A Developmental-Longitudinal Study of Request External Modifiers in Authentic and Elicited Data

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Abstract

This developmental-longitudinal study aims to investigate the pragmatic development of Iraqi EFL learners in the use of external modifications of request over four years of study in authentic and elicited data. The authentic data is natural requests of Viber and WhatsApp while the elicited data is discourse completion test (DCT). The researcher has collected 202 authentic messages and 192 elicited messages from 24 learners. The external modifications are coded based on Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper's (1989) and Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2011) taxonomy of external devices.

The results unveil that there is an evidence of pragmatic development in the learners' use of external devices in the two types of data. Yet, the use of these devices increases with increased study years particularly when these learners produce their natural requests. Besides, this study reveals that the authentic data includes authentic results occur in real context whereby natural and spontaneous utterances are produced. Hence, the elicited data must be used in addition to other types of research instruments to arrive at valid results because it does not accurately uncover the learners' real development.

Keywords: Longitudinal design, external modifications, authentic data, elicited data.

دراسه تطوريه۔ طوليه لوسائل الطلب الخارجيه في بيانات اصيله ومستنبطه

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الملخص :

تهدف هذه الدراسة التطويريه-الطولية إلى دراسة التطور التداولي لمتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في استخدام وسائل الطلب الخارجيه على مدى أربع سنوات من الدراسة في البيانات الأصلية والمستنبطه. البيانات الأصلية هي طلبات طبيعيه عن طريق الفايبر والووتس اب (٢٠٢ طلب) بينما الطلبات المستنبطه (١٩٢طلب) هي عن طريق استبيان، والتي جمعت من ٢٤ متعلم. ورمزت الوسائل الخارجيه بالاعتماد على تصنيف الوسائل الخارجيه لبلوم كولكا وهاوس وكاسبر ١٩٨٩) وايكونوميدو كوجستس (٢٠١١). تكشفت النتائج بان هناك دليلاً على وجود تطور في استخدام المتعلمين للوسائل الخارجية في نوعي البيانات. ولكن ، يزداد استخدام هذه الوسائل مع زيادة سنوات الدراسة خاصة عندما يقوم هؤلاء المتعلمين بإستخدام طلباتهم الطبيعية. إلى جانب ذلك ، تكشف هذه الدراسة أن البيانات الأصلية تتضمن النتائج الحقيقية التي تحدث في السياق الحقيقي بإنتاج التعبيرات الطبيعية والعفوية. ومن ثم ، يجب استخدام البيانات المستنبطة الى جانب أنواع أخرى من أدوات البحث للوصول إلى نتائج صحيحة لأنها لا تكشف بدقة عن التطور الحقيقي للمتعلمين.

1. Literature Review

Most of pragmatics studies investigate the speech act of request from an interlanguage pragmatics perspective. Scholars have also examined the learners' pragmatic development in requesting by either cross-sectional or longitudinal research. Cross-sectional research examines the development of two or more cohorts in diverse stages of learning (Rose, 2000, 2009; Octu & Zeyrek, 2008). In contrast, a longitudinal design focuses on the development of a particular group over an extended period of time (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999; Kasper & Rose, 2002). The longitudinal research is advantageous in that it can follow the long-term development of the same learners and show the change at the micro level (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). However, the studies of request have relied mainly on Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) CCSARP by either authentic or elicited data as discussed below.

For instance, Rose (2000) applies an oral DCT to study the pragmatic development in requesting by three cohorts in the primary school. The researcher reveals that the most often strategy is the query preparatory. The children resort to the direct strategy at grade 2. As for the external devices, there is little use of them by the three groups. Besides, the most advanced children use the grounders. In a follow-up research, Rose (2009) examines three cohorts of learners in the secondary school to show the pragmatic development in requesting by an oral DCT. The results are identical to the results of the previous research. Regarding the use of internal modifiers, the results display a linear development. The children show diverse strategies in requesting and use little external devices.

Ellis (1992) investigates the development of request by 2 learners over 16 and 21 months by an observation. The results disclose that the learners heavily resort to direct strategies and they use a limited range of internal and external devices as well as there is little development over time. Ellis suggests that the classroom setting might prevent the development of the learners.

Furthermore, Schauer (2004, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009) conducts a series of studies to examine 15 Germanic learners in requesting when they learned abroad. Over a period of eight months, the data is gathered via multimedia elicitation task. The data collection process is divided into three phases: the point the learners arrive at England, in the middle, and the period befre they go back to Germany. The results uncover that there is an evidence of pragmatic development in the learners' requests because they tend to use indirect strategies in phase three of data collection. There is also a development in using the internal devices (such as embedding and marked modality) and more complicated external devices in the second phase. However, the pragmatic development in the learners' requests is the result of the long exposure to the target language context.

In addition, Chen (2006) carries out a longitudinal study on an ESL learner to show how she develops her e-mail discourse in second language setting. Chen aims to examine 266 authentic e-mails produced by a Taiwanese graduate student (Ling) while she is studying in America over two years and a half. A critical discourse analysis is used to analyse the learner's discourse in the e-mails. Interviews are also conducted with the learner. Chen (2006) displays that the learner faces difficulties when she is developing her discourse in her e-mails. Besides, she is hardly producing a proper discourse, mostly when she is communicating with her professors. Chen (2006) clarifies that the way the second language learners use to produce e-mails to peers is diverse

from the way they use to interact with individuals of higher authorities. This is related to the point that the latter requires progressive pragmatic competence and some knowledge of critical discourse in an academic setting. Ling's discourse comprises strong tones of wishes for help via using 'want statement'. Also, inappropriate style, unsuccessful reasons and justifications are used by the learner. Ling develops, to some extent, her way of discourse and recreates her concepts towards her professors because of her identity change and her interaction with the second language setting. Also, Ling acquires new internal mitigators such as 'conditional' and 'subjectivizer'. In relation to the external modifications, Ling changes her style from using personal subjects to institutionally reasonable reasons.

Moreover, Woodfield (2012) examines 8 postgraduate learners' development in the use of request modifications over 8 months at a British University. Open role-play is conducted to collect the data. The process of data collection is administered at three distinct phases. The results show that there is a linear development in the use of internal devices by the learners. The learners also reduce the use of downtoners gradually which results in increasing the familiarity with the professors. In addition, the learners favor the use of lexical devices at the first phase and they require time to develop the syntactic categories. With regard to the external modifications, the learners frequently use them as the native speakers of English do.

Another research is conducted by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) to examine 200 e-mails sent by Greek learners of English to 11 professors in Cyprus. The e-mails are gathered over one year and a half. The study analyses the address terms, level of directness, external modifiers, lexical/phrasal downgraders and upgraders. Furthermore, the perception of professors on the e-mails sent by the learners is also examined. Online questionnaires (replied by the professors) are applied to evaluate the appropriateness. Requests of low and high imposition degrees are identified regarding 'requests for information' and 'requests for action' respectively. An adapted version of request strategies basically proposed by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) and later revised by Biesenbach-Lucas (2006, 2007) is applied to examine the directness level. Besides, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) and Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) models are used for examining the external and internal modifiers accompanied by Edmondson's (1981) taxonomy of the internal devices.

The results reveal that the direct requests are frequently used in the two forms of request, specifically in requests for information. The most favoured sub-strategies are 'direct questions', imperative', and 'want statements'. The participants also use a good number of conventional indirectness in requests for action. Besides, there is an underuse in mitigations, greetings and closings, and proper forms of address. The force of request is not reduced because there is an underuse in the use of lexical/phrasal devices. On the other hand, the requesting force is increased by using a number of upgraders. As for the external devices, the participants have tendency to use the external modifiers (particularly grounder and pre-closing) rather than the internal modifiers in their requests. Overall, the professors state that the e-mails are inappropriate and ill-mannered as they involve a coercive tone. This is related to the point that the learners do not stimulate the professors to fulfill their requests because they fail to be aware of the imposition included.

