The Linguistic Behaviour of Street Children in Yemen:

How do they request and apologize?

Dr. Nada Qanbar*

Abstract:

The present paper focuses on the linguistic behaviour of street children in Taiz regarding two speech acts: requests and apologies. The researcher interviewed ٣٩ children to investigate the extent to which the social background of the street children influences their linguistic behaviour. The researcher gave the children ١٠ situations and asked them to produce the speech acts in question. For both requests and apologies, the children showed sensitivity to the features of the situations, and chose the appropriate strategy accordingly. Among main request strategies, the researcher found that street children preferred the most direct strategy type. They also made their requests without modifications. The study revealed that the children used socially unacceptable swear words.

In apologizing, street children preferred a simple straightforward apology and they also showed a high sense of responsibility in committing an offence. The study gives suggestions for future research.

١. Introduction:

One of the primary objectives of sociolinguistic research is to investigate linguistic variation as it relates to social variation. It is concerned with finding out the relationship between language variation and biosocial factors such as age, sex, race, socioeconomic class, educational attainment, regional origin, ethnic identity and so on.

Sociolinguistic studies show that the varieties of languages that speakers use reflect these factors. These studies also show that particular ways of speaking, choosing of words, and even rules for conversing are determined by certain social requirements. The thrust of argument is that the members of a given category share material conditions of existence, and thus to a large extent will produce similar 'worlds views'.

In this study, the researcher tries to investigate the extent to which the social background of the street children, as underprivileged category and as deprived of care and most needs, affect their linguistic behaviour regarding two speech acts, i.e., requests and apologies. The assumption is that children follow the linguistic models they encounter in their environment as part of their 'socialization'. The first model is that of

* **Assistant Professor of English, Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Taiz University.**

the parents, then peers, then adults (Chambers ١٩٩٥). Here the children, in most of cases, lack the parent model and are influenced more by their peers in the street who also come from the same social background and go through hard times. Since Social structure may either influence or determine linguistic structure and behaviour (Hudson ١٩٩٦,and Wardhaugh ١٩٩٦), the researcher hypothesizes that their linguistic behaviour is negatively affected and it either lacks or has certain distinct features.

The main reason for choosing these two speech acts among a wide range of speech acts is that these speech acts are methodologically rich and have been examined as means of maintaining the social order and as markers of distance and dominance in relationships. They have also been used to reveal the role that pragmatic competence plays in the use of a language.

The importance of this study comes from the fact that it is the first study of its kind which studies the linguistic behaviour of street children in Yemen and elsewhere in the world-to the best of my knowledge. The studies that focus on these children are mainly socially/psychologically centered but they are never linguistic. Furthermore, subsequent studies can take this study as a basis to study other manifestations of the linguistic behaviour of street children.

١.١ *Who Are Street Children?*

Many scholars (Boyden ١٩٨٦, Groza ٢٠٠٢, Marklusk et al ١٩٨٩, Tacon ١٩٩١ among others) and organizations (WHO ١٩٨٥,١٩٩٣, UN ١٩٨٦, UNICEF ١٩٨٥) have attempted to define who a street child is. The most comprehensive definition is given by Abu- Annasr (٢٠٠٤), which reads as follows:

"A street child is a child (male or female) whose age is below ١٨, and he/she lives, eats and plays in the street as homeless, and receives no care or attention from elders. His/her family is socially wrecked, and his/her relationship with it is irregular. He/she is begging or doing marginal/illegal works." (p.٤٩)

٢. *Aims of the study:*

١-To investigate from a socio-pragmatic perspective the ways in which street children manifest the speech acts of requests and apologies.

٢- To investigate the frequency and the type of the strategies and sub-strategies of these two speech acts and whether the fact of being a street child influences his/her linguistic behaviour or not.

٣. Methodology:

٣.١ Subjects:

The subjects are ٣٩ in number (٣٨ male, I female)(١). ٣٢ of the subjects are interviewed in Taiz streets (Zeid Al-Moushky street, ٢٦th Sept. Street, Al-Markizy, Osaifra, and Attahreer street); and ٧ in the Safe Childhood Center-Taiz(٢). The age range of the children is between ٧ and ١٣.

