*

Kathy- *Angie, I'm really really sorry, but I had an emergency come up for the test yesterday and, family stuff. I know this was, in class you said that this wasn't O.K. to do, but I had a huge emergency yesterday with my family. I missed the test. My day was in the hospital. I'm wondering if there's any chance that I could retake it.*

Julie- *I know that you originally said that there, that we couldn't retake the test, but is there any way that I find a way to make up the test or do extra credit or something, because I missed the test yesterday.*

Scenario A: Situation #2

Now, the situation is almost the same; you need to make up a test in order to pass a class that you are in. The rule is that if you miss a test, you will not pass the class. The difference in the situation is that this time you do not know your teacher at all. Again, after class, you walk up to the teacher's desk to ask her about taking the test. What do you say?

Somali responses

Saynab- *Can I ask you a question, please?*
I say: *sure.*
She says: *I want to talk to you. Do you have time?*
I say: *yes, what do you need?*
She says: *I want to take the test, because I missed the test yesterday. Can you do me a favor, please. Please, I need help. That's the way I can pass the class, if you give me help. ('If she say no, I go somewhere else, her supervisor')*

Sophia- *Hi teacher, can I, can I take a test, retake a test, 'cause I couldn't able to take yesterday.*

Amman- *Hi, teacher. This is first time, this is my first time I am asking you something, and it's very difficult to ask you too. Would you PLEASE, PLEASE, can I have a chance to do my test?*

Amina- *Hi, my name is Amina Osman, I am, and I am one of your students. I would like to ask you some questions. I didn't take the test and I missed that day. Can I take again please? Can I take that test? PLEASE? PLEASE?*

Asha- (same as situation #1)

Fathiya-*Mrs. Angie, um, my name is Fathiya. I missed the test, so this is very important to me, so would you PLEASE help me to retake the test?*

Native speaker responses

Christa- (same as situation #1)
Jessie- (same as situation #1)
Laura- (same as situation #1)
Kimberly- *I know you have stated that I can't retake any tests, but I was wondering if I could retake the test. I realize that it doesn't hurt to ask.*
Kathy- (same as situation #1)
Julie- (same as situation #1)

Scenario B: Situation #3

Your car is not working. Your job is outside of Minneapolis and there are no buses that go out that far. You know that you cannot afford to fix your car for about a month. Your co-worker, Julie, lives in Minneapolis. You are good friends with her. During your break, you ask her to give you a ride to work until your car is fixed. What do you say?

Somali responses

Saynab- *Julie, my car is broken, I don't, um, have enough money to fix my car. Will you please give me ride until I fix my car?*

Sophia- *Hi Julie, how are you?*
I say: *Fine, how are you?*
She says- *Fine, as you know my car is not working and we live same place, please can you give me a ride until I fix my car? I gonna pay gas.*

Amman- *Hi, how are you?*
I say: *fine, thanks.*
She says: *I have something very, very big issue. I need help. I can't fix my car for one month. Every week, I will pay you gas. Like how much is it going to cost, I don't know, PLEASE. If you PLEASE, I need help, if you can.*

Amina- *Julie, my car was broken and I don't, I can't afford right now to fix it now, I'll fix it later. Could you give it to me, a ride to work please? For a short time.*
(It is different, I mean, Somalian culture and American. Somalian culture, they help me for however long I need. And we don't give her anything. So, we help each other, you know. With an American, maybe I ask for two days and then I have to do something else. It more difficult to ask American, different cultures, you know)

Asha- *My car is broken. Can you pick up me for job a month?*

Fathiya- *My car got stuck, so I have no money to fix it until I put some aside, some money, so I will pay, would you please give me a ride until I'm fixing my car. I will give, I will pay the gas.*

Native speaker responses

Christa- *Say, I was wondering if you'd be willing to bring me to work until my car gets fixed. I really don't have any money for it, but I will pay you for the gas that you use.*

Jessie- *Julie, I know you live in Minneapolis and my car broke down and it's gonna cost, it's gonna be about a month before it gets fixed. I was wondering if there's any way you could, maybe, we could carpool and I would be willing to help you pay gas.*

Laura- (*This is a mortifying request. I would find another way to work.*)