Another research is conducted by Aldhulaee (2011) to examine the modification devices by native speakers of English (14 respondents) and Iraqi Arabic speakers (14 respondents) via role-play interviews in Australia. The results unveil that the internal

modifiers are prominent in the requests made by the English native speakers rather than in the requests made by Iraqi Arabic native speakers. With regard to the external modifiers, they are prevalent in the requests of both groups. Besides, diverse softening devices are used by the two groups in several situations. The study infer that the cultural difference between Australian and Iraqi Arabic is the reason behind the differences between the two groups in the use of modifications.

Pan (2012) studies the pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics of request in 180 elicited e-mails composed by 15 Chinese learners of English and 15 native speakers of English when they interact with their professors in Hong Kong. The study applies a demographic survey, an electronic DCT, and a Likert scale. Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) CCSARP is modified and the studies of Spencer-Oatey (2000), Woodfield and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2010), and Centre for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition are contributed in Pan's model. The study investigates the directness level and the internal and external modification devices. In his study, Pan reveals that the learners resort to the conventional indirectness in their requests. As for the native speakers of English, they are more flexible in using their requests from direct to indirect. The Chinese learners controll their pragmalinguistic competence by using diverse forms of indirect strategies, yet, they reduce the use of the syntactic devices. Hence, the lack of those devices is compensated by the lexical/phrasal devices and the external modifiers. But, the Chinese learners do not improve their pragmalinguistcs repertoire as their counterparts do.

Additionally, Economidou-Kogetsidis (2013) investigates the degree to which the requests written in DCT approximated the requests naturally produced in service-encounter telephone context in United Kingdom. The study aims to examine the degree of directness, the internal devices and the perspective. The authentic data consists of 110 requests of telephone calls made by 100 English speakers randomly gathered and recorded over five months. The elicited data is a written DCT by which 87 elicited requests are collected from English native speakers. One situation is given to the participants of DCT, which is identical to the situation of the authentic data. Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) taxonomy of request strategies and Hassall's (1999) taxonomy of request directness are used to code the strategies of request. Some classifications (e.g. Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Sifianou, 1992; Trosborg, 1995; Alco´n-Soler, Safont-Jordà, and Martínez-Flor, 2005; Schauer, 2007) are developed to code the modification devices.

Moreover, Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) taxonomy of request perspective is used to analyze the perspective of request. The results show that natural and elicited requests have important diversity in a number of aspects but they do not follow diverse trends with regard to directness and lexical devices. In comparison to elicited requests, the natural requests are conventional indirect and more complicated syntactically as well as more requestee perspective is included. Based on the results, the DCT approximates the authentic data in certain points. However, the study states that the DCT is somehow valid but it must be used with another instrument to confirm its validity.

Ko, Eslami, and Burlbaw (2014) examine the learners' pragmatic development in requesting via analysing 99 natural emails sent to a professor over two years of study. The results disclose that there is a diverse style in the use of closing and opening by non-native learners of English though they do not display much pragmatic development in the use of strategy type as compared to native speakers of English. With

reference to the syntactic modifiers, the non-native speakers' use is in line with that use of native speakers. Yet, the former do not approach the latter in the use of these modifiers. As for the use of lexical modifiers, the politeness marker is the most salient device by the non-native speakers. The non-native speakers also use a large number of external modifications as the native speakers do.

The aforementioned studies have examined the pragmatic use of requests by native and non-native speakers of English in either natural or elicited data. Very little investigation (e.g. Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2013) has been conducted to examine the pragmatic competence of these learners in requesting via authentic and elicited data. Moreover, a survey of developmental pragmatics literature unveils that no particular study has conducted a longitudinal design to study the pragmatic development of EFL learners in the speech act of request by authentic and elicited data. Thus, this study has carried out a longitudinal design in order to fill a gap in pragmatics literature because it investigates the pragmatic development of Arab EFL learners (particularly Iraqis) in using the external modifications of request in authentic and elicited data over four years of study. Therefore, this study aims to:

1. Identify the categories of external modifications made by Iraqi EFL learners in naturally occurring requests and DCT requests over four years of study.
2. Compare the pragmatic development of naturally occurring external modifiers with DCT external modifiers of requests made by Iraqi EFL learners over four years of study.

1.2 Authentic and Elicited Data

One of the major data collection methods in pragmatics research is authentic data whereby the researcher gathers natural utterances produced spontaneously in genuine setting (Kasper and Dahl, 1991; Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 2005). It shows what the participant actually says rather than what s/he thinks to say and the utterances produced by the speakers have genuine world conditions (Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 1993). The elicited data such as DCT is another major method of data collection in a formula of written questionnaire. It includes a number of different dialogues representing diverse situations. Each situation should be answered based on how the participants think they could answer the issue under question in genuine life occasions (Félix-Brasdefer, 2008). Although a researcher can collect a wide range of data by DCT, yet, it has weaknesses in that it does not reveal the real wording used in genuine communication and the participants might not answer all the questions willingly (Rue and Zhang, 2008). DCT elicits data under organized situations in order to evaluate offline pragmatic knowledge in non-communicating form. It evaluates the participants' knowledge rather than how these participants use their ability to communicate with others (Felix-Brasdefer, 2010).

2. Methodology

The authentic data is natural messages of WhatsApp and Viber sent by Iraqi EFL learners to their professors in Iraq. This study considers only the academic messages correlated with the research objectives and any personal and not related messages are neglected. The messages are continuously provided by the professors to the researcher. The elicited data is a DCT which is designed based on the authentic messages. Thus, after collecting the authentic messages in the first year, a DCT is designed and its situations are identical to the situations of the authentic messages. The authentic messages sent to professors include feedback and meeting requests in all the years. Hence, all the situations of the DCT are designed about the feedback and meeting requests. Besides, the same DCT is applied to the same group of participants in each

year in order to see their pragmatic development in the use of external devices. The DCT includes four situations and each situation is followed by a blank space so that the participants can write the proper linguistic form of request as if they are the interlocutors engaging in real-life communication (refer to Appendix 2).

A background questionnaire is used with the DCT (refer to Appendix 1) to obtain the information about the participants. All the participants are homogenous in the two types of data. That is, all of them (and their parents) are native speakers of Iraqi Arabic. The participants have the same characteristics regarding their cultural and educational background, place of birth (Iraq), specialization, age, gender, and parents' education. The participants are 24 MA and PhD postgraduate Iraqi EFL learners who majored in English (linguistics and literature) at Baghdad University/ College of Arts and College of Education. All of them were born in Iraq and did not travel to a foreign country before. Their age range is from 27 to 35 (the mean age is 21.7). In addition, gender is homogeneous in that each data is collected from 12 participants (6 male and 6 female). The selected number of participants is sufficient due to the issue that the qualitative research does not essentially require a large number of participants (Creswell, 2009).

Moreover, it is decided by the data saturation whereby no new patterns are shown any longer during the data analysis (Streubert and Carpenter, 2011). However, the messages are written by the participants during their postgraduate studies over four years of study (2015. 2016, 2017, and 2018). A consent form is provided by the participants and their professors, but their identities are kept confidential.

The DCT is piloted to 5 participants who are identical to the group of the main DCT. The participants are from University of Baghdad/ Department of English/ College of Education. All of them are homogeneous in the same aforementioned variables. The pilot study is conducted in order to decide the authenticity of the situations and whether the participants are familiar with the situations. It also aims to make sure whether the wording of the situations is clear and the participants comprehend the instructions clearly. Besides, it aims to assess the time required for DCT.

Two experts in pragmatics from University of Bagdad have stated that the DCT is valid and the situations are related to the authentic data as well as the wording is clear. Before conducting the DCT, the researcher has explained the aim of this study and the situations of DCT. However, the DCT takes 30 minutes and that time is suitable to the participants to answer the situations. The participants have stated that the situations are familiar and all the wording is clear except for the last situation which required some change because the participants could not understand it well:

(Before the pilot study)

Situation 3

You want to send a file to your professor by WhatsApp or Viber. You decide to send it and say…

After the pilot study

Situation 3

You want to send a file related to your research by WhatsApp or Viber. You decide to send it and say

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The reliability of DCT is 81% after applying test-retest. After conducting the pilot study, the main DCT is conducted. Natural and elicited data are analysed and the same aforementioned experts have also participated in coding the data to ensure the inter-rater reliability which is 84%. However, 300 authentic messages are collected first and after filtering them, 202 authentic messages are taken into account from 12 learners. Also, the researcher has collected 192 elicited messages from 12 learners. The messages are taken verbatim and word count is considered in both types of data. That is, the authentic and elicited data are equal in word count. The researcher has copied and pasted each authentic message into a word document. For facilitating the messages identification, a number is assigned to each message. The percentage is used to show the occurrence of the modifiers while Chi-square test is used to reveal if there is any difference between the two data in the use of internal modifiers.