٣.٢ Instrument:

The instrument used in collecting the data is a modified version of a DCT (discourse completion test/task). DCT is a test in the form of a questionnaire. The test consists of scripted dialogues and the informants are asked to complete the dialogue. Since the target population is assumed to be illiterate, the researcher conducted the test on them orally in the form of an interview. The test consisted of a description of ١٠ socially differentiated situations, specifying the setting, and the social distance and social power between the people involved in the situation. All the situations are presented in colloquial Taizi Yemeni Arabic. Half of the situations are to elicit requests, and the other half apologies. The informant is asked to pose his/her request or give his/her apology, as he would normally do in everyday life. The utterances of requests and apologies given by the informants are the subject of the analysis. (For full description of the situations, see the Appendix)

The researcher sometimes used the role-play method, in which the informants were asked to act out the roles of the situations. This method can get the informants closer to natural interaction (cf. McDonough ١٩٨١), and it also gives them the opportunity to negotiate and comment on the responses of each other. To keep up with the informants, the researcher tape-recorded them, then the researcher transcribed their speech.

٣.٣ Data Analysis:

In the analysis of the data, the researcher adopted the coding scheme of the CCSARP project (Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Pattern)[٣]. I also used descriptive statistical analysis such as frequency and mean distribution whenever necessary.

٤. Requests:

٤.١ Preliminaries:

'Requests usually involve asking for something 'outside' the hearer's daily routine and entail doing activities that require some time or effort on the part of the hearer'

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١ It is more common for male children to stay around in the streets rather than girls. Even the little girls the researcher found were scared and refused to talk.

٢ In the center, the researcher interviewed ١٢ children. ٧ children are either irregular or they have just joined the center, so the researcher considered them as street children, while the rest have been there for more than six months, which made the researcher exclude them from the study because they have been institutionalized and hence no longer street children.

٣ The CCSARP project is a world project which is mainly interested in analyzing the various speech acts across languages and cultures.

(Qanbar ٢٠٠٦). A Request consists of two parts: the core request or the head act and peripheral elements (modifications). The head act is the obligatory element which has the function of request and thus can stand by itself to convey the request, while the latter, which may precede or follow the head act such as reasons for the request are optional and their function is either to soften the head act or upgrade it. The example below exemplifies these categories: the elements in bold represent the head act of a request and can be perfectly used alone as a request; the other utterances represent the modifications.

Ahmad, the kitchen is in a mess. Clean it up, you lazy-bones.

The head act can be varied along three levels of directness (Blum-Kulka et al١٩٨٩ b):

١-The most direct level (Impositives), e.g.: 'Close the window';

٢-Intermediate level of directness (conventionally indirect), e.g. 'Can you close the window?' This strategy can take two forms in Yemeni Arabic: mumken + finite clause (Could you do x?), and leiΣ ma + finite clause ('Why don't you?'); and

٣-The least direct level (hints), e.g. 'It's cold in here', as a request to close the window.

It is worth noting that these strategies are in complementary distribution, i.e, only one of them can be used by the requester in a requestive utterance.

Let us take a look at the distribution of these strategies in the speech of the street children as they figured in the data collected:

٤.٢ *Levels of '(In)directness' in Requests of Street Children:*

Table ١ shows how street children made use of the three 'strategy types' of requests[٤]:

Situation	Impositives	Conventional Indirectness	Hints
S١ (Traffic Warden)	٣٨ ٩٧.٤٪	١ ٢.٦٪	---
S٢ (Walkman)	٣٥ ٨٩.٧٪	١ ٢.٦٪	---
S٣ (Neighbour)	٣٨ ٩٧.٤٪	---	---
S٤ (Biscuits)	٣٩ ١٠٠٪	---	---
S٥ (Street)	٢١ ٥٣.٨٪	---	١٠ ٢٥.٦٪

Table ١: The Distribution of the Three Main Request Strategy Types in five Situations of Street Children

٤ The total distribution in S٢, S٣, and S٥ is not ١٠٠٪ because some of the respondents chose to answer non-verbally. That is to say, they said that they would not say anything and would resort to violence like beating the hearer up.