Kimberly- *Julie, would you be willing to pick me up for work, because my car is not working? If it's not an imposition, would you be willing to do it for the whole month and if it's, if that's a problem, feel free to let me know.*

Kathy- *Julie, is there a chance, my car just broke down, I can't fix it for a month. Is there a chance that you could pick me up on your way to work and we could ride together? I'll give you gas money if you'd like.*

Jessie- *Julie, how do you get to work?*
My answer- *I drive. Why, what's up?*
She says-*I was curious, I, do you, where do you live?*
I say: *I live in South Minneapolis.*
She says-*Well, I was just wondering, if it's not too much of an imposition, if, my car is broken right now, if I give you some gas money, if you wouldn't mind just carpooling until my, my, my car is fixed.*

Scenario B: Situation #4
Now, the situation is almost the same; your car is broken and you need someone to help you get to work until it is fixed. Your co-worker, Shelly, lives near you. The difference in the situation is that you aren't really friends, just acquaintances. You have never talked to her outside of work. Again, during break, you ask her to give you a ride to work until your car is fixed. What do you say?

Somali responses

Saynab- (She would not make this request)

Sophia- *Hi Shelley, I have a problem with my car, so can you give me a ride until I fix my car, I gonna pay gas.*

Amman- (same as situation #9)

Amina-*(No, no, no, I can't. It's too big with American.)*

Asha- (*I wouldn't ask it. I don't know them.)*

Fathiya- *I have a question for you.*
(*The rest would be the same.*)

Native speaker responses

Christa- *Shelley, this feels really awkward, but my car just broke down and I really don't have the money to fix it and I really need a ride to work. Is there any possibility that you could help me?*

Jessie- (She would not make the request.)

Laura- (She would not make the request.)

Kimberly- *Shelley, I realize this might be an imposition, but I was wondering if you would be willing to give me a ride to work for a month, because my car is not working.*

Kathy- (Same as in situation #3, but would for sure offer the gas money)

Julie- (She would not make the request.)

Scenario C: Situation #6
At your nursing home job, you always clean a few rooms before the end of your shift. Your shift is almost over and you still have a couple of rooms to clean. You are not feeling well and do not want to stay late. You notice that your co-worker, Jill, is done with her work. You sometimes talk to her at work, but you don't really know her. You walk up to her to see if she will help you finish cleaning. What do you say?

Somali responses

Saynab- (She would not make this request, because she has to talk to her supervisor. If her supervisor were not available, she would stay.)

Sophia- *Hi Jill. Tonight, I'm not feeling well and I have few rooms I didn't finish yet. So, can you help me to do it?*

Amman- (She would opt out of this request. It is a tough request. *I would take pain killer and keep working.)*

Amina- *Please, Jill, could you help me, I'm sick and I need a break. Could you help me to finish this work, please?*

Asha- *Can you help me today please? I don't feel good.*

Fathiya- *Will you please do a favor for me?*
I say- *Sure, what do you need?*
She says- *Can you cover me my cleaning?*

Native speaker responses

Christa-*Jill, I really hate to ask you this, but I'm not really feeling very well right now and I still have two rooms to go, do you think you could help me tonight?*

Jessie- *Jill, I realized you finished early. I've got a couple rooms left and I'm not feeling very good. Would there be any way you could help me, so I could get done faster?*

Laura- *Jill, I hate to bother you, but I'm not feeling well, and I don't know you very well, but I am at a place where I don't think that I am going to be able to finish my rooms and I need to leave, so do you think that, and if you ever need me in the future to help you, consider me, because I really need it at this point.*

Kimberly-*Jill, it seems that you aren't doing anything right now. Would you be willing to help me clean a couple of rooms. I'm really not feeling well and I'd like to go home on time.*

Kathy-*Jill, I noticed that you were finished and I'm wondering if you could help me with my rooms, so we can both get out of here at a decent hour.*

Julie-*Jill, I'm sorry to do this and I am just wondering if I could ask you a huge favor. I'm not feeling well. Is there any way that you can help me finish my rooms today? Next time that I come in, I'll do your rooms for you or something.*

Scenario C: Situation #5 (additional situation)
The situation is almost the same; your shift at work is almost over and you don't have time to finish your cleaning jobs. You notice that your co-worker may have time to help. The difference in the situation is that, now, your co-worker is a good friend. You walk up to her to see if she will help you finish your cleaning. What do you say?