3. Data Analysis

Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) and Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2011) taxonomy of external modifications is used to identify the external modifiers of request. The naturally occurring external modifiers are compared with DCT external devices to reveal to what extent these two types of data show valid results. The researcher has selected the time the participants started their master study as a dividing point for comparison because pragmatic changes are more obvious after that point.

The external modifications are mitigators used to mitigate the illocutionary force of request and they occur before and/or after the head act of request. Based on the aforementioned models, Table no. (1) displays the external modifications of request with some adaptation as some categories (such as appreciation, wishes, expressing joy, and affective appeals) have been revealed in the data of this study.

Table 1: The external modifications of Request

Name	Function	Device
Grounder	The request is supported by using reasons, justifications, and/or explanation before and/or after it.	*"Last week I was with my sister in the hospital. I had very difficult circumstances which was the reason of my delay*, you know I actually like you to read my proposal as soon as possible"
Preparator	The request is prefaced by: a. asking whether the hearer is available. b. asking a permission for issuing a request. c. clarifying that there is a problem faced by the requester, or stating that the requester needs the requestee's assistance.	"…I have many questions in my mind I'd like to meet you please…" " so *r u available on Thursday*. I need to see you please to discuss it…"
Disarmer	It is used to remove any possible challenge raised by the hearer.	"*I know I am bothering you* but I'm afraid you're going to to read this additional page, I am sorry"
Promise	It is used before accomplishing the request to promote the hearer to comply with the request.	"Can you read it and *I promise to submit soon…*"
Imposition minimizer	It is used to mitigate the imposition of the request.	"Is it OK on SUNDAY if it does not disturb you.."
Appreciation	It is used to present thanks and appreciation for the hearer before fulfilling the request.	"*Thnx*", "*Thanks a lot*", "*Appreciate it*", "*with many thanks*", "*Thank you very much*"

Table 1, continued

Name	Function	Example
Small talk	It is used to create a softening way with the hearer before producing the request.	"*… How do you do*? Can I see you on Wednesday …"
Wishes	It is used to express the requester's wishes for the hearer to promote him/her to comply with the request.	"*God willing*", "*Inshallaa*", "*Allah bless you*", and "*God bless you*"
Expressing Joy	It is used to express joyful expressions to promote the hearer to comply.	"*I will be so hapy to see you*, so can I see you on Monday"
Affective appeals	It is used to appeal the hearer's emotions and promote him/her to reply.	'*…Please let me know soon*"
Apology	It is used to express the requester's regret to increase the hearer's compliance.	"*sorry*", "*I am sorry*"
Sweetener	It is used to express complimentary utterances to the hearer to encourage him/her to comply with the request.	"*Your comments are as lovely as this evening…*"

4. Results and Discussion

Iraqi EFL learners use different types of external modifiers to mitigate the threatening face of their requests. These types involve grounder, preparator, disarmer, promise, imposition minimizer, appreciation, small talk, expressing wishes, expressing joy, affective appeals, apology, and sweetener as presented in Diagram 1.
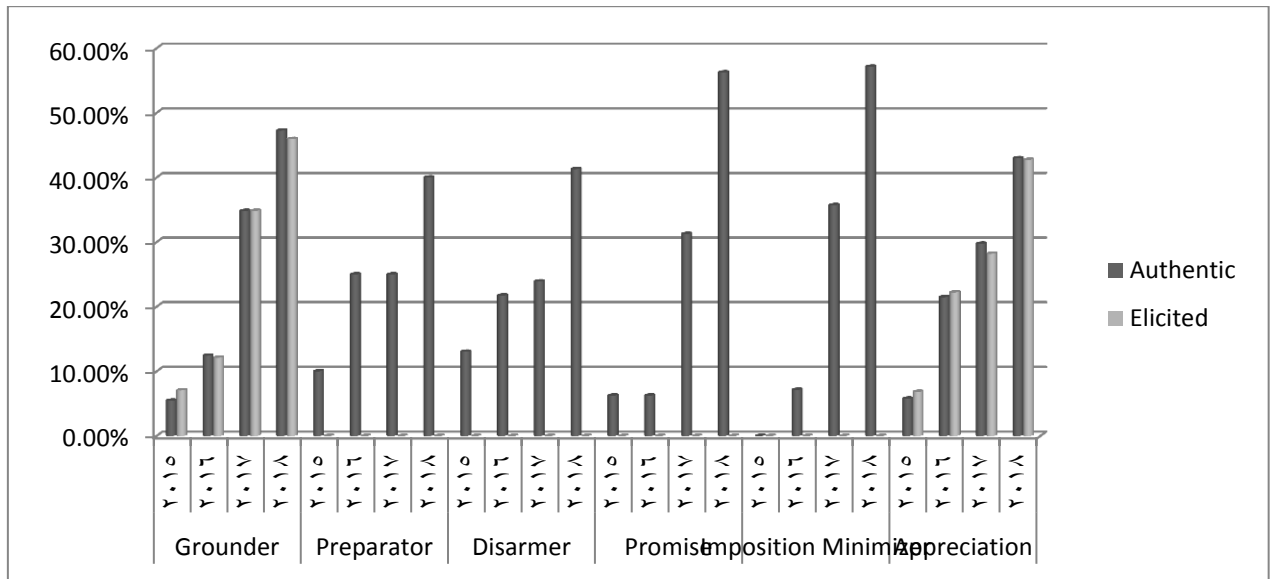
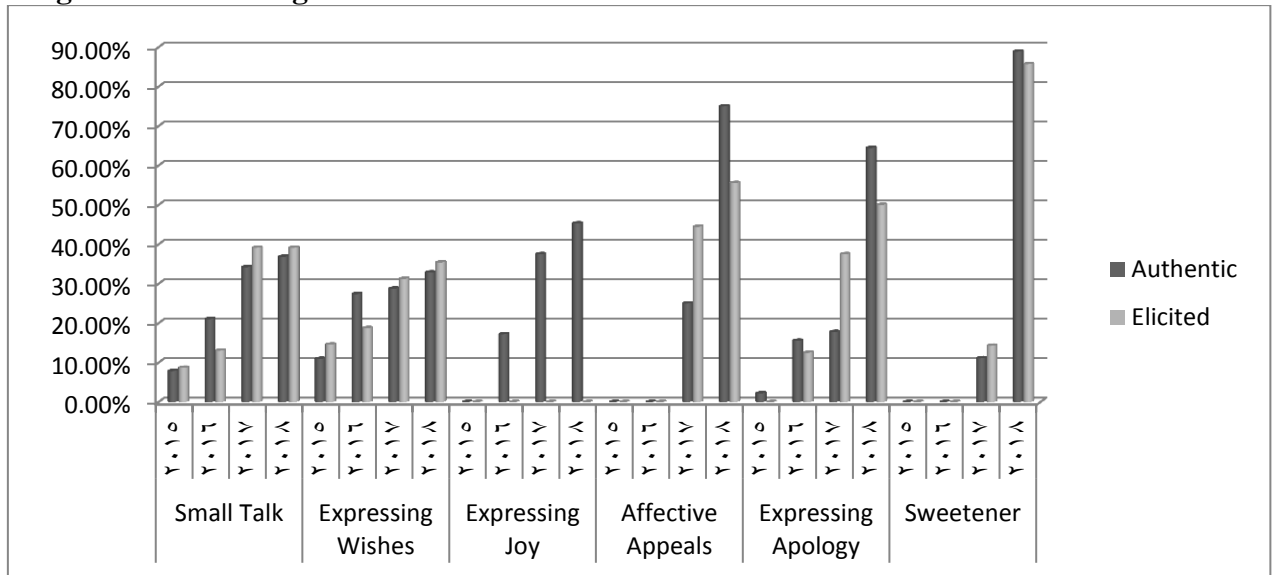**Diagram 1: Percentages of External Modifications in Authentic and Elicited Data**