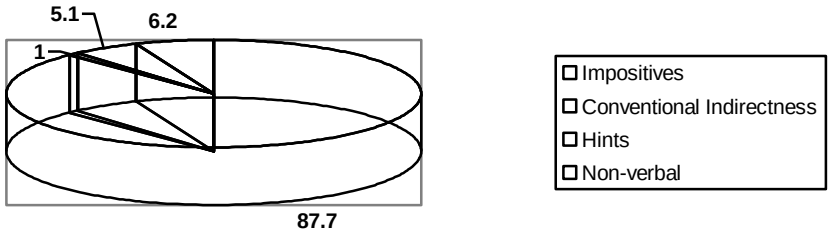

Figure ١: The Mean Distribution[٥] of the Request Main Strategies in the Street Children Data

From table ١ and figure ١, three things can be noticed: first, it is obvious that the most direct strategy (impositives) is the most dominant strategy used. It accounted for ٨٧.٧٪ of the data. The highest incidence of this strategy featured in S٤ (Biscuit) (١٠٠٪), and the least incidence in S٥ (Street) (٥٣.٨٪). Second, the use of Hints comes in the second place with a mean distribution of (٥.١٢). It was only used in one situation (S٥Street situation)[٦]. Third, the use of Conventionally Indirect is the least strategy used (١٪). It was only used in two situations (S١ (Traffic Warden) and S٢ (Walkman)) with very little frequency (٢.٦ % in each situation).

Here there is a big gap between the frequency of the most direct strategy type and the conventionally indirect, one which demands an explanation.

The notion of "indirectness" is instrumental in the theoretical conceptualization of politeness theories (Brown and Levinson ١٩٨٧, Leech ١٩٨٣). In the literature, politeness and indirectness have been conceptualized as equivalent entities, and, therefore, parallel and scalable (cf. Blum-Kulka ١٩٨٧). It is assumed that the chief motivation for using indirectness is politeness (Searle ١٩٧٥). It can be said that linguistic politeness has been almost reduced to the simple formula, "the more indirect, the more polite" (cf. Kasper ١٩٩٤). Leech (١٩٨٣) suggests that the propositional content of an utterance being constant, one can increase the degree of politeness by increasing the indirectness of illocutions.

On the basis of this assumption and from the distribution of the strategies in the speech of the street children which showed high use of direct strategies and very little use

٥ The raw numbers on the table correspond to the number of the respondents who opted for a certain strategy type in each situation.
٦ This is a universal fact about the use of hints as a requestive strategy. It is, thus, expected to be used in little frequencies (Blum-Kulka ١٩٨٩ b).

of indirectness (in the form of mumken + finite clause), one can assume that street children are impolite and their speech is too forward and 'rough', which is a natural result for their being in the street. But this can be a misleading reading. The high use of direct strategies may not only result from the fact that these children are street children, but it may also be an indicator that these children conform to the underlying socio-cultural norms of the Yemeni society. Based on a study of the linguistic behaviour of Yemeni Arabic speakers (adults) with regard to requests, it was shown that ٧٠.٦٪ of Yemeni speakers use the most direct strategy type (Impositives) (Qanbar ٢٠٠٦). This was a high frequency compared to other languages and cultures, but Yemeni culture is categorized as a "solidarity-oriented cultures" (cf. Az-zomor ٢٠٠٣: ٥٥). Unlike individualistic cultures or distance-oriented societies, represented by occidental cultures, where individualism is of paramount concern and the territory of individualism is considered basic to human relations, the Yemeni culture is a culture where the collective image rather than the individualistic or atomistic one is of highest regard. The (traditional) Yemeni society gives great importance to the principles of brotherhood and sociability. The community structure in the Yemeni culture defines the individual's life to such an extent that any member of that community is viewed as a brother - one of the same kind. This public-spiritedness and sense of belonging and cordiality are reflected in the strategies of linguistic action and thus requests are not perceived as imposing. They are signs of solidarity. Thus, the preference of a specific category to the other forms an integral part of the culture's distinctive "way of speaking" (Hymes ١٩٧٤), and constitutes its interactional style.

However, the little use of indirectness is striking. Although we said that using direct strategies forms an integral part of Yemeni speakers' pragmatic competence, Yemenis use it in their daily life with a mean of (١٦.٢٪), and they also consider indirectness as a polite way of posing a request (Qanbar ٢٠٠٦: ٢١٤). This suggests that street children may not have the pragmatic ability to use this 'sophisticated' strategy which is usually used by educated people who are supposed to come from 'good' families.