Somali responses

Saynab- (same as situation #5)

Sophia- *Can you clean these rooms for me? Please, because I'm sick.*

Amman- *I am not feeling well. Would you PLEASE, PLEASE, can you cover tonight for me? I will cover you one day when you need me. (It is good to ask for help. We need each other.)*

Amina- *(name), please help me. I am already late, PLEASE help me.*

Asha- (Same as in situation #5)

Fathiya- *Jill, I'm not feeling well. Will you please cover the rest of my shift?*

Native speaker responses

Christa- *Jill, could you help me tonight. I'm not feeling so good.*

Jessie-*Hey Jill, can you help me clean my rooms? I'm not feeling good, I don't want to stay late. I noticed that you were finished.*

Laura- *Jill, I need you to clean my rooms. I'm feeling really sick, I need to get out of here.*

Kimberly- *I'm not feeling well, would you be willing to help me, so I can get out of here on time?*

Kathy- *Jill, can you please help me finish cleaning my rooms? I don't feel well.*

Julie- *Julie, I'm totally not feeling well right now, is there any way that you can help me finish these rooms and I'll help you out next time I come in.*

Appendix 3b: Questions about the ODCT Situations

Scenario A: Situation #1 and #2

Do you think that this is a difficult request? Why or why not?

Saynab-*You have to ask. It is hard, because if you miss your test, it is very hard.*

Sophia- *It is easy request, because I have to ask what I want.*

Amman- *This is not really a difficult request, because you are a human being, you can get sick, maybe you think something today, but it won't happen tomorrow. We don't know what's going to be tomorrow. I try to explain to my teacher why I was absent. I will accept her answer either way. I prepare before for either answer.*

Amima- *This is not a lot to ask of your teacher unless you ask all the time. It is a big request if you do it more than once.* (Her comfort with this request depends on how the teacher is, nice or not nice).

Asha- *No, because I have to take it, it is not difficult to ask her. No, this is not a big thing to ask of a teacher.*

Fatiya-*This is a big request, because the test is important for me. I feel uncomfortable making this request if the teacher is not my friend. If she is my friend, I feel comfortable making the request.*

Christa- *If it was because I overslept or something, then it is a lot to ask.*

Jessie- *Yes, this is a hard request. It would be harder if it were a friend, because I would be placing them in a position where they would feel like they had to do something for me, 'cause they were my friend. It may be easier to do it if I didn't have a relationship with that person. I would always be uncomfortable making this request.*

Laura- *It is not an easy request, but it is one that I'll make. I am not naturally comfortable making the request, but I could push myself through it because I know what I need.*

Kimberly- no. I am comfortable making the request.

Kathy- *If you do not have a good explanation, it is a hard request to make, because you are wasting his/her time. I am not uncomfortable making the request.*

Julie- *yes.*

If the teacher is your friend, do you think that she should change the rules for you?

Saynab-*If she is my friend, I expect her to give me the test. If you are talking our language, we know how to ask each other, relationships are more important than rules.*

Sophia-*It easier if she is friend. I feel more comfortable, than if I don't know the person. No, she should not negotiate, because teachers always try to be fair.*

Amman- *No, she should not change her rules for you. You have to be fair with everything. I love how strict the U.S. is with rules. This is the way I was raised. If you don't have strict rules, people take advantage of you. They won't respect you. That's the way my family raised me.*

Amina- *If she is my friend, I feel more comfortable making the request. She can negotiate, but she also has to be fair to other students, because that is the rules. I can't break the rules, because every student has to be treated equally.*

Asha- *It is easier to ask, if your teacher is friend. Yes, she should change the rules if she your friend. If she is not her friend, she shouldn't change the rules.*

Fatiya- *No, the teacher should not change the rules for you. She must follow school policy.*

Christa- *No. I think in some ways, it would be harder, because you don't want them to feel pressure into doing something for you that they wouldn't do for someone else. But, I am comfortable making this request.*

Jessie- *I am less comfortable with a friend, because I feel like I would be taking advantage, that she would feel like she had to help me. I do think that my teacher (friend) should negotiate with me and this is why it is more difficult to make the request of a friend.*

Laura- *I think that it might make it easier if they were my friend. If I had a legitimate reason, I think that I might expect more from a friend, that they might be more able to see my side of things.*

Kimberly- *She should not change her rules for me.*

Kathy- *no.*

Julie- *I would be afraid that they would, but I wouldn't want them to. I would be putting them in a particularly hard situation if they were my friend and that would be harder.*

Scenario B: Situations #3 and #4

Is this a big thing to ask of someone else?