Diagram 1, continued

The grounder is used by the learners to modify the requests by providing reasons and justifications, e.g.,

"*Last week I was with my sister in the hospital. I had very difficult circumstances which was the reason of my delay*, you know I actually like you to read my proposal as soon as possible…"

"Hi Dr. X Hope everything is going well with you. I will be thankful if you give me some time on Sunday please *I have to travel to my home soon*"

"… I'd like to meet you please *because a lot of points are unclear so I have to know them from you*"

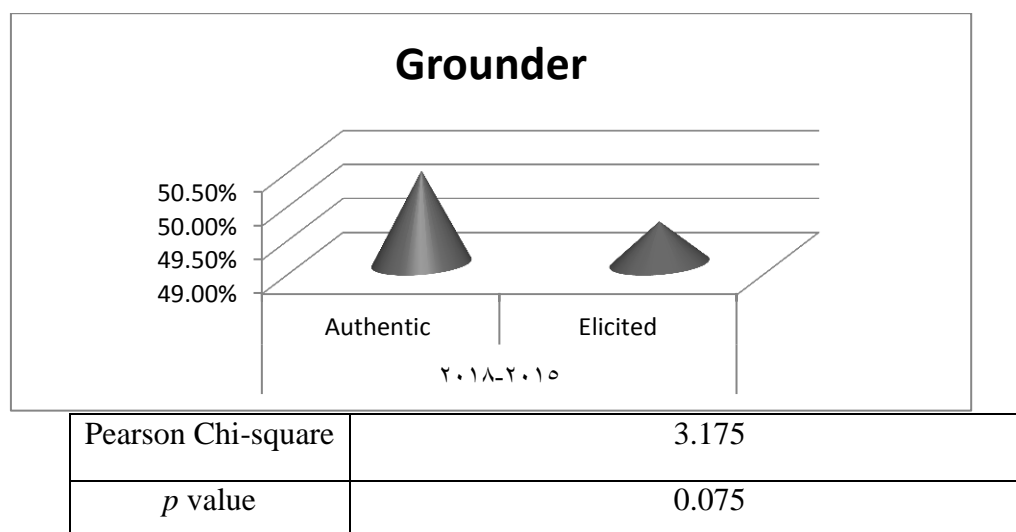| Pearson Chi-square	3.175
p value	0.075

Diagram 2: Percentages and Chi-square Values of Grounder in Authentic and Elicited Data

As presented in Diagram (1), the grounder has 7.89%, 21.05%, 34.21%, and 36.84% in the authentic data while it has 8.69%, 13.04%, 39.13%, and 39.13% in the elicited data in 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018 respectively. The elicited data has the highest occurrence of grounder in the last two years. The use of this device (either authentic or elicited) increases over four years of study due to the development of the learners' competence. Yet, there is no statistically significant difference in the use of this device between the two types of data from 2015 to 2018 as shown in Diagram (2).
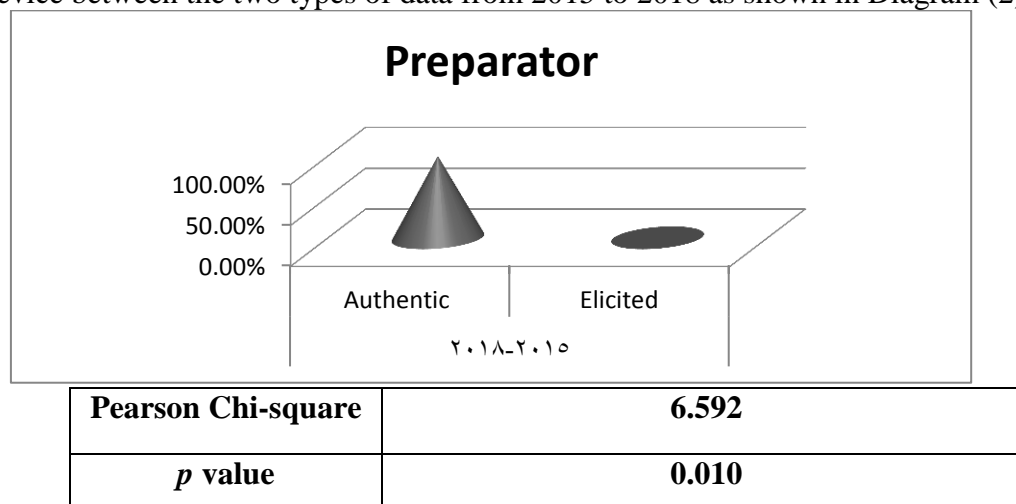

Pearson Chi-square	**6.592**
***p* value**	**0.010**

Diagram 3: Percentages and Chi-square Values of Preparator in Authentic and Elicited Data

Disarmer

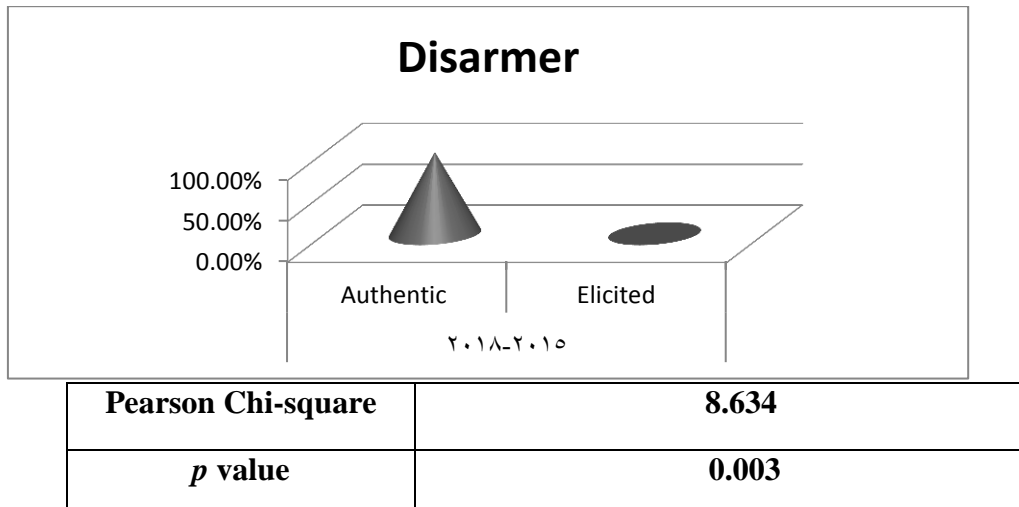| Pearson Chi-square	8.634
p value	0.003

Diagram 4: Percentages and Chi-square Values of Disarmer in Authentic and Elicited Data

Promise

Pearson Chi-square	4.382
p value	0.047
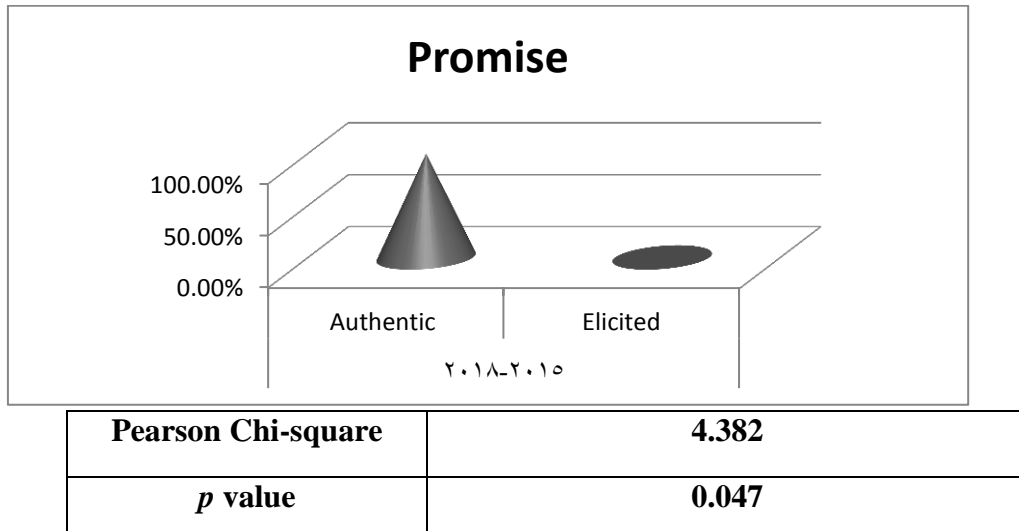
Diagram 5: Percentages and Chi-square Values of Promise in Authentic and Elicited Data