The use of hints as a strategy in the speech of street children turns out to be situation-specific. That's to say, S٥ is culturally-loaded. In this situation, the hearer has committed an extremely prohibited act in pestering a woman in the street. In fact, the high frequency in the use of hints is quite satisfactory in this situation. Subjects are evoked to give standardized reactions. The most used response in the form of hints found

in the data was ma ma√akΣ √aar (lit. "Don't you have a shame?"[٧]. This response is contextually conventionalized, and they also used swear words (٣٨.٥٪). To tease a woman in the street constitutes a very despicable act, which may entail social punishment. It is quite satisfactory then to find that up to ٢٥.٧٪ of the subjects thought that they would also respond nonverbally and will not even hesitate to use their hands or some other means to stop the harassment. The other situations, on the other hand, did not call the need to use hints as a request strategy.

After examining the obligatory component of the requestive speech act of the street children, let us take a look at the ways they modify it.

٤.٣ *The Use of Modification:*

As we said earlier, modifications are those optional elements in the requestive sequence and they are of two types: Mitigators (to mitigate or soften the head act), and Aggravators (to upgrade or intensify the head act).

٤.٣.١ Mitigators:

I identified three kinds of mitigating modifiers in the data. They are: the use of the Politeness Marker law samaHt (lit 'if you allow'), the use of Grounders (reasons for the request), and the Promise of Reward. There are other types of mitigating categories like getting precommitment, preparatory questions, humour, minimizing imposition, religious pleas, and pacifier (Qanbar ٢٠٠٦), but the researcher did not come across any of them in the data. Therefore, the use of mitigation in the requests of street children is little and is confined to these three categories. And when mitigating categories are used, their frequencies are remarkably little as shown in Table ٢ and Figure ٢ below. This indicates that street children may not be aware of the importance of mitigating categories in facilitating their requests. These categories help minimize the intrinsic seriousness of the imposition. By using them the requester believes that what he/she is asking for will not cost the addressee much. They help encouraging the requestee to comply with the request. These categories, therefore, need social and personal skills on the part of the requester, which street children obviously lack.

Let us have a look at the distribution of the categories used by the street children:

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٧ The word √aar 'shame' is the word commonly used in the Yemeni culture to refer to the female members of one's family. This reference to the female members of one's family as √aar is not offending.

Situation	Politeness Marker	Grounders	Promise of Reward
S١ (Traffic Warden)	١١ ٢٨.٢٪	٣ ٧.٧٪	--------
S٢ (Walkman)	٩ ٢٣.١٪	٢ ٥.١٪	----
S٣ (Neighbour)	١٥ ٣٨.٥٪	١٩ ٤٨.٧٪	----
S٤ (Biscuits)	٨ ٢٠.٥٪	٦ ١٥.٤٪	٥ ١٢.٨٪
S٥ (Street)	٢ ٥.١٪	١ ٢.٦٪	----

Table ٢: The Distribution of the Mitigating Categories across the Situations

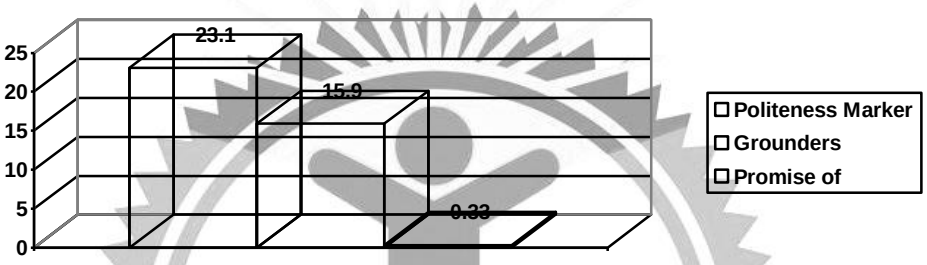

Figure ٢:The Mean Distribution of Mitigating Categories of Street Children

Table ٢ and Figure ٢ show the use of the politeness marker law samaHt (please) is the most frequent mitigator, and it peaks in S٣ (Neighbour). Since this situation involved a request to a neighbour and it is a part of the Yemeni underlying socio-cultural system that neighbours are to be respected and nothing should come between one and one's neighbour, the requesters showed sensitivity to this fact. And in this situation, it seems that some of the context external factors[٨] (type of request) plays a vital role in making the request. Here the requestive goal involves a personal favour, the requester in this case has to mitigate the coercive nature of his request by resorting to the politeness marker law samaHt. The same can be said about the relatively high use of grounders in this situation.