Saynab- *No, if they live and work in the same place, it is not that hard. Because I do that if one of my co-workers, if we worked in the same place, and broke his car and has no money to fix her car, I know what she is feeling, I have to help her. It is harder to ask someone I don't know. She maybe say yes, maybe say no. It is hard to ask.*

Sophia- *Yes, this is a hard request, but I have to ask. I don't have choice.*

Amman- *If the person lives close to me, like we see everyday each other, I ask. No problem, I don't care if you are my cousin, my friend, my neighbor. I will treat you the way I treat my sister. But, with American people, you have to offer money. It is the same for American and Somali people. The only difference is gas money.*

Amina- *This is a big request to make, but not of a friend. I cannot ask this of someone that I do not know, maybe a Somali.*

Asha- *Yes, this is a big request. I would not ask someone I don't know, because I don't know them.*

Fatiya- *Yes, with a Somali, this would even be a hard request. I may still ask it though.*

Christa- *Yes.*

Jessie-*Yes, I would request this of someone I didn't know very well if I had no other option. If it were on the way for her, it wouldn't be as big of a request.*

Laura- *Yes!! Mortifying!*

Kathy- *Yes, I would probably not make this request to someone who I didn't know very well.*

Kimberly- *Yes, this is a big thing to ask of someone that you don't know.*

Julie- *Yes, it is a horrible request of someone I don't know. I wouldn't make it. I would go broke paying cab fare, before I would make this request of someone I didn't know.*

Is it a big thing to ask of a friend?

Saynab-*It is easy request if she is a friend.*

Sophia- *With friend, it is easier. It is an easy request to make of a friend.*

Amman- *No, not at all.*

Amina- *This is even a big request with a friend, especially an American friend. Not with a Somali friend though.*

Asha- *If it is good friend, it is not hard request. That is easy. It would always be hard to ask an American for ride.*

Fatiya- *No, it would not be a hard request.*

Christa- *No, not really.*

Jessie- *Yes, but it is not as big of a request to ask of a friend.*

Laura- *Yes, it still is a big request. I would never expect someone to say yes to this request.*

Kimberly- *Yes, kindof.*

Kathy- *No, it is not a big request to make to a friend.*

Julie- *Yes, but not as hard. I would actually maybe do it if it was a friend. I would still feel like I was imposing, but wouldn't feel as bad.*

In Somali culture, would it be a big thing to ask of someone, of a friend?

Saynab-*It is easier to ask a Somali. Even if I don't know, because that's in our culture, sometimes if I walk the streets, if I see somebody, Somali people, especially guys, they say, hey, do you want a ride? Do you want help? I want to give you a ride. All the time, that's in our culture, we help each other. Even if I am in my neighborhood, if I don't know them and they are Somalis, I say please, I don't have car, I don't have enough money to repair my car, I am sure he say yes. Because I know my culture, we help each other.*

Sophia- No.

Amman-*No, if they accept fine, if not fine. It is fine for both. I need help. It is easier with a friend.*

Amina- *It is much easier to ask a Somali for this favor, because American people are very busy and our people, they help each other no matter how the situation is. This is not a very big request to make of a Somali friend, but is always difficult with Americans, because I Don't know the rules or that they will help. I might still ask a Somali person that I don't know, but it would still be hard. No matter what, if you don't know the person well, you are uncomfortable making this request. You are not sure what they will say. With a friend, it would not be as hard. Gas money seems strange.*

Asha- *It would be easy to ask Somali friend and I ask a Somali that I don't know. This is not a big request to make of a friend, because we help each other.*

Fatiya- *No, not of a friend. But, it is a hard thing to ask of someone you do not know.*

Scenario C: Situations #5 and #6

In your opinion, is this a big thing to ask of someone? –Of a friend?