Imposition Minimizer

Pearson Chi-square	5.741
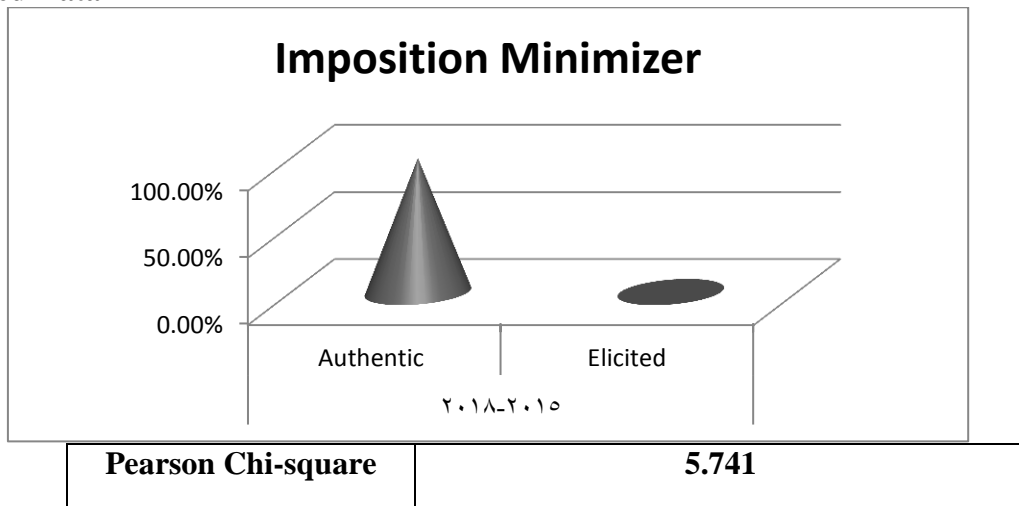
p value	0.024

Diagram 6: Percentages and Chi-square Values of Imposition Minimizer in Authentic and Elicited Data
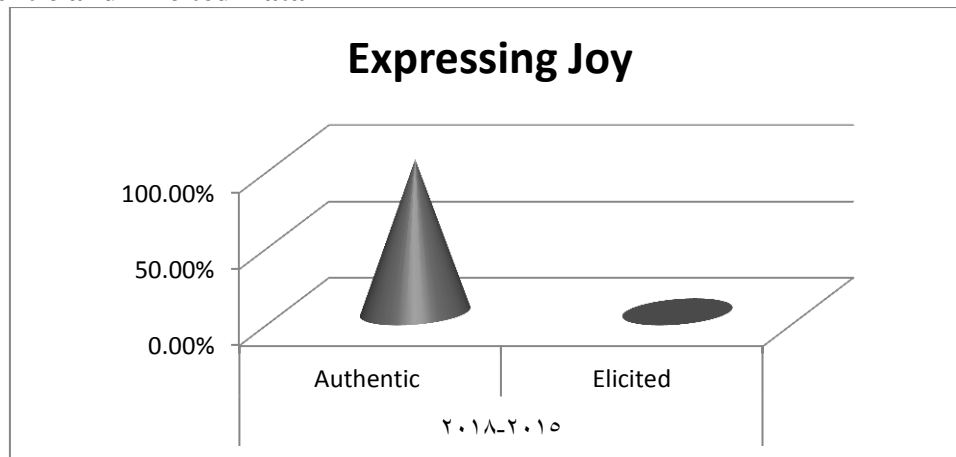
Expressing Joy

Pearson Chi-square	9.802
p value	0.002

Diagram 7: Percentages and Chi-square Values of Expressing Joy in Authentic and Elicited Data

The preparator, disarmer, promise, imposition minimizer, and expressing joy are used by the learners to modify the threatening nature of their authentic requests only. For example,

(Preparator)

"Mrs. *I have many questions in my mind* I'd like to meet you please because a lot of points are unclear so I have to know them from you"

" so *r u available on Thursday*. I need to see you please to discuss it…"

(Disarmer)

"*I know I am bothering you* but I'm afraid you're going to to read this additional page, I am sorry"

"*I know I am asking more* but believe me I have to meet you very soon and …"

(Promise)

"… *I am sure I will write it in the wau you like*"

"Can you read it and *I promise to submit soon…*"

(Imposition minimizer)

"… I kindly ask you to have a look at them *if there is no noise* with many thanks"

"Is it OK on SUNDAY *if it does not disturb you*..Thnx"

(Expressing Joy)

"*I will be so hapy* to see you, so can I see you on Monday"

"*I am glad coz of your comments*. Can you read the other pages"

Over four years respectively: (a) the preparator has 10.0%. 25%, 25%, and 40% , (b) the disarmer has 13.04%, 21.37, 23.91%, and 41.30% , (c) the promise has 6.25%, 6.25%, 31.25%, and 56.25%, (d) the imposition minimizer has 0.0%, 7.14%, 35.71%, and 57.14%, and (e) expressing joy has 0.0%, 17.18%, 37.50%, and 45.31%. These results reveal that there is a pragmatic development in the use of these devices which increases with increased study years. In addition, there are statistically significant differences ($\chi2$ 6.592, *p*= 0.010, $\chi2$ 8.634, *p*= 0.003, $\chi2$ 4.382, *p*= 0.047, $\chi2$ 5.741, *p*= 0.024, and $\chi2$ 9.802, *p*= 0.002) in the use of preparator, disarmer, promise, imposition minimizer, and expressing joy respectively between the two types of data from 2015 to 2018. The authentic data has the highest occurrence 100% while the elicited data has no occurrence in the use of all these devices (refer to Diagrams 3, 4, 5, 6, &7).
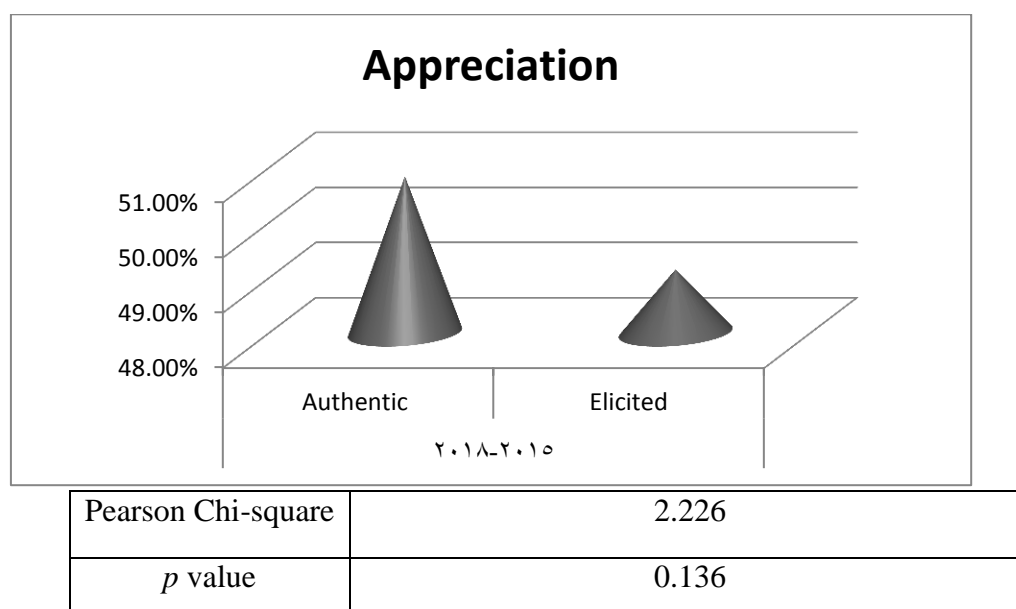