Promise of Reward crops up only in S٤ (Biscuits). Here ١٢.٨٪ of the informants promised the requestee some of the biscuits the requestee would buy for the requester.

٨ Requests can be defined in three terms: a) linguistic form), b) external context (setting, participants, and topic); and c) internal context (meaning, function in context, and phonological environment).

The informants used mitigating categories the least in S٥ (street) for obvious reasons. The requestee is eve-teasing a lady in the street, so there is no need to use mitigating categories in this situation. It actually demands a much more 'aggressive' way of requesting.

Now let us move on to the use of aggravating categories in the requests of street children:

٤.٣.٢ Aggravators:

In the use of aggravators, the most intensified aggravators are used by the street children in the data (Qanbar ٢٠٠٦), though their frequencies are not high. These categories are: Insults, Threats, and Moralizing (the speaker invokes general moral maxims to provoke the hearer into complying with the request).

Look at Table ٣ to see the distribution of aggravating categories across the situations investigated and Figure ٣ for their mean distribution.

Situation	Insults	Threats	Moralizing
S١ (Traffic Warden)	٤ ١٠.٣٪	١٧ ٤٣.٦٪	----
S٢ (Walkman)	٦ ١٥.٤٪	١٠ ٢٥.٦٪	٣ ٧.٧٪
S٣ (Neighbour)	٥ ١٢.٥٪	٣ ٧.٧٪	٣ ٧.٧٪
S٤ (Biscuits)	١ ٢.٥٪	٣ ٧.٧٪	٤ ١٠.٣٪
S٥ (Street)	١٥ ٣٨.٥٪	٥ ١٢.٨٪	٦ ١٥.٤٪

Table ٣: The Distribution of Aggravators across Five Situations

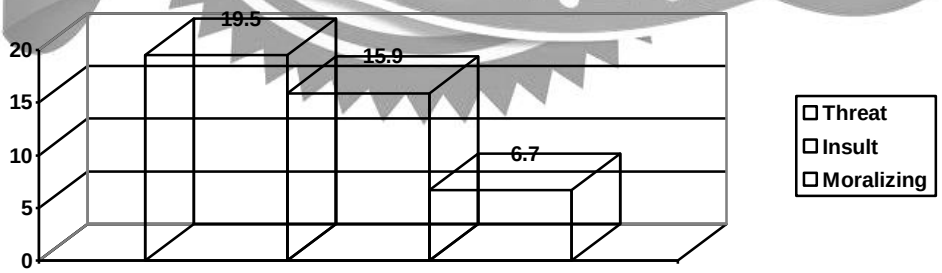

Figure ٣: The Mean Distribution of Aggravators across Five Situations

As shown from Figure ٣, threats are the most frequently used category compared to the other categories. Here the highest frequency is found in S١, and least used in both S٣ and

S٤. Here the informants showed some sensitivity to the internal factors of the request. That is to say, ٤٣.٦٪ of the informants thought that the traffic warden in S١ would use threats in his request due to his institutionalized power in the society, so he threatened drivers of taking their cars from them and take them to jail. ٢.٥٪ of the informants thought that the traffic warden would ask for money. Here the children at this age are able to see through the corruption in the Yemeni system! In S٢, ٢٥.٦٪ varied their threats between complaining to the parents of the requestee, and beating the requestee up.

Insults are the second most used aggravating category. The highest frequency occurred in S٥ (Street) (١٢.٨٪). Again, here the reason for the relatively high frequency of the use of insults is obvious. Here, there is an interesting observation. In my study of the request among Yemeni speakers, the frequency of the insult was ١٨.٣٪ of the data. This suggests that adults in Yemen used more of insults, but the 'type' of insults has the word. In the adult data, all the insults were of the 'average' types like: Himaar (donkey), ghabi (stupid), kasel (lazy) and the kind, but in the street children data, the insults involve swear words that are considered taboos in the Yemeni society. Most of the children used words related to sexual activities and sexual organs (٩٥٪), and ٥٪ used curse words. The use of such kind of insults is, undoubtedly, attributed to the lack of parenting, and mixing with bad friends in the street.