Saynab- *I cannot go straight to co-worker. I have to talk to my supervisor.*

Sophia-*When she is my friend, I ask like I know she gonna do it. This is an uncomfortable request to make. But, with friend, it's easy. It is big request, because it's your job and that person has same as you have and it's kind of hard to say somebody to do my job.*

Amman- *This is a hard request. Always try your best to do your responsibilities. You have to be strong and do for yourself as much as possible. It is even a big thing to ask of a friend. I have to treat people with equal respect.*

Amina-*It is hard a little bit, but not really with a friend. If the supervisor allows us to help each other, it is O.K. It is difficult to ask someone that you don't know very well though. The difficult of the request depends how well you know the person. If you don't know them, you don't know if they will refuse you or not.*

Asha- *Yes, because American people, my culture is different, America, everybody, they try to do on their own. I think they doesn't help me, so I feel shy for ask them for help. It is a little more comfortable with a friend.*

Fatiya- *If you do not know the person, it is a hard request to make to an American. It is not hard to ask of a friend.*

Christa- *No, not as long as I don't do it all of the time. If it is just once in awhile and I am really not feeling well, it is a good reason and she's got time, no it is not a big request. It is even easier to ask a friend. It does not feel like an imposition if I don't do it very often.*

Jessie- *No, it is not a hard request. I usually puts myself in a position at a job, where I don't feel bad asking people to work for me, regardless of whether it is a friend or an acquaintance.*

Laura- *No, this isn't a very big request. It is medium in difficulty. It is not at all hard to ask of a friend.*

Kimberly- *No, it is a reasonable request. It is not at all difficult to ask of a friend.*

Kathy- *No, It is not a very big request for either a friend or an acquaintance.*

Julie- *This is not a difficult request. It doesn't feel like a big request, because it is something that I can repay. If I had never spoken to someone before, it would be hard, but not really with a co-worker, friend, or acquaintance.*

Would it be harder to ask an American than a Somali?

Saynab- *I have to talk to supervisor, not my co-worker. It does not matter if my co-worker is an American, a Somali, a friend or not.*

Sophia- *It is easier to ask Somali, because I know the culture.*

Amman- *Same, for Americans and Somalis.*

Amina- *This would not at all be hard to ask of a Somali friend. I am more comfortable asking Somalis in general, because I know their culture.*

Asha- *It would be a lot harder to ask American. Easy with Somali.*

Fatiya- *Yes, a little bit.*

Appendix 4: Consent Form

Consent to Participate in Research

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The research is about communication between Somalis and other Americans. You are being asked to participate because you are either a Somali or a native speaker of English. I am asking you to listen as I read through this form to you and to ask any questions that you have before agreeing to be in this study.

The study is being conducted by: Angie Hanson-Huff, MA ESL student at the University of Minnesota.

Background Information:

The study will compare the ways in which Somalis and native speakers of English make requests. It will look at the potential breakdowns in communication and, based on the findings, it will look at the implications for teaching ESL in the Somali community.

Procedures:

If you agree to be a part of this study, I am asking you to participate in an oral survey that will look at the way that you make requests in English. You will be audio taped during the interview. The interview will take about 45 minutes.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. No one other than the researcher will listen to the audio tapes. The tapes will be erased when the research is finished. In the paper, no information that will make it possible to identify you will be included.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There are no risks or benefits.

Compensation:

There will be none, except for my continued involvement with the Franklin Learning Center.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

You do not have to participate in this study. There will be no negative consequences if you choose not to participate. If you decide to participate, you do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

Contacts and Questions:

The study is being done by Angie Hanson-Huff, who is a Masters level student in Teaching English as a Second Language at the University of Minnesota. You may ask any questions that you have right now, but you can also contact Angie at any time (612-721-0208; anfela@hotmail.com). If you have any questions about the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you can contact her advisor Anne Lazaraton, at any time (612-626-9372). You can also contact the research subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 42 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; 612-625-1650.

Statement of Consent:

Signing this document means that the research study, including the above information, has been described to you and that you agree to participate.

You will be given a copy for your records.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

_____ _____

Signature of Researcher Date