Pearson Chi-square	2.226
p value	0.136

Diagram 8: Percentages and Chi-square Values of Appreciation in Authentic and Elicited Data

Iraqi EFL learners also use 'appreciation' in their authentic and elicited requests as disclosed in Diagram (1). For example: "*Thnx*", "*Thanks a lot*", "*Appreciate it*", "*with many thanks*", "*Thank you very much*". Over four years respectively, the appreciation has 5.78%, 21.48%, 29.75%, and 42.97% in the authentic data while it has 6.83%, 22.22%, 28.20%, and 42.73% in the elicited data. There is no statistically significant difference in the use of appreciation between the two types of data as disclosed in Diagram (8).
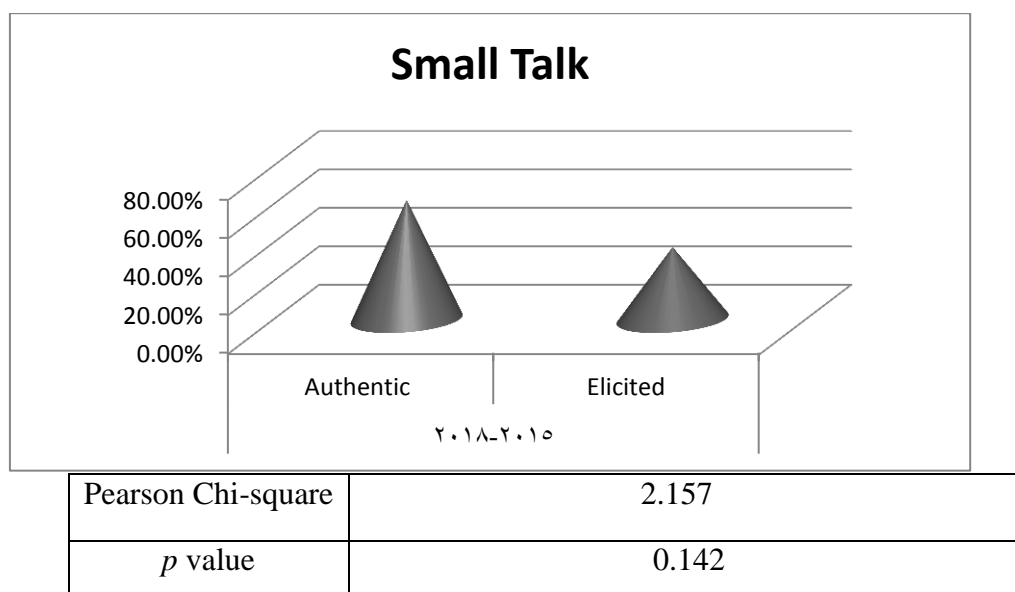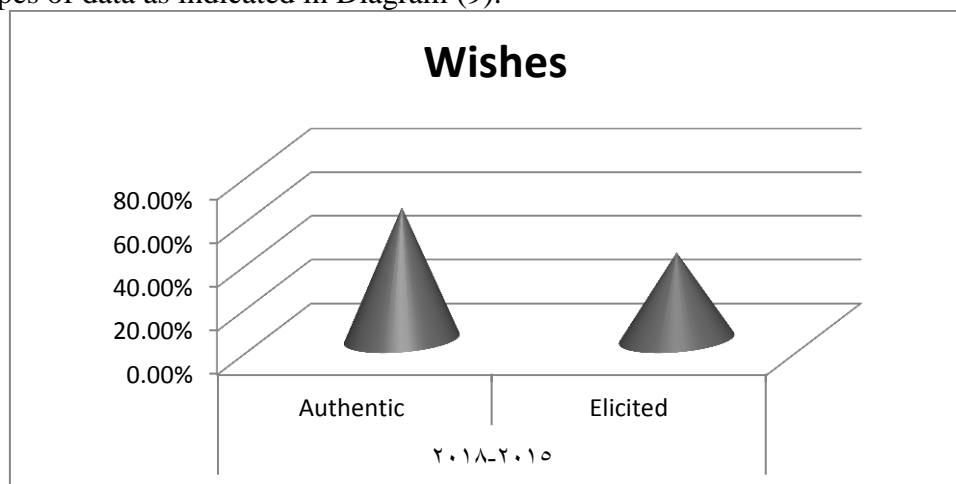
Pearson Chi-square	2.157
p value	0.142

Diagram 9: Percentages and Chi-square Values of Small Talk in Authentic and Elicited Data

With regard to the small talk, it is used to modify the authentic and elicited requests, e.g.,

"Dear Dr. X *Hope all is very well with you*. This is my topic "Wilson's representation of Black Women: A study in Selected Plays by August Wilson, Fences, The Piano Lesson& Ma' Rainey Black Bottom ، Ok?..."

"Dr. *How do you do*? Can I see you on Wednesday to discuss it with you, if you have time. Really …"

As shown in Diagram (1) and over four years respectively, the small talk has 7.89%, 21.05%, 34.21%, and 36.84% in the authentic data while it has 8.69%, 13.04%, 39.13%, and 39.13% in the elicited data. The use of this device increases with increased study years particularly in the elicited data due to the point that such device is considered a conventional modifier to start the talk with the professor before requesting. However, there is no statistically significant difference in the use of this device between the types of data as indicated in Diagram (9).

Pearson Chi-square	2.266
p value	0.132

Diagram 10: Percentages and Chi-square Values of Wishes in Authentic and Elicited Data

     As for wishes, the learners use it to express their wishes for their professors in their natural and elicited requests. For example, "*God willing*", "*Inshallaa*", "*Allah bless you*", and "*God bless you*". Yet, over four years respectively, the wishes modifier has 10.95%, 27.39%, 28.75%, and 32.87% in the authentic data while it has 14.58%, 18.75%, 31.25%, and 35.41% in the elicited data as presented in Diagram (1). The use of wishes increases with increasing the study years. Yet, there is no statistically significant difference in the use of such device between the two types of data as displayed in Diagram (10).
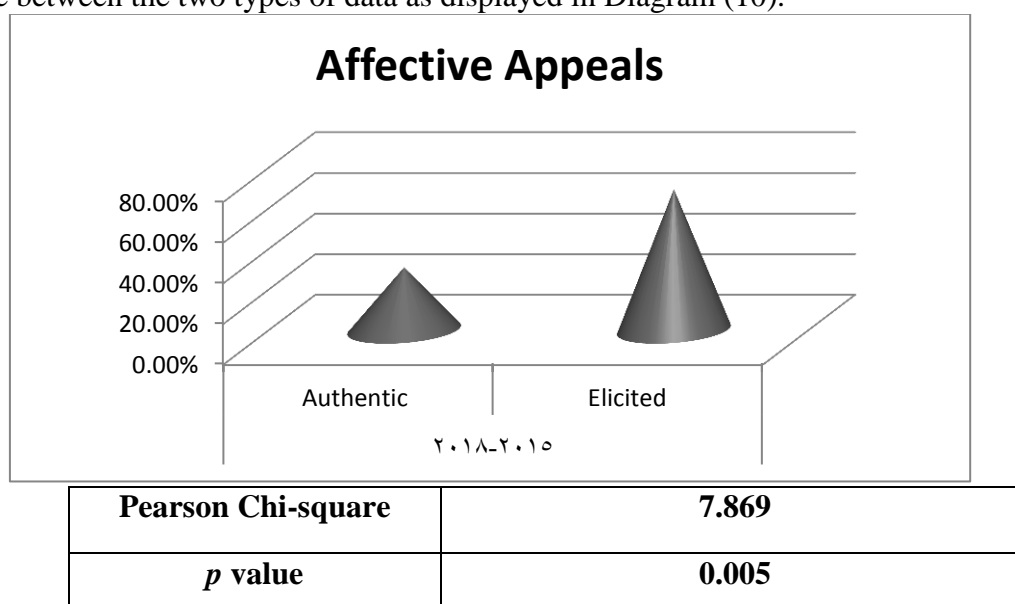