Moralizing is found the highest in S٥ (Street) (١٥.٤٪). The children thought that to use traditional sayings like eib alik (lit. 'Shame on you.') is suitable to turn away the pestering man.

٤.٣.٣ Non-verbal Responses:

This category was used when the informants thought that in certain situations they would prefer also to take an action. The mean distribution is ٢٠٪. The distribution of the frequency of this category is as follows:

Situation	Non-verbal responses
S١ (Traffic Warden)	٤ ١٠.٣٪
S٢ (Walkman)	٧ ١٨٪
S٣ (Neighbour)	١٠ ٢٥.٦٪
S٤ (Biscuits)	٨ ٢٠.٥٪
S٥ (Street)	١٠ ٢٥.٦٪

Table ٤: The Distribution of Moralizing across Five Situations

In S١ and S٥ the children thought that they would take an action right away without even posing a request. In S١ they thought that the traffic warden has the right to give a ticket to the driver. In S٥ the children thought that beating the pestering man up, or bringing a gangster to do that is the best option, and some went to the extreme that they would kill or stab the pestering man to death without hesitation, and when I had a further discussion with them as for the reason for not putting a request first, they showed their anger and thought that to request first in this situation is a sign of weakness.

In S٢, S٣, and S٤ the children thought that they would resort to violence in case of the non-compliance of the requestee. Some of the children gave the researcher surprising responses. For example, in S٢ (Walkman), they said that in case the requestee did not return the Walkman, they would wait for sometime and steal an object from the requestee in compensation. In S٣ (Neighbour) some said that they would cut the power of the neighbour from the source outside, or they would bring a gang to throw stones at the requestee's house.

This sense of aggression and the culture of gangs and thievery are some of the outputs of being in the street. The children can kill, steal, and get involved in gangs which reflects a frailty in morality and the inability to distinguish between right and wrong (Dawkam ٢٠٠٥:١١١).

After examining requests, let us move on to examine the second speech act in this study, viz. apology.

٥. Apologies:

٥.١ preliminaries:

A broad definition of apology is given by Holmes (١٩٩٠) as follows:

An apology is a speech act addressed to B's face-needs and intended to remedy an offence for which A takes responsibility and thus to restore equilibrium between A and B (where A is the apologizer, and B is the person offended). (p. ١٥٩)

Olshtain and Cohen (١٩٨٣: ٢٢) provide the most comprehensive taxonomy for the apology strategies. They maintain that apologies can be carried out by a finite set of "conventions of means", or strategies, all of which are related to the offensive act and serve as the speaker's attempt to make it go away.

٥.٢ Strategies of Apologizing:

١. an expression of an apology (or an Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID)). e.g., I'm sorry';

٢. an explanation or account of the situation. e.g., 'there was a traffic jam' ;
٣. an acknowledgement of responsibility. e.g., 'It's my fault';
٤. an offer of repair. e.g., ' I'll repair it for you'; and
٥. a promise of forbearance. The promise not to do the offensive act again. e.g., ' this is the last time I do this.'

Any one of the above-mentioned strategy types or a combination of them may count as a realization of an apology.

Table ٥ below presents the distributional occurrence of these categories in the situations under study in the street children data:٩

Situation	IFID	Taking On Responsibility	Explanation	Offer of Repair	Promise of Forbearance
S١ (Tape-recorder)	٦ ١٥.٤٪	٢٣ ٥٩٪	٢ ٥.١٪	٢٩ ٧٤.٤٪	---
S٢ (Eggs)	٢٥ ٦٤.١٪	١٤ ٣٥.٩٪	---	٢٢ ٥٦.٤٪	---
S٣ (Bicycle)	٣٣ ٨٤.٦٪	١٧ ٤٣.٦٪	----	١٦ ٤١٪	----
S٤ (Money)	٨ ٢٠.٥٪	٣٢ ٨٢.١٪	١ ٢.٦٪	١٧ ٤٣.٦٪	----
S٥ (Play)	١٩ ٤٨.٧٪	٢٩ ٧٤.٤٪	٤ ١٠.٣٪	١ ٢.٦٪	٢ ٥.١٪