Affective Appeals

Pearson Chi-square	7.869
p value	0.005

Diagram 11: Percentages and Chi-square Values of Affective Appeals in Authentic and Elicited Data

    Moreover, Iraqi EFL learners use affective appeals to modify their natural and elicited requests. For example,

    "… I would be very grateful if you give your point of view on my proposal. *Please this proposal is not final*"

    "Is it all right if you send it to me next week so that I can adapt based on your comment. *Please let me know soon*"

    The affective appeals modifier has 25% and 75% in the authentic requests while it has 44.44% and 55.55% in the elicited data in 2017 and 2018 respectively (refer to Diagram 1). Its use increases with increased study years. Besides, there is a statistically significant difference ($\chi2$ 7.896, *p*= 0.005) in the use of this device between the two

types of data. The elicited data has the highest occurrence 69.23% while the authentic data has 30.76% (refer to Diagram 11).
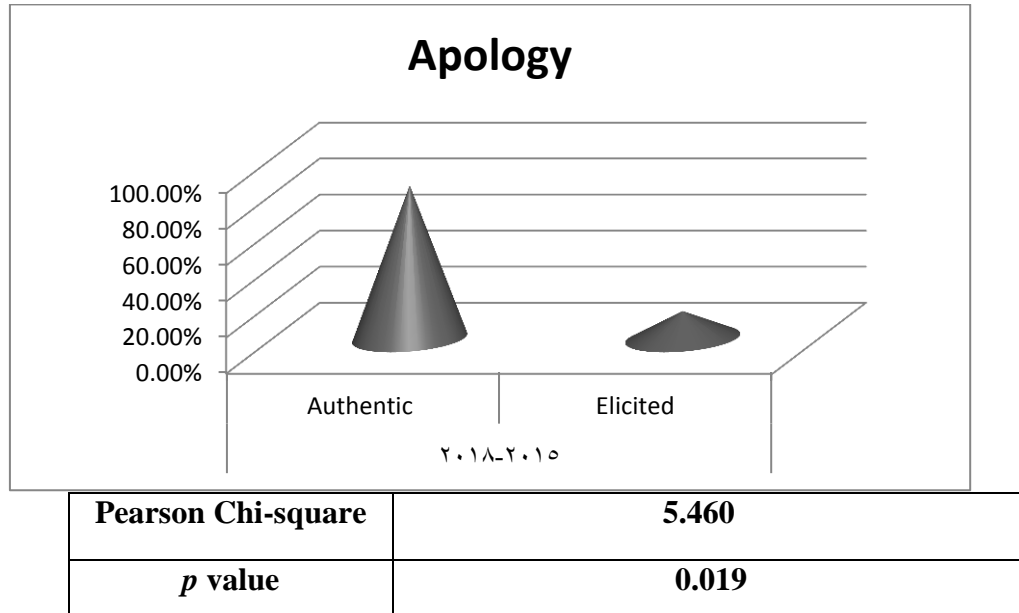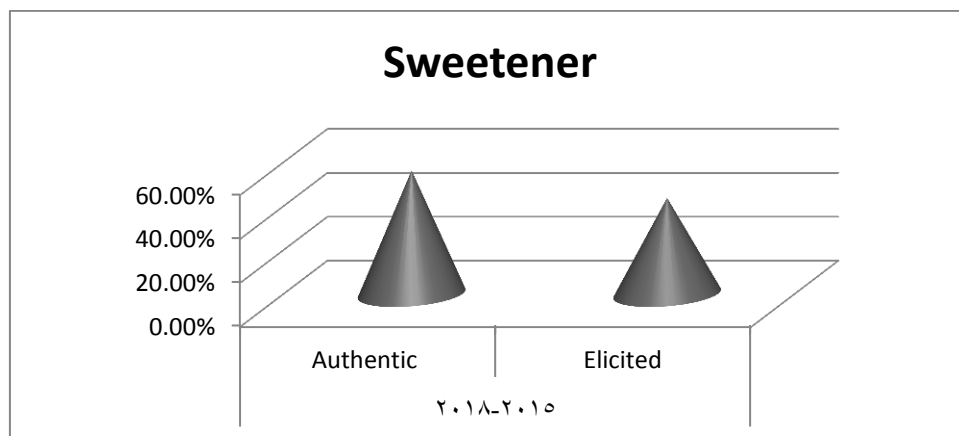

Pearson Chi-square	5.460
p value	0.019

Diagram 12: Percentages and Chi-square Values of Apology in Authentic and Elicited Data

     Iraqi EFL learners mitigate their natural and elicited requests by using apology, e.g., "*sorry*", "*I am sorry*". Over four years of study respectively, the apology has 2.22%, 15.55%, 17.77%, and 64.44% in the authentic data while it has 0.0%, 12.50%, 37.50%, and 50% in the elicited data (as presented in Diagram 1). The use of it increases with increased study years. Moreover, there is a statistically significant difference ($\chi2$ 5.460, $p=$ 0.019) in the use of apology between the two types of data. The authentic data has the highest occurrence 84.90% while the elicited data has 15.09% as shown in Diagram (12).

Pearson Chi-square	6.387
p value	0.013

Diagram 13: Percentages and Chi-square Values of Sweetener in Authentic and Elicited Data

Furthermore, the learners use sweetener to mitigate the threatening tone of their natural and elicited requests, e.g.,

"*Your comments are as lovely as this evening*
I just finish writing the first chapter. Kindly I want to see you please"
"*… The topics you have given are very lovely*. I wonder if it is possible to give me your opinion about the last three novels you have given to us in the first semester"

The use of sweetener increases with increased study years. It has no occurrence in 2015 and 2016 in the two types of data. But, in 2017 and 2018 respectively, it has 11.11% and 88.88% in the authentic data. Also, it has 14.28% and 85.71% in the mentioned two years respectively in the elicited data (as shown in Diagram 1). In addition, there is a statistically significant difference ($\chi 2$ 6.387, *p*= 0.013) in the use of sweetener between the two types of data and the authentic data has the highest occurrence 56.25% while the elicited data has 43.75% as disclosed in Diagram (13).
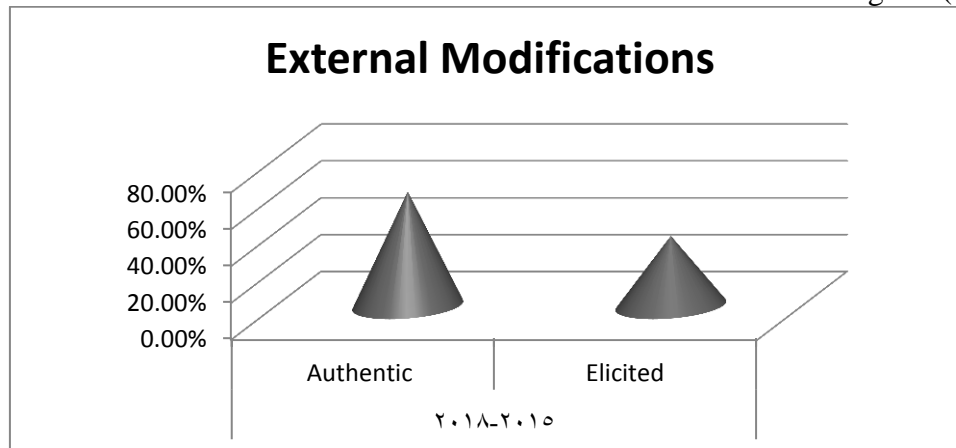
Pearson Chi-square	23.023
p value	<0.001

Diagram 14: Percentages and Chi-square Values of External Modifications in Authentic and Elicited Data

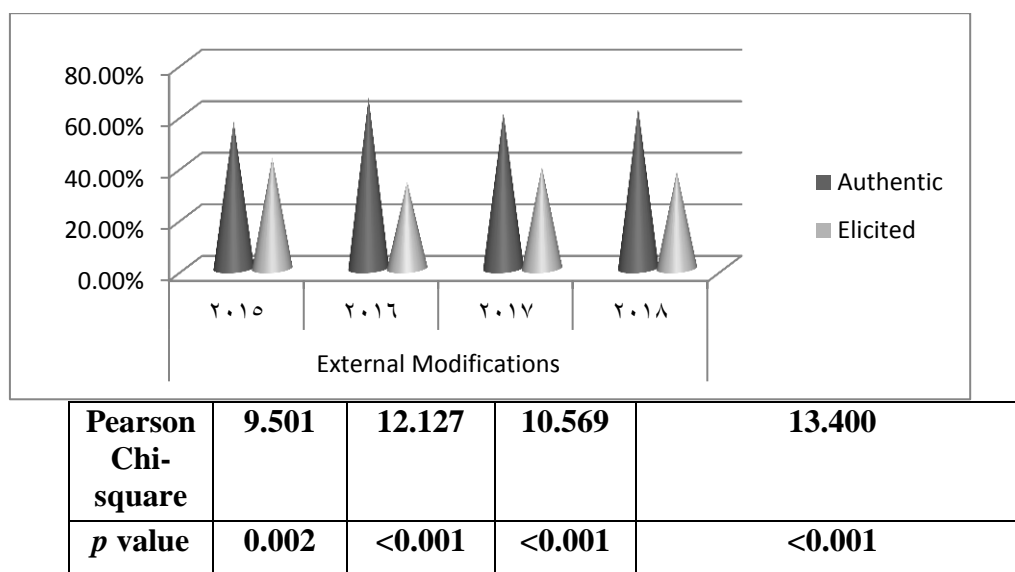| Pearson Chi-square	9.501	12.127	10.569	13.400
p value	0.002	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001

Diagram 15: Percentages and Chi-square Values of External Modifications in Authentic and Elicited Data Over Four Years

On the whole, the use of external modifiers increases with increased the study years. Yet, there is a statistically significant difference (χ2 23.023, *p*= <0.001) in the use of external modifications between the two types of data. The authentic data has the highest occurrence 62.07% while the elicited data has 37.92% over four years of study as reported in diagram (14). Moreover, there are statistically significant differences (χ2 9.501, *p*= 0.002, χ2 12.127, *p*= <0.001, χ2 10.569, *p*= <0.001, χ2 13.400, p= <0.001,) in the use of external modifiers between the two types of data in 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018 respectively. The authentic data has the highest occurrence in all the years (refer to Diagram 15). This uncovers that Iraqi EFL learners use more external modifiers in the authentic data than in the elicited data. It also shows that the authentic data reveals more valid results better than the elicited data. The learners mitigate their natural requests by more external modifications as they consider these requests genuine and serious.

5. Conclusion, Limitations, and Suggestions for Future Research

This study compares the development of Iraqi EFL learners in the use of external modifications in authentic and elicited requests over four years of study. These learners produce diverse types of these devices in requesting. While they modify their elicited requests by using grounder, appreciation, small talk, wishes, affective appeals, apology, and sweetener, these learners tend to modify their authentic requests by the aforementioned devices alongside other types such as preparator, disarmer, promise, imposition minimizer, and expressing joy. The use of these modifiers increases with increased study years due to the learners' pragmatic development particularly when they make natural requests. Over four years and in each year of study, these learners use more external devices in their authentic requests that occur in a natural setting. Besides, this study unveils that the authentic data uncovers more valid results than the elicited data does. The learners consider the elicited requests artificial and not as genuine as the authentic requests and thus they resort to more types of external modifications to mitigate the threatening tone of their natural requests. Furthermore, this study concludes that the elicited data should be used in addition to other research instruments to arrive at valid findings.

However, this study is limited to the external modifications of request only in two types of data collection: authentic data (WhatsApp and Viber messages) and elicited DCT data. Another study can be carried out by using different types of data collection such as authentic e-mails and role play to show whether there is any diversity in the use of the external devices in these two types of data. Also, another research can be conducted to investigate the request strategies by using the same data collection of this study. Moreover, another study can compare the performance of EFL learners to English native speakers' performance in the use of such devices in the same types of data collection of this study.

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Appendix 1
The Background Questionnaire

Gender: M / F
Age:
Place of Birth:
Country of Origin:
Native Language:
University where currently enrolled:
Major:
College level:
Do you Speak Languages Other than English? Yes   No.   If yes
How long have you studied the Language?
Have you ever lived in a foreign country?   . If yes
Where   . How long?
The parents' nationality:

Appendix II
DCT

Dear Participant:

This study aims to examine the speech act of request in authentic and elicited data. This questionnaire includes three situations. Please carefully read each situation and imagine as if you are in the same situation. After that, answer naturally and utilise the same language that you use when you communicate with your professor by WhatsApp and/or Viber.

Please do not hesitate to contact the researcher in case you have any question.

Thank you very much.

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Situation 1
You are writing your research and in need for your professor's comment. You decide to send him/her a message by WhatsApp and/or Viber and say
----
Situation 2
You are thinking of a topic on your research. You decide to send him/her a message by WhatsApp and/or Viber and say
----
Situation 3
You want to send a file related to your research by WhatsApp or Viber. You decide to send it and say
----
Situation 4
You want to meet your professor to discuss issues related to your research. You decide to send him/her a message by WhatsApp and/or Viber and say
----

Appendix 3: Sample of Authentic and Elicited Data
1. Dear Dr. X Alsalam Alaikum I believe it is great. Can you write it on my chapter if you have time so that I can finish it as soon as possible
Rgds,

2. Dear Sir Alsalam Alaikum and Jumaa Mubaraka
Last week I was with my sister in the hospital. I had very difficult circumstances which was the reason of my delay, you know I actually like you to read my proposal as soon as possible
Thank you very much
Best,

3. Dear Dr. X Hope all is very well with you. This is my topic "Wilson's representation of Black Women: A study in Selected Plays by August Wilson, Fences, The Piano Lesson& Ma' Rainey Black Bottom , *Ok*?
Thanks

4. Good Morning Dr. X The topics you have given are very lovely. I wonder if it is possible to give me your opinion about the last three novels you have given to us in the first semester.
Have a wonderful day. Thank you

5. Hi Dr. X Hope everything is going well with you. I will be thankful if you give me some time on Sunday *please* I have to travel to my home soon. Thank you very much

6. Good afternoon Prof. Jumaa Mubarakah

Is it all right if you send it to me next week so that I can adapt based on your comment. Please let me know soon.
Thanks & Cordially

7. Dr. I need your comments. I kindly ask you to have a look at them if there is no noise with many thanks.

8. Mrs. I have many questions in my mind I'd like to meet you please because a lot of points are unclear so I have to know them from you
9. Dr. How do you do? Can I see you on Wednesday to discuss it with you, if you have time. Really thnx

10. Dear Dr. X
Your comments are as lovely as this evening
I just finish writing the first chapter. Kindly I want to see you please
Many thanks Dr. X

11. Dear Sir, I wish you a blessed Friday. Please, I would be very grateful if you give your point of view on my proposal. Please this proposal is not final.
Thanks a lot

12. Dear Dr, Hope you are healthy and doing well. I was very sick and couldn t answer soon. I am sorry Can you clarify? Please. Thanks in advance

13. Dear Dr. X How are you
I know I am bothering you but I'm afraid you're going to to read this additional page, I am sorry

14. I was too busy and also couldn't understand it.
 so r u available on Thursday. I need to see you please to discuss it…

15. I know I am asking more but believe me I have to meet you very soon and I am sure I will write it in the wau you like"

16. Dr. (X) Can you read it and I promise to submit soon…plz

17. Is it OK on SUNDAY if it does not disturb you..Thnx

18. Dr. I will be so hapy to see you, so can I see you on Monday

19. Prof. …I am glad coz of your comments. Can you read the other pages.