Table ٥: The Distribution of Apology Strategies of Street Children

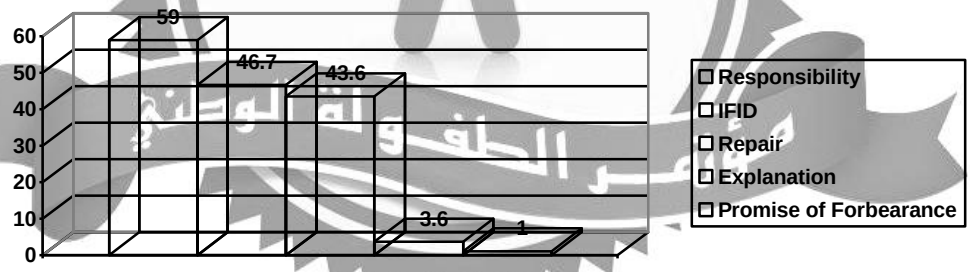

Figure ٤: The Distribution of Apology Strategies Of Street Children

From Table ٥ and Figure ٤ it is clear that three strategies (taking on responsibility, IFID, and offer of repair) have got the highest frequencies respectively, and with little difference among them. The most dominant apology strategy used is Taking on Responsibility (٥٩٪). By taking on responsibility, the speaker admits his role in the

٩ Unlike request strategies, the apology strategies are not in complementary distribution. Therefore, the apologizer can, in principal, use all of them in one utterance.

violation. It is the most successful strategy (Deutschmann ٢٠٠٣). More than ٩٠٪ of those who selected this strategy expressed their lack of intent (glossed as 'I didn't mean to do that.') The speaker explicitly states that s/he had not intended to hurt the hearer through the committed offence.

IFID is a formulaic expression of apology found in every language and culture. In Yemeni culture, it is materialized as asef (sorry), alafw (pardon me), samiHna (forgive me). These are explicit expressions of apology. Only ٤٦.٧٪ of street children used this strategy. In fact, the researcher expected less use of asef than the researcher actually found. The children in the Safe Childhood Centre used this more than children the researcher interviewed in the street. This may be attributed to the constant attention these children receive about their speech. Their supervisor was sitting with the researcher during the interview, and now and then he drew the children's attention to their speech. Some of the children even started to look at him first then responded to the researcher. It may also be attributed to what is called in Sociolinguistics 'the observer's paradox' (Labov ١٩٧٢). That's to say, the children might try to speak politer and be conscious of what they said because of the presence of the researcher and the tape- recorder.

Offer of Repair accounted for ٤٣.٦٪ of the data. In fact, this is a high frequency compared to what Yemeni people use (٢٤.٨٪) (Qanbar ٢٠٠٦). My explanation is that the children, as a result of being in the street, and almost all of them are working to support themselves or their families, develop a high sense of responsibility. They learn to pay the cost for everything they get/do. For example, in S١ (Tape-recorder) ٧٤.٤٪ offered repair for the damaged tape-recorder. Even in S٢ (Eggs), more than half of the children said that they would pay for the broken eggs. Whenever the children said that they would offer a repair, the researcher asked them from where they would get the money. They told me that they would work for it as to pick up materials from garbage and sell it, or carry shopping stuff for people for money and so on. This tells us about the unfair circumstances that push these children into streets. Perhaps, this may not be found in ordinary children. This sense of responsibility may be the only good value the street children get from the street.

Giving Explanation as an apology strategy is rarely used by street children (the mean distribution is ٣.٦٪). This strategy again needs lots of language skills as giving explanation is about giving objective reasons only. Street children obviously lack such ability.

Promise of Forbearance is the least strategy used (١٪), and it is only a situation-dependent strategy. That is, it only appears in those situations in which the offensive act is likely to re-occur as in S٥ (Play).

٥.٣ *Refusal to Apologize:*

It is important to note that up to ٨.٣٪ of the children evaded an apology. This can be a strategy adopted by the offender just to save his 'face', and not to appear socially inefficient. Therefore, they tried to relieve themselves from personal involvement by minimizing the offence (glossed as 'nothing happened'). The main reasons for not choosing to apologize are because either the children did not want to pay for the damage as in S٢ (Eggs), or they thought that the offence was not serious and it happened between intimate friends as in S٥ (Play).

Table ٦ below shows the distribution of this strategy in the five situations under investigation:

Situation	Refusal to Apologize
S١ (Tape-recorder)	٤ ١٠.٢٪
S٢ (Eggs)	٣ ٧.٧٪
S٣ (Bicycle)	٣ ٧.٧٪
S٤ (Money)	I ٢.٦٪
S٥ (Play)	٦ ١٥.٤٪

Table ٦: The Distribution of Refusal to Apologize of Street Children

٥.٤ *Intensification of Apology:*

Sometimes simple apology (without intensification) is not enough. The speaker needs to show true interest in restoring the good relationship. Here comes the role of intensification. IFID can be intensified ('very sorry'), or double use of IFID ('sorry, forgive me'), or emotional expression ('oh'), and so on.

In the data, only ١.٦٪ of the children did intensify their apologies (double use of IFID). This indicates that whenever street children commit a kind of offence, they prefer a simple apology to showing genuine regret. Even the way they said it was 'expressionless. That is to say, they did not show emotions through body expressions or changing of voice tone. It was like a routine expression of apology.

The last remark with regard to an apology, which the researcher encountered during the interview with the children, is that ٢.٦٪ of them recoursed to non-verbal responses besides using the apology form. For example, in S٣ (Bicycle), ٧.٧٪ said that they would kiss their brothers.

٦. Summary and Conclusion:

In conclusion, this study is the first attempt ever to investigate from a socio-pragmatic point of view the linguistic behaviour of street children with regard to the ways they request and apologize. These are some of the common linguistic features found in the speech of street children. It indicates the extent to which social factors can affect the language use.

The following is a summary of the findings in the study:

Requests:

١. When requesting, street children preferred the most direct strategy type. Not a single child used the form *mumken + finite clause*, the form that represents the CI which is supposedly the most polite way of requesting.

٢. The children preferred to make their requests without much modification. They did not use the politeness marker *law samaHt* or other mitigating categories much to facilitate their requests.

٣. When using aggravators, the children used socially unacceptable swear words.

٤. The threats of killing and bringing gangs to beat the requestee up reveal psychological disturbance in the personalities of these children.

Apologies:

١. Street children mostly preferred to take on responsibility and the use of IFID *(asef)* was almost exclusive to children who have been receiving language attention (those in 'The Safe Childhood Centre').

٢. The children have a strong sense of responsibility which is reflected in their high use of 'offer of Repair'.

٣. Street Children did not intensify their apologies as to show genuine regret, but preferred a simple straightforward apology.

For both requests and apologies, the children showed sensitivity to the features of the situations, and chose the appropriate strategy accordingly.

٧. Suggestions for Future Research:

As mentioned earlier this study is the first, and can be explored more from different perspectives. Future studies can:

١- study the linguistic behaviour of street children in other areas of Yemen.

٢- compare between the linguistic behaviour of the children who are brought up in normal circumstances and street children.

٣- study the role of some centers like 'the Safe Childhood Center' can play in affecting the linguistic behaviour of children by comparing the present data with the speech of the same children after one year.

٤- investigate other speech acts like compliments, greetings, refusal etc.

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Appendix
Request:

Traffic Warden

١- A driver has blocked the road with his car. A policeman asks him to move his car.

The Policeman:

Walkman

٢- You lend your Walkman to one of your friends. Now you want it back.

You:.....

.....

Neighbour

٣- One of your neighbours has a wedding party and he has been playing music very loudly. Your mother is ill. Now you go to your neighbour to ask him to lower the volume.

You:.....

.....

Biscuits

٤- You need biscuits from a near-by shop and you want your younger brother to go and buy some for you

You:.....

.....

Street

٥-A man is pestering your sister on the street and you want him to stop teasing her.

You:.....

.....


مؤتمر الطفولة الوطني

Apology:

Tape-recorder

١-You borrow a tape-recorder from one of your friends. You unintentionally broke it. Your friend wants back now.

Friend: I want my tape-recorder.

You:.....

.....

Eggs

٢-You are running and accidentally you pump over an old lady who was carrying a basket of eggs. All eggs get broken.

Lady: ah. You broke all my eggs.

You:.....

.....

Bicycle

٣-You beat your younger brother for breaking your bicycle, but later you found out that he didn't.

You:.....

.....

Money

٤-Your mother gave you ١٠٠٠ YR to buy something from the market but you lost it. What are you going to tell your mother?

You:.....

.....

Play

٥-You had agreed with your friend to go play, but you forget the appointment and your friend kept waiting for you. What are you going to tell him?

You:.....

.....